INDIA

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
IN A DEVELOPING NATION

SEVENTH EDITION

ROBERT L. HARDGRAVE, JR. • STANLEY A. KOCHANEK

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Preface

In the 60 years since India achieved independence in its "tryst with destiny," the strength and stability of the nation have been tested many times. This new edition of *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation* looks back over the years since independence and examines India's struggle for freedom and national unity, its experience with democratic political institutions, and its efforts to establish itself as a power in South Asia and the world. It also reviews the political, economic, social, developmental, and foreign policy successes and failures over the past six decades.

Most Indians today look back with pride on the resilience of their democracy; the country's success in warding off the widespread famines of the past; their survival as a nation; and their country's new economic prowess and international status as a nuclear power. At the same time, there is also a rising sense of apprehension over the increased problems of governance, the corruption and criminalization of Indian politics, growing political instability, and the seeming inability of the country to generate sustained economic growth. While some Indians attribute these problems to a crisis of leadership, others argue that the country must fundamentally reform and reorder existing political institutions.

Each of the chapters in this new edition has undergone substantial revision and many chapters have been totally rewritten in an effort to take into account the momentous changes of the past 60 years. The most extensive revisions have been made in those

chapters that deal with socioeconomic change, political institutions, interest groups, parties, elections, development policy, and foreign policy. Chapter 1 outlines the major socioeconomic changes that have taken place in India in the past 50 years. Chapter 2 reviews the course the nationalist movement leading to Indian independence on August 15, 1947. Chapter 3 reviews the increased strains on governance that have resulted from the fragmentation of the party system, corruption and criminalization of politics, and the rise of judicial activism and public interest litigation. Chapter 4 examines the strains on India's federal system and the regionalization of Indian politics. Chapter 5 traces the impact of India's interest group explosion, the rise of identity politics and social movements on India's system of state-dominated pluralism, and the movement toward competitive pluralism. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 document the decline of the Congress, the rise of Hindu nationalism, the failure of an alternative third force, and the implications of the regionalization of the party system for governance. These chapters also examine the impact of increased electoral mobilizations, caste, religion, and markets on Indian electoral behavior. Chapter 9 reviews the impact of liberalization, globalization, privatization, and markets on Indian economic development, poverty, competitiveness, and social development. Chapter 10 concludes with a review of Indian foreign policy in the post-Cold War era and the implications of India's new nuclear power status for South Asia and the world.

India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation, Seventh Edition, is designed to introduce the problems of political development as shown through the experience of one nation. India, one of the first new states to emerge from colonial rule after World War II, has confronted a wide range of problems, and dramatizes—perhaps more than any other developing nation—the crisis imposed by the limited capacity of institutions to respond to expanding participation and rapidly increasing demands. Although the book reflects a particular theoretical perspective, it is not essentially theoretical in either content or purpose. It is designed to provide a sense of the cultural and historical milieu in which political development takes place and to give a balanced treatment of structure and process, of institutions and behavior, and of policy and performance in

Indian politics. India provides the framework, then, in which problems of political development common to a major portion of the world are explored and, in addition, reflects the growing global importance of non–Western nations.

The first three editions of this book were written by Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. Fifteen years after the book first appeared he was joined by Stanley A. Kochanek in the revision for the Fourth Edition. The Fifth and Sixth editions were again co-authored.

The revision of the Seventh Edition was done by Professor Kochanek, for whose efforts his colleague Robert Hardgrave expresses heartfelt thanks. We also wish to thank Lauren Matthews for her assistance in preparing the final manuscript.

Over the life of the book, many people have assisted with helpful suggestions. Their number now precludes individual acknowledgement, but our appreciation and gratitude are in no way diminished.

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About the Authors

Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. is the Louann and Larry Temple Centennial Professor Emeritus in the Humanities, Departments of Government and Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He is a specialist in comparative politics, with an area focus on the domestic and international politics of South Asia. Working principally in India, he has conducted research on a wide range of topics, including ethnic/linguistic conflict, social movements, and politics and social change. In addition to *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, first published in 1970, his books include *The Dravidian Movement*; *The Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political Culture of a Community in Change*; *India Under Pressure: Prospects for Political Stability*; and *Essays in the Political Sociology of South India.* His most recent book, though not in political science, addresses his long interest in India: *A Portrait of the Hindus: Balthazar Solvyns & the European Image of India 1760–1824.* Professor Hardgrave is senior policy adviser on South Asia for Political Risk Services, Inc., and has served as a consultant on South Asia for the U.S. Department of State.

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Indian Politics on the Internet: A Resource Guide

http://asnic.utexas.edu/asnic/hardgrave/resourceguide.html

The guide, prepared by Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., and Stanley A. Kochanek and updated periodically, includes websites on Indian government; parties, politics, and elections; economy and society; issues and interest groups; military and security; newspapers and media; and a variety of sites for general information and links on India.

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The Globalization of the Development Challenge

AFTER 60 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITISH colonial rule India appears to be on the verge of a significant economic and political transformation. Politically conscious, increasingly participant, the country's masses are an awakening force that has yet to find coherence and direction in the world's largest democracy. The turbulence of modern India brings into focus a process of transformation and change that has been sweeping the post–Cold War world.

THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

In the aftermath of decolonization following World War II, theorists and statesmen saw the problems of poverty, economic stagnation, accelerated socioeconomic change, ethnic upheaval, and the need to create and sustain political order and legitimacy as a unique set of challenges that confronted the new states of Asia and Africa on their way to modernization and development. By the early 1970s, however, the advanced industrial societies of Europe, North America, and Japan were themselves convulsed by similar challenges as rapid technological change, global energy crises, raw material shortages, and a deteriorating environment found

governments straining to satisfy rising expectations in a world of diminishing resources.[1]

In the late 1980s and early 1990s there came an even more dramatic change marked by the collapse of the communist model of development and the attempt by the states of the old Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to move toward Western-style democracy and market economies and to integrate into the global economic system. In the wake of what has become known as the third wave of democratization and globalization, mainstream development models have become increasingly universal in scope and objective and the political debate has shifted to a focus on problems of democratic transition and consolidation. The death of communism, however, has also been accompanied by the rise of nationalism in all its most virulent forms as ethnic cleansing, religious fundamentalism, and global terrorism have come to threaten the new global order. Political organization, administrative competence, and good governance have emerged increasingly as the critical variables in the development process.

The crisis of governance and political development that has come to confront the entire world has made it clear that all states are part of a continuous process of change in which public choice plays a key role in shaping, directing, and managing the adaptation and transformation of the political order. The process of political, economic, and social change is not a transitory phenomenon confronting traditional agrarian societies on their march toward industrialization, secularization, and modernity, but is part of a continuous process of global transformation brought about by accelerated technological advances and rising expectations in a world of finite resources. In short, to a considerable extent all countries can be seen as developing countries, and the study of governance, development, and change has become a major part of comparative analysis.[2]

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[1]Samuel P. Huntington, "The Change to Change: Modernization, Development and Politics," *Comparative Politics*, 3 (April 1971): 283–322; David E. Apter, "The Passing of Development Studies – Over the Shoulder with a Backward Glance," *Government and Opposition*, 15 (Summer/Autumn 1980): 263–75; and Dudley Seers, "The Birth, Life and Death of Development Economics," *Development and Change*, 10 (1979): 707–19.

[2]For a survey of development theories, see Vicky Randall and Robin Theobald, *Political Change and Underdevelopment, A Critical Introduction to Third World Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), and John Rapley, *Understanding Development: Theory and Practice in the Third World* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1996).

THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE IN INDIA

Among the states of the developing world, India, like China, represents one of the great intellectual and practical development challenges of the century. Until recently India was important not only in its own right, but also because its size, population, and geo-strategic location made it one of several competing models for the states of Asia and Africa that were at similar stages of development. As the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, its independence set the tone for political reform and an indigenous model of development that was to have a major imitation effect throughout the developing world. In 1991, however, India all but abandoned its indigenous model of development based on centralized democratic planning, socialism, and government control and regulation of the economy in favor of a policy of liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and globalization of its formally closed economy. The development challenge in India, however, remains the transformation of one of the oldest, most complex, continuous civilizations in the world into a modern nation state. Its success or failure will have significant regional and global consequences as India continues to remain a major testing ground for theories and models of development and change.

The pattern of Indian development over the past half century has confounded existing theories of modernization, development, and dependency and has required substantial reevaluation of these notions. Quantitatively, in terms of levels of urbanization, industrialization, secularization, education, media consumption, and welfare, India appears to be almost a stereotype of a less-developed country (LDC) and has few of the alleged socioeconomic requisites of democracy. Yet, qualitatively, India has a comparatively high level of institutional development and is one of the few nations in the developing world to sustain a democratic polity. Indian development, moreover, does not appear to be progressing neatly through a series of predetermined stages nor through a set sequence from traditional to transitional to modern. It has political structures that are modern, competitive, and institutionalized and yet a political style that is highly traditional, consensual, and personalized.[3] Moreover, India's governing elites can in no way be characterized as *comprador* (that is, foreign-controlled), as dependency theory would have it, and its poverty and inequality are no more a result of the international economic order than is its ethnic

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[3]Samuel J. Eldersveld and Bashiruddin Ahmed, *Citizens and Politics: Mass Political Behavior in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 3–18.

heterogeneity.[4] In the coming decades the Indian experience may also challenge the current development orthodoxy of free markets, liberal‑ization, and globalization. India, it seems, fails to conform to existing explanations and, for that reason, an understanding of the Indian experience is of interest in its own right as well as in providing a better understanding of the development process itself.

The Indian Experience

The decline of Mughal power, the rise and fall of British colonial rule, and 60 years of independence have resulted in a rapidly accelerating process of social, economic, and political change that is fundamentally altering one of the oldest civilizations in the world. This process of transformation, in beginning to reorder Indian society, has upset tradi‑tional status relationships among major social groups and has begun to create new identities and demands. It has in addition also accelerated in scope, rate, and impact in recent decades. Thus, any attempt to ana‑lyze these changes is like slowing down a motion picture and stopping it in order to examine tentatively a single frame, knowing full well that each succeeding frame will be different.

At the macro‑level the process of transformation taking place in India can be measured quantitatively by examining key socioeconomic indicators that tend to reflect underlying changes taking place in the society. These statistical indicators outline the broad context within which political development is taking place and the major problems that confront political decision makers. By almost any measure India has made considerable progress since 1947, and yet in many ways the data yield ambiguous results. This is especially the case when eval‑uating India's economic performance. The Indian economy is like the proverbial half‑filled vessel: Is it half empty or half full?

The fundamental challenge facing India's governing elites is to inte‑grate a continental‑size country, as large and diverse as all of Europe minus the former Soviet Union. India is a mosaic society composed of varied regional, caste, ethnic, and religious communities spread over a land area of 1.3 million square miles, about one‑third the size of the United States. It has a large and rapidly expanding population; it is pre‑dominantly rural; it has one of the lowest per‑capita incomes in the world; it has limited fiancial resources and it has low levels of urbaniza‑tion, literacy, and life expectancy. At the same time, it has a large and

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[4]Baldev Raj Nayar, *India's Quest for Technological Independence*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Lancers, 1983), pp. 1:85–132.

increasingly prosperous middle class, the third largest pool of scientific and professional talent in the world, and the most extensive industrial infra-structures in the developing world outside of China.

The Population Explosion

Perhaps the most potent social change of all in India is its rapidly expand-ing population. This "population bomb," as it has been described, has a devastating impact on limited resources, political management, and planned development. The control of disease in the past 80 years has brought a rapid decline in the death rate—the Malthusian equalizer. From 251 million in 1921, India's population more than doubled by 1971, reaching 548 million. By the census of 1991, the population reached 846.3 million and by the time of the 2001 census had crossed the 1 billion mark. The population in 2006 was estimated to be about 1.1 billion and is expected to reach 1.6 billion by 2051. The annual rate of population growth increased from 1.1 percent between 1921 and 1931 to 2.2 percent between 1961 and 1981. Population growth dropped to 1.6 percent in 2000–2005. At the present growth rate, India's population will surpass China's by the middle of the century.

To reduce birth rates, the Government of India has undertaken one of the most extensive family-planning programs in the world. To overcome the fatalistic belief in "God's will," propaganda posters are omnipresent. Billboards, radio, and films proclaim: "A small family is a happy family." The campaigns have yielded mixed results. Although millions of women have had intrauterine devices (IUDs), or "loops," inserted, the initial success of the IUD has succumbed to side effects. The condom (or Nirodh, "prevention") is heavily pro-moted, and research is now underway to develop an anti-fertility vac-cine that will bring temporary sterility.

A major thrust of India's family-planning program involves vasec-tomies. From 1952 until mid-1976, more than 19 million men had undergone voluntary sterilization. Mobile vasectomy camps were organized, and incentives—even transistor radios—were offered to volunteers. But during the emergency (1975–77), incentives were displaced by coercion as overzealous officials sought to fill quotas. The campaign surpassed its target of 7.5 million vasectomies, but alle-gations of compulsory sterilization became a major issue in Indira Gandhi's 1977 electoral defeat. The fear generated by the vasectomy campaign—and the Janata Party's successful exploitation of the issue—posed a serious setback for birth control in India, a setback symbolized by the responsible ministry's change in name from

"Family Planning" to "Health and Family Welfare." Since 1977 no political party has called for control of population nor has any election manifesto mentioned it.

For all the government's efforts, many people, particularly among the poor, simply do not feel a compelling need for family planning. Aside from the fact that a male heir has ritual importance and additional future wage earners will augment family income, "those babies who are a planner's worry are also a parent's hope and joy."[5] They are social security for old age in a society untouched by the welfare state. Beyond this, the calculations of democratic politics have led many groups to consciously endorse population growth among their own so as to translate greater numbers into more power and influence. Critics, moreover, charge that government claims of success in family planning tend to be highly exaggerated.

As a result of its pattern of population growth, the age structure of India's population is like a great pyramid, and in 2006 35 percent of the population is age 0–14. Thus, even with the most successful birth-control program, there would be little immediate impact on population growth. Moreover, as the young mature, the demands of this expanding population for education, housing, government services, jobs, and, above all, food and clean water will place an increasingly heavy burden on India's limited capacity.

Urbanization

Only a small proportion of India's population lives in urban areas, but urbanization, which has been relatively slow in the past, has begun to accelerate at a rapid pace. India's urban population has increased from 11 percent in 1901 to 17 percent in 1951 to 28 percent in 2001—some 286 million people. This population is undergoing a massive change in lifestyle, as women enter the urban work force in larger numbers and as consumption habits change due to a growing appetite for consumer goods once considered a luxury. In 1965–66, only 500 people owned a TV set. By 1980 1.1 million people owned TV sets, and the figure reached 16.9 million by the late 1980s, with more than 100 million viewers.[6] By 2006 the number of TV sets increased to 108 million and is expected to continue to grow quite

[5]David G. Mandelbaum, "Social Components of Indian Fertility," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 8 February 1973, p. 171.

[6]See Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers, *India's Information Revolution* (New Delhi: Sage, 1989).

rapidly. Similar increases are expected in the case of motor scooters, refrigerators, radios, and home appliances.[7] The size of the Indian consumer market is larger than the entire European Community.

Incredibly crowded and polluted and lacking in adequate housing, transportation, and sewerage, Indian cities have become almost ungovernable and, for many, unlivable. But because they offer new economic opportunities, rich and varied cultural experiences, and intellectual stimulation, cities are preferable to rural areas for most urban dwellers. And in terms of relative deprivation, even the burdens of the poor in Kolkata (Calcutta) may represent an improvement over the marginal subsistence of the village. Nevertheless, with rapid social change, high levels of communication, and a frustrated middle class squeezed by rising prices and a deteriorating standard of living, India's cities suffer a deepening malaise. It is within the cities—where the government finds itself least able to respond to accelerating demands—that political unrest is most sharply evident.

Rural Society

India, like most of the developing world, is overwhelmingly rural and agricultural. According to the 2001 census, about 72 percent of India's population lives in some 600,000 villages, most with less than 1000 people. Village life was traditionally narrowly circumscribed, and even today the world of the average villager extends only a few miles beyond the place of birth. Although the villages have now been penetrated by radio, film, and increasing contact with government officials and aspiring politicians, they remain the font of traditional values and orientations. If they are often eulogized as an ideal of harmony and spirituality, even by those who have chosen to leave, traditional villages are nevertheless bastions of parochialism and inequality.

Ownership of land has been the traditional means of both wealth and power in India. Land ceilings and tenancy reforms have been more symbolic than substantive. Unimplemented by state governments politically dependent on the landed peasantry or evaded, often with the connivance of officials, reforms in most states have had little effect on the radically unequal distribution of land ownership.[8] According to the 1990–91 agricultural census, 98.4 percent of

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[7]"The Consumer Boom," *India Today* (New Delhi) , February 15, 1984, pp. 48–56. See also *India Today,* October 31, 1988, pp. 38–47 and *India Today* July 28, 2003, pp. 10–17.

[8]For an account of the failure of land reform in one state, see F. Tomasson Jannuzi, *Agrarian Crisis in India: The Case of Bihar* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974).

TABLE 1.1 Percentage Distribution Size of Landholdings,
1970–1991

Size	Number of Holdings (Percent of Population)		Area of Holdings (Percent of Land)	
	1990–91	1970–71	1990–91	1970–71
Marginal: Below 1 Hectare (2.47 acres)	59.0	50.6	14.9	9.0
Small: 1–2 Hectares (2.47 to 4.94 acres)	19.0	19.1	17.3	11.9
Semi-medium: 2–4 Hectares (9.88 to 24.7 acres)	13.2	15.1	23.2	18.5
Medium: 4–10 Hectares (9.88 to 24.7 acres)	7.2	11.2	27.2	29.7
Large: 10+ Hectares (24.7 acres)	1.6	3.9	17.4	30.9
Total (combined size)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: 1 hectare equals 2.47 acres.

SOURCE: Tata Services Ltd., *Statistical Outline of India,* 1996–1997 (Bombay: Tata Services Ltd, Dept. of Economics and Statistics, 1996), p. 59.

rural households owned less than 10 acres of land. As seen in Table 1.1, 59 percent owned less than 2.5 acres, 19 percent held 2.47 to 4.94 acres, 13 percent owned 4.94 to 9.88 acres, and 7 percent held 9.88 to 24.7 acres. Only 1.6 percent of rural households owned more than 25 acres. Due to the pressure of population, the average size of holdings has decreased from 2.30 hectares (5.68 acres) in 1970–71 to 1.57 hectares (3.87 acres) in 1990–91 and by 1994, 37 percent of the rural population was estimated to be landless. According to the agricultural census of 1999–2000, the process of land fragmentation has continued to accelerate. The area operated by large land holders over 10 hectares has declined from 17.4 percent in 1990–91 to 14.8 percent in 1995–96, while the area operated by marginal farmers had increased from 15.0 percent to 17.2 percent. Additionally, the proportion of agricultural cultivators had decreased

from 59 percent in 1991 to 54 percent in 2000, while the proportion of agricultural laborers had increased from 41 percent to 46 percent.

Rural India has increasingly become divided into two broad categories based on the percentage of wage labor in agriculture, the percentage of product marketed, and the degree of penetration of rural society by communications. One set of districts is predominantly based on subsistence agriculture and covers the areas of eastern Uttar Pradesh, northern Bihar, eastern and southern Rajasthan, and the nonindustrial regions of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh in central India. The second set of districts is now commercialized, more prosperous, and increasingly urbanized. This includes much of the Punjab and Haryana, Gujarat, western Uttar Pradesh, the irrigated areas of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, and the rural hinterland of the metropolitan cities. These are the areas of the green revolution that have transformed Indian agriculture and rural life.

Resources

A major portion of India's national income is from the land, but there is little beyond the 451 million acres under cultivation that can be redeemed for agriculture. The soil, though capable of being rejuvenated by rotation and fertilization, has been depleted by centuries of harvest. Only about 40 percent of India's farmland is irrigated. In the remaining 60 percent rain is irregular, and the monsoon, which determines the difference between prosperity and subsistence, is uncertain. The uses of irrigation, pesticides, fertilizers, improved seed grain, and modern agricultural techniques have increased India's agricultural output enormously without expanding present acreage, but most of India's peasants, with little access to credit and a tenuous hold on the land they till, cannot afford to assume the risks involved in innovation. Moreover, regional disparities are stark. Against the booming agricultural prosperity of the Punjab stands Bihar—backward, caste-ridden, and desperately poor.

After a decade of massive grain imports, India was self-sufficient in food production by the mid-1970s. As a result of modern agricultural technology, hailed as "the green revolution," production of wheat and rice—the principal food crops—expanded to record levels. By 1990–91 India produced 176.4 million tons of food grains, compared to 63 million tons in 1951–55. Food production reached a high of 212.9 million tons in 2001–02 only to drop back to 174.2 in 2002–03 due to a severe drought. Food production reached another new high in 2003–04 to 213.5 million only to drop back to 204.6 million tons in 2004–05 as Indian agriculture remains hostage to the vagaries of

the monsoon. Whether the breakthrough in irrigation and agricultural technology can sustain production through a series of bad years is doubtful. The periodic failure of the monsoons and resulting widespread drought underscore India's dependency on rainfall.

In raw materials India possesses the resources for substantial industrial growth. In the northeast, coal, iron ore, and transport facilities provide the base for a major steel industry. Oil reserves have been opened in Assam and off the western coast (the "Bombay High"), but despite expanded production in recent decades, India still imports a large proportion of its petroleum requirements—a heavy cost on economic development efforts. India is pursuing an active nuclear-energy program, though thus far with modest success, and its rivers offer great hydroelectric potential that has only been touched. Production of electricity has expanded enormously since 1947, but India's generating capacity is hindered by inefficiency and strained by rapidly increasing demands. The inadequate power supply remains a serious bottleneck to both agricultural and industrial development. Overall, India's resources, although substructural in themselves, are limited in terms of the demands upon them and, at the same time, remain underutilized. Moreover, India faces a major infrastructure crisis due to a lack of investment capital.

The Economy

Although India is still a predominantly agricultural country with 60 percent of its population dependent upon agriculture for a livelihood, the Indian economy has changed considerably. At the time of independence India had a small industrial base and one of the largest rail systems in the world, but the business and industrial sectors contributed only five percent of the nation's income. By 2005, India had the fourth largest economy in the world—based on purchasing power parity—and industry contributed 27 percent of the Indian gross national product (GNP). The country is self-sufficient in consumer goods and in such basic commodities as steel and cement. India manufactures ships, locomotives, trucks, machine tools, and sophisticated electronic equipment. Manufactured goods constitute a growing portion of India's export trade and, despite protectionist barriers, India is aggressively expanding its markets throughout the world. Although India still imports more than it exports, its unfavorable balance of trade has been partly bridged by remittances from Indians working abroad—especially in the Middle East.

India entered independence determined to raise the standard of living of its people and protect its newly won freedom. These objectives were to be accomplished by a process of rapid economic growth

and industrialization. During the first half of the 20th century, from 1900 to 1946, Indian national income under colonial rule rose by 0.7 percent annually, while its population grew at the rate of 0.8 percent, resulting in a stagnant per-capita income.[9] From 1950–1951 to 1990–1991 India had achieved an average annual growth rate of 3.9 percent—considerably higher than under British rule. Since the 1980s, India's growth rate has steadily increased from 5.4 percent per year in 1984–1994, to 5.8 percent from 1994–2004 and 6.1 percent from 2004–2008. Due to its relatively rapid population growth, however, the net increase in per-capita income has been modest. Thus, India's growth rate, while well above preindependence levels, has fallen far below expectation and is considerably below the 8–10 percent of the high-growth Asian states like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, and lags substantially behind China.

Although the Indian growth rate has eliminated the mass starvation of the past, it has failed both to meet the rising expectations of its population and to reduce major disparities. Slow growth has failed to transform the basic economic structure of Indian society, and a large portion of the population continues to live below the poverty line. Because of conflicting definitions, estimates of the number of people living below the poverty line in India vary considerably. According to the Government of India, 26 percent of the Indian population lived below the poverty line in 1999–2000, officially defined as the estimated minimum per-capita monthly expenditure necessary to maintain good health. The poverty line is calculated for rural and urban households. A World Bank study, by contrast, estimated some 39 percent of the Indian population lived in poverty in 2003 and had to survive on less than $1 per day. A United Nations Development Program study estimated some 80 percent of the Indian population in 1999–2000 lived on less than $2 per day, which it considered to be essential to provide basic needs and a modest quality of life.

Health, Education, and Welfare

There has been a dramatic decline in mortality in India as a result of advances in medical technology, but even with the control of epidemic and endemic diseases, sanitation and elementary hygiene have improved little. Despite expanding agricultural production, nutritional standards remain low, and the diet of the poor is both monotonous and inadequate in terms of the minimum caloric intake required to maintain health. Life

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[9]Nayar, *India's Quest*, pp. 1:109.

expectancy has risen from 32 years in 1947 to 63 in 2004, but even this figure suggests a continuing high rate of infant mortality. Although the number of medical colleges increased from 30 in 1951 to some 250 by 2005, rapid population growth in India has limited the number of doctors to only 0.5 per 1000 people. Despite efforts to establish a system of rural health centers, most doctors practice in the major urban areas, and many leave India as part of the "brain drain."

Education in India has expanded rapidly, from 23 million children in school in 1951 to more than 163 million in 2003–04, but only 80 percent of 6 to 14 year olds attended school in 1999.[10] In 1951 the rate of literacy (inclusive for all ages from birth) was about 16 percent. By 2001 it was 64.8 percent (75.3 percent for men, 53.7 percent for women). Despite this progress, India, which has 17 percent of the world's population, has 40 percent of the world's illiterates. Literacy is overwhelmingly in the mother tongue alone, but increasingly Indians outside the Hindi heartland of northern India have some knowledge of Hindi. (About three percent of the adult population is literate in English.) Education, in its strictly instrumental aspects of attitude change and dissemination of practical knowledge, is vital for progress and development. But education has also raised the sights of the Indian people and has stimulated their aspirations toward a better life. The possibilities of satisfying these demands depend on both the will of the government to respond and its capacity to mobilize resources in a context of scarcity.

Overall, India's achievements in social sector development have lagged considerably behind East Asia. In 2003, India ranked 127th out of 175 states on the global human development index, which is a composite of three variables: life expectancy, educational attainment, and real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

THE CURRENT DILEMMA: ''THE REVOLUTION OF RISING FRUSTRATIONS''

The challenge of population growth demands radical change in the form of a fundamental transformation of society. The inertia of tradition can be broken only by creating "felt needs," by stimulating

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[10]Myron Weiner provides a devastating indictment of India's failure in primary education in *The Child and the State in India: Child Labor and Education Policy in Perspective* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). See also Tim Dyson, Robert Cassen, and Leela Visaria, eds., *Twenty-First Century India: Population, Economy, Human Development, and the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

discontent and aspiration toward a better life. The leadership of India, committed to economic development and a more equitable distribution of income, has sought to induce social change and has succeeded to a considerable degree. Through the universal franchise it sought to expand political participation in order to foster national integration, political legitimacy, and enhanced institutional capacity, but its grace period was short. The "revolution of rising expectations" has become a "revolution of rising frustrations," as the gap between aspiration and achievement has widened. As demands have increased and as new groups have entered the political system in the expanding participation, the capacity of the government to respond effectively has not kept pace. Beyond capacity, India still has often lacked the will to initiate and respond to rapid change. Under pressure from sectors of society with a vested interest in preserving the inequalities of the status quo, the Indian leadership has been undermined by the paradoxical position in which it finds itself:

> On a general and noncommittal level they freely and almost passionately proclaim the need for radical social and economic change, whereas in planning their policies they tread most warily in order not to disrupt the traditional social order. And when they do legislate radical institutional reforms—for instance in taxation or in regard to property rights in the villages—they permit the laws to contain loopholes of all sorts and even let them remain unenforced.[11]

India's leaders must have the capacity and the will to respond to increasing demands if they are to fulfill the hope for the transformation of society and the achievement of both growth and equity. In a process of social mobilization, with the breakdown of traditional society, the expansion of communications and transportation facilities, and the heightened political competition, more people have become political participants and, at the same time, more highly sensitive to the poverty in which they live. Yet distributive response to demands can dissipate the capacity for growth. The distributive requirements of equity must go hand in hand with increased production. Striking the balance will not be easy.

Sixty years of freedom have also brought about major changes in the Indian political system as the politics of consensus and accommodation have given way to the rise of Hindu nationalism, the growth of

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[11]Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon, 1968), pp. 1–117.

caste, language and regional identities, and the challenges of economic reform and globalization. These stresses have now been compounded by the fact that India enters the 21st century as a nuclear weapons state.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

India, among the first of the colonies to emerge from the yoke of imperial rule, gained independence from Great Britain in 1947. Today it epitomizes both the problems of and the prospects for political development in the non-Western world. With over 1 billion people, India is the world's largest democracy. Its leadership is confronted by an almost overwhelming cultural diversity, by often intransigent traditions rooted in the village and in religious values, and by poverty bred by scarcity, ignorance, and staggering population growth.

Jawaharlal Nehru spoke of the "essential unity" of India, of a civilization that was "a world in itself" and that gave shape to all things: "Some kind of a dream of unity," he wrote, "has occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilization."[12] However, the unity of India was more a quest than a reality. The diversity of India has given richness and variety to its traditions, but diversity has been accompanied by patterns of social and cultural fragmentation historically rooted in, and sanctioned by, religion. Almost every known societal division can be found in India: The Indian people are divided by religion, sect, language, caste, dress, and even by the food they eat. These divisions are compounded by the chasm between the rich and poor, between the English-speaking elite and the vernacular mass, and between the city and the village. These differences have become an increasingly difficult challenge to the development process.

The Challenge of Cultural Identities

In India, as in most developing countries, the nation shares loyalties with a variety of other sociocultural identities. These identities play a major mediating role between politics and society and represent a natural and potential source of political mobilization by competing elites who attempt to translate group loyalties into focal points of political solidarity, behavior, and group advantage. In its diversity and continental size, India shares more of the characteristics of the

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[12]Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1959), p. 31.

European community than of the more integrated, multiethnic, and unified United States.

India contains all of the major world religions; it is subdivided into a myriad of castes; and it has 15 major languages as well as 24 other languages, each spoken by 1 million or more people, plus a large number of minor languages and dialects. These diverse groups are organized into 28 states and seven union territories.

Political mobilization and the accelerated process of social change have heightened the sense of awareness and identity of these sociocultural groups and have resulted in increased competition, tension, and social conflict. Identities based on religion, caste, and language have strong appeal and have challenged the ability of the political elite to manage them effectively. In general, however, India's political leadership has proven to be much more successful in managing these sources of diversity than have most leadership elites in the Third World.

Religion   All of the major religions of the world are represented in India (see Table 1.2). However, the vast majority of the population—80.5 percent—are Hindus. It is the sheer size of the Hindu community that has raised fears among India's religious minorities of being overwhelmed or absorbed in a Hindu sea. This fear has increased significantly with the growth of Hindu nationalism since the 1980s, the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya by Hindu militants in December 1992, and the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the voice of Hindu nationalism. Hinduism is a religion unique to India, and, like other religions of the subcontinent, it is undergoing a revival. Hindus believe that each person is born into a particular station in life, with its own privileges and obligations, and must fulfill an individual *dharma* (sacred law or duty). According to the sacred Hindu text, the Bhagavad Gita, it is better to do one's own duty badly than another's well. The sufferings of people's existence can be explained by their conduct in past lives, and only by fulfilling the dharma peculiar to their position in life can they hope to gain a more favorable rebirth and ultimate salvation. There is a quality of resignation, of passiveness and fatalism, in this religious belief that has manifested itself in the political attitude of the many Indians who simply accept the government they have as the one they deserve. Expanding communications and political competition have, however, increasingly challenged the traditional order. The vote has brought a new sense of efficacy and power and a willingness to question what was previously accepted simply as written by the gods.

T A B L E 1.2   **Religion in India, 1961/1991**

Religious Group	1961[1]		1991	
	Number (million)	Percentages (%)	Number (million)	Percentages (%)
Hindus	366.5	83.5	827.6	80.5
Muslims	46.9	10.7	138.2	13.4
Christians	10.7	2.4	24.1	2.3
Sikhs	7.8	1.8	19.2	1.9
Buddhists	3.2	0.7	8.0	0.8
Jains	2.0	0.5	4.2	0.4
Other[2]	1.6	0.4	6.6	0.6
Total	**439.2**	**100.0**	**1,029**	**100.0**

[1]Excludes Mizo district, now part of the state of Mizoram.

[2] Including persons not identified by religion.

SOURCE: *India 1998: A Reference Annual*. New Delhi: Publications Divisions, 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.

Hinduism, while uniting India in the embrace of the great Sanskritic tradition, also divides the subcontinent. Each cultural-linguistic area has its own "little" tradition and local gods, and it is within the little tradition, rather than in the realm of Brahminical Hinduism, that most villagers live their religious life. The two levels of tradition penetrate each other, however, as the elastic pantheon of Hinduism absorbs the local tradition and is modified by it. Religion at the "higher" level need not be in conflict with the goals of modernization, Gunnar Myrdal argues, but the inertia of popular belief, giving religious sanction to the social and economic status quo, remains a major obstacle to social transformation. "Religion has, then, become the emotional container of this whole way of life and work and by its sanction has rendered it rigid and resistant to change."[13]

Despite the creation of Pakistan, partition did not solve India's communal problem. India still has one of the largest Muslim populations in the world, and Muslims constituted 13.4 percent of the population in 2001. Having lost the bulk of its leadership at the time of

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[13]Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, pp. 1:112.

partition, the Muslim community in India has only recently begun to develop new leaders and a greater sense of its position in Indian society. As Indian Muslims have begun to gain self-confidence, education, and identity, they have become increasingly assertive. Because this assertiveness has been accompanied by a similar movement toward Hindu revival among the majority community, there has been a sharp rise in tension between the two and a substantial increase in the intensity and scope of communal conflict.

In addition to Muslims, a smaller but more militant religious minority with a strong sense of group identity can be found in India's 19.2 million Sikhs. Although Sikhs comprise less than 2 percent of the population, they are prominent in Indian life, with a highly visible presence in construction, transport, and the military. The Sikhs are concentrated in their home state of Punjab, the granary of India, where they are predominantly agriculturalists and form a slight majority of 55–60 percent of the population. The Sikhs, who have long feared the loss of their separate identity, are increasingly apprehensive over an ethnic balance within the state, which is shifting against them because of the emigration of Sikhs and the immigration of Hindus. These anxieties fueled a political movement that, by 1984, had taken an increasingly violent turn, precipitating a series of events that led to the army's siege of the Golden Temple, the citadel of Sikhism, and the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Communal strife in India has tended to be initiated or exacerbated by groups seeking political advantage in a society of scarcity. Each seeks to define its identity as a mechanism for gaining benefits for the group as a whole. There is nothing inevitable about translating these group identities into political action.[14] It depends largely upon the character of the leadership that emerges in the process and on how effective government is in dealing with the demands and actions of such groups. India, with all its diversity, has been more successful than most in accommodating, managing, and containing these conflicts by a process of political and institutional adjustment.

The Caste System

Despite its numerical size, the Hindu community of India does not represent a unified religious bloc. Hindus are divided into a myriad of castes, and the appeal of militant Hindus for the creation of a State committed to the defense of the Hindu religion is limited

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[14]Marguerite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 3–10; 314–28.

accordingly. There are thousands of castes, or *jati,* in India. Most are confined to relatively small geographical areas within a linguistic region. Marrying only among themselves, the members of each caste share, by tradition, a common lot and occupy a defined status and role within village society by virtue of their birth. Each caste is hierarchically ranked according to the ritual purity of its traditional occupation—whether or not the occupation is still followed. Castes can be distinguished from one another even in the same village by the manner of behavior and speech, the style of dress and ornaments, the food eaten, and the general lifestyle. The behavior of each caste is restricted. Deviation may bring action from the caste itself through the *panchayat*, the council of caste elders, or it may incur the wrath of the higher castes and bring punitive measures against the aberrant individual or the caste group as a whole.

Although traditionally conflict between castes certainly occurred, the caste system ideally presupposes the interdependent relationship of occupational groups, each functioning according to prescribed patterns of behavior, with the system providing both economic security and a defined status and role. The caste system is what Alan Beals calls "being together separately." "To survive," he says, "one requires the cooperation of only a few jati; to enjoy life and do things in the proper manner requires the cooperation of many."[15] Kathleen Gough, however, characterizes the system as one of "relationships of servitude."[16] A typical village might have from a half dozen to 20 castes within it. Traditionally, each by its ascriptive status occupied a particular position in relation to the land. In a system of reciprocity and redistribution, each caste provided the landlord with its services, agricultural or artisan, and received in return a portion of the harvest. The relationship of the lower castes to the high-caste landlord was hereditary, but their dependent status carried certain rights. All behavior within the system, however, served to emphasize superordination and subordination, congruent inequalities of power, wealth, and status. Control over land was the critical lever of social control, and today land remains the fundamental resource of political power.

The ascriptive identity of caste cannot be escaped, even by abandoning the traditional occupation. Although an individual cannot move from one caste to another, within the middle range of castes

[15]Alan Beals, *Gopalpur: A South Indian Village* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 41.

[16]Kathleen Gough, "Criteria of Caste Ranking in South India," *Man in India*, 39 (1959): 15–17.

between the Brahmins and the untouchables, there is considerable movement in the local hierarchy, as castes adjust their ritual position to accord with shifting economic status and political power. Such shifts, usually with a lag of several generations, are accompanied by changes in lifestyle, such as the adoption of vegetarianism in "sanskri-tized" emulation of higher castes. This movement occurs within the framework of the *varna* system. Classically, castes have been divided into five divisions, the four varna and those beyond the pale of a caste. The varna represented the classes of ancient Aryan society. Ranked hierarchically, the first three varnas included the Brahmins, who acted as the priests; the Kshatriyas, who were the rulers and the warriors; and the Vaisyas, who were the mercantile classes. The Sudras, the lowest varna, were the common people, the agriculturalists and artisans. Beyond the embrace of the varna were the outcastes, or untouchables, polluted by their traditional life as scavengers and sweepers and therefore relegated to the lowest rungs of society. Untouchables, who numbered 166.6 million, made up 16.2 percent of India's population in 2001 or about 20 percent of the country's 827.6 million Hindus. India's untouchables now prefer to call them-selves Dalits (oppressed) and have shifted their loyalty from the Con-gress Party to their own political parties and leaders.

India's tribals, numbering 84.3 million or 8.2 percent of the pop-ulation, live largely in areas they regard as their "homeland." Many of these are designated as reserved or "scheduled areas," where tribal lands and rights are protected by the central government. Although tribals are scattered in pockets throughout India, they are concentrated in three main regions—the Northeast (where they make up the majority populations in Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh), the hill areas of central India, and western India. Overall, they remain socially and economically depressed, but some among them have begun to advance, and tribal consciousness is growing.[17]

The heterogeneity of India and the divisions of caste and sect within Hinduism itself helped sustain the secular state and weakened the aspira-tions of those who have sought a Hindu polity. Although the emergence of a heightened Hindu consciousness has nurtured increased militancy, support for a Hindu state remains largely confined to the higher castes of the Hindi-speaking areas of North India. Indeed, setting religion

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[17]Myron Weiner, "India's Minorities: Who Are They, What Do They Want?" in James R. Roach, ed., *India 2000: The Next Fifteen Years* (Riverdale: Riverdale, 1986), pp. 111–13. Also see Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, *Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival* (Berkeley: University of California, 1982).

aside, considering the 20 percent of the population that is non–Hindu, the 52 percent of the population from the lower, "backward castes" and the 24 percent who make up the "scheduled castes (untouchables) and tribes," Hindu nationalists must craft a much more inclusive Hindu nationalist ideology if it has any hope for success.[18]

Language

Next to religion, the most explosive issue faced by India's postindependence leadership has been the problem of language. India has over a dozen major language groups, each with its own distinctive history. Many are very highly developed, with their own distinguished literary traditions. Subnational loyalties based on language developed almost simultaneously with the nationalist movement, and one of the persistent demands of the Congress had been for redrawing the map of British India along linguistic lines. The Congress itself was organized on the basis of regional languages as early as 1920. The administrative map of India was not redrawn until 1956, and since then the Indian states have been reorganized on the basis of the unilingual principle. The creation of unilingual states reinforced the federal character of the Indian system, but concurrently it created a variety of problems for linguistic minorities, interstate migrants, and interstate communications.

Indian languages can be divided into two distinct groups: the Indo-Aryan languages of the North and the Dravidian languages of the South. As seen in Table 1.3, the largest single language in India is Hindi, which, along with English, is recognized as the official language of India. Although the languages of North India have a common Sanskritic base, each is as distinctive as each of the Romance languages of Europe. Moreover, Hindi is very different from the Dravidian languages of the South, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam, which have a totally different root.

It is this linguistic particularism that has served as a base for many of the regional parties that have arisen in India. Although most of these language-based regional parties have been single-issue, grievance-oriented, and transient, some have persisted for an extended period of time. The most durable have been the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and its offshoot, the All-India Anna DMK (AIADMK), reflecting Tamil particularism. Other manifestations of regionalism are the Telugu Desam in Andhra,

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[18]Susanne H. Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, "The Centrist Future of Indian Politics," *Asian Survey*, 20 (June 1980): 579–80.

T A B L E 1.3 **Population and Percentages for Principal Languages, 1971–2001**

No. Languages	Number (in millions)			Percentages (%)		
	1971	1981	2001	1971	1981[1]	2001[2]
1. Hindi	208.5	264.5	410.5	38.0	38.7	39.9
2. Bengali	44.8	51.3	84.3	8.2	7.5	7.8
3. Telugu	44.8	50.6	80.2	8.2	7.4	8.2
4. Marathi	41.8	49.5	77.1	7.6	7.2	7.5
5. Tamil	37.7	N.A.	69.9	6.9	N.A.	6.8
6. Urdu	28.6	34.9	64.8	5.2	5.1	6.3
7. Gujarati	25.9	33.1	51.4	4.7	4.8	5.0
8. Malayalam	21.9	25.7	42.2	4.0	3.8	3.9
9. Kannada	21.7	25.7	40.1	4.0	3.8	4.1
10. Oriya	19.9	23.0	36.0	3.6	3.4	3.5
11. Punjabi	14.1	19.6	28.8	2.6	2.9	2.8
12. Assamese	9.0	N.A.	N.A.	1.6	N.A.	N.A.
13. Sindhi	1.7	2.0	5.1	0.3	0.3	0.3
14. Kashmiri	2.5	3.2	3.1	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total Population	**548.2**	**683.2[2]**	**1,029**	**95.4**	**85.4**	**96.6**

[1]Includes the estimated population of 18.0 million for Assam worked out by interpolation as the 1981 census could not be conducted in Assam due to the distrubed condition then prevailing there.
[2]The percentage of each language for 1981 has been worked out on the total population of India including the estimated population of Assam.
N.A. Complete figures for Tamil and Assamese for the year 1981 are not available as the census records for Tamil Nadu were lost due to floods and the 1981 census could not be conducted in Assam due to the disturbed conditions then prevailing there.

SOURCE: *India 1998: A Reference Annual.* New Delhi: Publications Divisions, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, p. 17 and http://www.Indianfoline.com/fmcg/demo/p.03.html.

the Asom Gana Parishad of Assam and the variety of splinter groups that broke away from the Janata Dal and the Congress (I) in the 1990s. Language has also reinforced the religious base of the Akali Dal, the Sikh party in the Punjab, and the National Conference of the Kashmiri Muslims.

In a developing society like India, the principal sources of cleavage continue to center around status groups and cultural communities, as leaders seek to use these identities for political advantage. Conflicts based on religion, caste, and language have increased as ascriptive loyalties have intensified, and competition has been sharpened by the "revolution of rising expectations" in a society of scarcity.
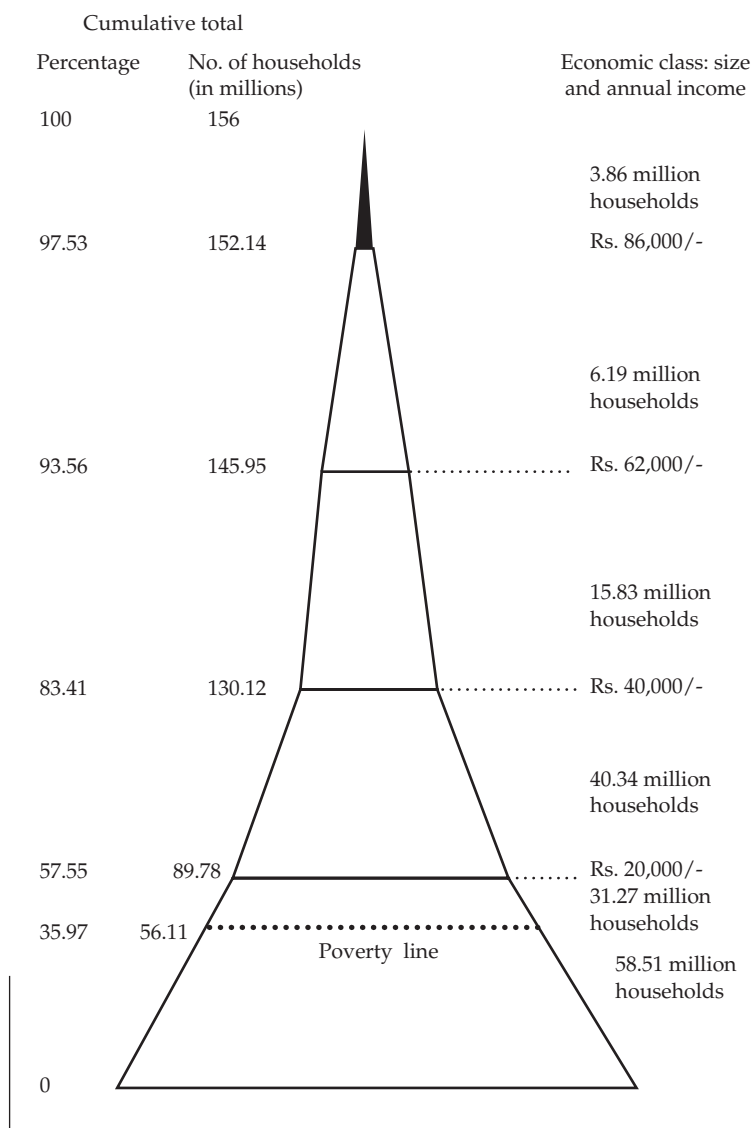
India's Emerging Social Structure

In addition to the existence of powerful status groups based on religion, caste, and language, India has also begun to develop a class system. India's class structure, however, remains tenuous. The slow pace of industrialization and urbanization has led to a highly uneven pattern of class growth, and status groups continue to cut across class lines. As a result, the development of class identities and political mobilization based on class appeals has been severely inhibited.

There are many ways of defining social class in India, including occupation, lifestyle, education, language, and value systems. Perhaps the two most frequently used variables in attempting to define India's embryonic class system are income and urban versus rural. As seen in Figure 1.1, an income-based measure of class in India takes the shape of a very steep pyramid divided into six tiers. The base of the pyramid consists of the almost 60 percent of households that are mostly destitute. This mass of the Indian population is divided between those 36 percent of households that fall below the poverty line and the 22 percent of households that fall just above the poverty line. The remaining 42 percent of households are divided into a very small upper class of 2.5 percent, an upper middle class of 4 percent, a middle class of 10 percent, and a lower middle class of 26 percent.

Because of varying definitions, the size of the Indian middle class is estimated to be somewhere between 60 and 250 million. Using the broadest definition of the middle class based on an annual income of Rs. 70,001 or more in 1998–99, Sridharan estimated the size of the Indian middle class to be about 248 million or 26 percent of the population. Using a much narrower definition of middle class as those earning between Rs. 200,000 and Rs. 1 million a year, a more recent study by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) estimated the size of the Indian middle class to be about 60 million in 2001–02. The NCAER estimated that the size of the middle class would increase to about 154 million by 2009–10.[19]

The Indian middle class is far from homogenous. It lacks a collective consciousness, is split along urban-rural lines, and is preoccupied with its own precarious status. The fastest growing segment of India's emerging class system, however, is the lower middle class. It is the lower middle class and the poor that have become increasingly

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[19]E. Sridharan, "The Growth and Sectoral Composition of India's Middle Class: Its Impact on the Politics of Economic Liberalization," *India Review*, 3 (Oct 2004): 405–428 and *The Times of India* (New Delhi), April 16, 2005.

Cumulative total

Percentage	No. of households (in millions)		Economic class: size and annual income
100	156		
			3.86 million households
97.53	152.14		Rs. 86,000/-
			6.19 million households
93.56	145.95	....	Rs. 62,000/-
			15.83 million households
83.41	130.12	....	Rs. 40,000/-
			40.34 million households
57.55	89.78	....	Rs. 20,000/-
			31.27 million households
35.97	56.11	Poverty line	58.51 million households
0			

FIGURE 1.1 Likely Structure of Households when Arranged According to Their Annual Income

SOURCE: *Frontline* (Chenni), February 7, 1997, p. 106.

politically conscious since independence and have begun to challenge the traditional political domination of the deeply entrenched urban middle-class power elite composed of political leaders, the bureaucracy, the organized sector of trade and industry, intellectuals, technocrats, and the upper echelons of the military.

While the size of the Indian middle class has increased significantly since 1947, the size of the urban working class has remained remarkably small. Due to the slow pace of industrialization, employment in the organized sector of Indian industry has actually decreased from 9.7 percent in 1971 to 9 percent in 2001. In 2001, the workforce in the organized sector of industry was composed of only 27 million out of a workforce of 378.2 million. During the same period, by contrast, employment in the unorganized sector has increased from 90 percent of the workforce to 93 percent of the workforce. The decline in employment in the organized sector has been accompanied by an increasing fragmentation of the working class, a sharp rise in the use of contract labor, and de-unionization. Of these 27 million Indians employed in the organized sector, only 6 to 7 million belong to trade unions.

The industrial workforce remains small, and as a portion of the total labor force it has been remarkably static over the past several decades. Until very recently the communist movement in India focused most of its attention on the mobilization and organization of this small-urban, industrial sector with mixed success. The largest trade union in India, however, is controlled by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

India remains a predominantly rural, agricultural society and organizing the rural sector on the basis of class presents an even greater challenge. In 2001, some 60 percent of the labor force was dependent on agriculture. The land reforms introduced by the Nehru government shortly after independence essentially eliminated the old feudal, landed class. In their place there emerged a powerful new rural force composed of a mixed status–class group of middle peasant cultivators. These middle peasants, whom the communists call India's "kulaks," own between 2.5 and 15 acres of land each, control 51 percent of the land, and constitute 35 percent of the rural households and 25 percent of the total population of India. They have emerged as a powerful political force in rural India and have come to challenge the formerly dominant position of the older traditional notables and large landowners.[20]

[20]Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 20–59.

Although the landless and the small landowners constitute almost 60 percent of the rural households, they lack a sense of solidarity, have proven to be difficult to mobilize and organize, are unevenly distributed throughout the subcontinent, and are only beginning to awaken in political consciousness. These tenants, small landholders, and landless have been largely under the influence of the traditional notables and large landowners. Mobilization of the rural poor represents a long-term prospect, and it will take some time before they are reached by modern forms of political organization. Moreover, the landless and small landowners do not share a common interest. The small landowners holding less than 2.5 acres of land do not identify with the needs and aspirations of the rural landless population. Finally, the distribution of the landless population is very uneven. Landless laborers tend to comprise a higher proportion of the rural sector in the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra and in the northeast province of West Bengal, where they constitute 34–37 percent of the rural population. In contrast, landless labor in the North Indian Hindi belt states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Punjab and in the western state of Gujarat represents only 12–23 percent of the rural sector. But throughout India, their numbers are growing, both in absolute numbers and relative to landholders.

The existing class structure of India poses a serious challenge to economic growth with social justice. Fundamentally, as Baldev Raj Nayar writes,

> the levers of political and state power have rested in the hands of what may broadly be termed the "middle sectors" of economic and social life in both urban and rural areas—the educated and professional groups, town merchants and small businessmen in the urban areas; and the middle peasantry or kulaks in the villages.[21]

They command a position of relative privilege in a nation of poverty and economic backwardness:

> [T]he source of their power lies in the strategic combination of considerable population size with extensive economic resources and significant social status, as against the greater economic power but small numbers of the upper business and

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[21]Baldev Raj Nayar, "Political Mobilization in a Market Polity: Goals, Capabilities and Performance In India," in Robert I. Crane, ed., *Aspects of Political Mobilization in South Asia* (Syracuse: Maxwell School, Syracuse University, 1976), pp. 148–49.

land owning classes and the large numbers but economic destitution of the lower classes. Socialism to the middle sectors has meant, apart from what may fairly be described as tokenism toward the scheduled castes, the bringing down of the upper classes to their own level, but no redistribution or leveling down below that level. Democracy has served these classes well in this regard by facilitating the conversion of economic privilege and numerical strength into political power while at the same time giving it an aura of genuine legitimacy.

In an environment of political and economic uncertainty, the middle sectors "have been the major block to redistribution in behalf of the underprivileged classes."[22] In competition for the scarce resources, the middle sectors are now challenged from below by newly politicized classes, but it is less in terms of "class" than of localized and particularistic groups that their protests are voiced. These demands of the lower castes and classes have become heightened as traditionally oppressed and backward groups have begun to form their own parties in an attempt to gain control of the state machinery to insure control of the process of distribution through a system of job reservations and benefits.

In short, India is a highly pluralistic and segmented society in which social conditions lack uniformity. Each of India's 28 states and seven union territories has its own distinctive cultural, linguistic, and social mosaic that makes it a distinct political unit requiring its own strategy and tactics. Moreover, this very segmented character of Indian society has tended to focus political competition among social groups and cultural communities based on language, region, caste, and religion and not on class. These status groups cut across class lines and inhibit the development of class identities and mobilization based on class appeals.

Since India began its tryst with destiny 60 years ago, both the country and the world have changed dramatically. While Indians look back with pride on their achievements, these achievements have often been clouded by the difficult challenges, as the hopes and dreams of the freedom struggle have given way at times to a sense of despair over corruption, the criminalization of politics, political instability, and "the million mutinies"[23] set loose by the

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[22]Ibid., p. 150.

[23]V. S. Naipaul, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

cumulated impact of change. As India enters the 21st century, how-
ever, its mood has changed dramatically due to accelerated growth,
the emergence of the information technology sector, the renewed
interest of foreign investors in the Indian economy, rapidly expand-
ing exports, and the country's rising global status. Despite this upbeat
mood, however, India continues to face a formidable list of difficult
challenges.

RECOMMENDED READING

*Ayres, Alyssa, and Philip Oldenburg, eds., *India Briefing: Takeoff at Last*?
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of the India Briefing series of collected essays, published in cooperation
with the Asia Society.

*Bill, James A., and Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "Modernization and Political
Development," Chapter 2 of *Comparative Politics: The Quest for Theory*.
Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981. A critical analysis
of concepts and theory in the study of political development.

*Carothers, Thomas, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*. Washington,
DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000. An excellent
review of the history, strategies, methods, and problems that underpin
the concept of democracy promotion.

*Cohn, Bernard S., *India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization*. Englewood
Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971. A succinct and thoughtful portrait of
Indian civilization.

*Dyson, Tim, Robert Cassen, and Leela Visaria, eds., *Twenty-First Century
India: Population, Economy, Human Development, and the Environment*.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. A valuable collection of
papers that examines the nature and consequences of population growth,
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*Huntington, Samuel P., *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968. Explores the problems of political development in terms of the relationship between institutionalization and political participation, emphasizing the creation of stability and order.

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*Ottaway, Marina, and Thomas Carothers, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000. A very useful collection of essays dealing with the lessons and challenges of supporting democracy promotion through aiding the development of NGOs and civil society.

*Pantham, Thomas, *Political Theories and Social Reconstruction: A Critical Survey of the Literature on India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1995. Presents alternative visions of India reflected in a survey of social science literature.

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*Available in paperback edition.

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The Legacies of National History

ON AUGUST 15, 1947, INDIA GAINED INDEPENDENCE from Great Britain and emerged as one of the first new states of the postcolonial era. Its leaders were determined to create a new political order that would be capable of transforming Indian society and developing the economy. The character of the new system was shaped by the legacies of Indian history. Three factors played an especially critical role: the pluralist character of the traditional Hindu social order; the timing, scope, and duration of the colonial experience; and the nature of India's nationalist struggle for independence. These forces combined to produce an Indian political elite committed to the creation of a liberal democratic order and a political authority strong enough to subordinate the military and bureaucratic structures inherited from the vice regal system of the British Raj.

The society of the vast subcontinent, varied and complex in its rich heritage, is among the oldest in the world. Five thousand years of history have nourished the growth of a great civilization, vitalized through cross-cultural contact and characterized by diversities of culture, race, caste, religion, and language. In India there are examples of virtually every known type of societal division: six major religions—Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism; two major

language families, Aryan and Dravidian, with 18 official languages and innumerable dialects and tribal tongues; three racial strains, Aryan, Dravidian, and proto-Australoid; and over 2000 castes, hierarchically ranked, endogamous, and occupational.

The great tradition of Hinduism unites the diverse cultural regions, but within its elastic framework are a myriad of sects and local traditions. Perhaps more than anything else, localism characterized traditional India, a fragmentation not simply of cultural-linguistic regions but of villages themselves. By no means completely isolated, the cultural world of the villages nevertheless remains narrowly circumscribed.

In the past, the villages were little affected by the changes of governmental authority. For the villager, "it did not matter much who ruled in Delhi—Mughal, Maratha, or Englishman. His concern was with his crops, with the next monsoon, and with the annual visitation of the collecting officer."[1]

Even the most sophisticated administrative system, like that of the Mughals, penetrated the village for almost wholly extractive purposes. Neither the Mughals, the Muslim rulers who came to power in 1526 and reigned for over 300 years, nor the great Hindu emperors before them extended their sway over the whole of India. India was a concept, not a political entity. Pockets remained beyond the reach of even Asoka, whose empire in the third century b.c.e. extended from the Hindu Kush to the Bay of Bengal. Islamic authority never established itself in the extreme South; and even as the Mughals attained the height of their power, they were faced with revolts among the Jats, Rajputs, and Sikhs in the North and challenged by the rising power of the Marathas in the West. These internal conflicts were both exploited and exacerbated by the appearance of the European powers in India in the 15th century.

THE BRITISH RISE TO POWER

The British entered the struggle for a commercial foothold in India through the British East India Company, founded in London in 1600 during the reign of Akbar. Within a few years the Company

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[1]Percival Spear, *A History of India*, Vol. 2 (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1965), p. 43.

had secured limited trading privileges from the Mughals, and by the end of the century it had established commercial enclaves at Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta. As Mughal power declined in the 18th century, the British pushed for more extensive privileges and wider territories. The inability of the Mughals to control increasing disorder led the Company, as early as 1687, to instruct its Madras representative "to establish such a politie of civil and military power, and create and secure such a large revenue to secure both . . . as may be the foundation of a large, well grounded, secure English dominion in India for all time to come."

In expanding their hold, the British played one ruler against another, annexing a widening range of territory. The princely states led a precarious and vulnerable existence. The price of preservation from Indian conquest was the acceptance of British suzerainty. Security of trade ultimately demanded that the powers opposed to the Company be brought under control and that Pax Britannica be extended over the whole subcontinent. By the middle of the 19th century the Company had assumed direct control over three-fifths of India, and the remaining areas were held by more than 500 princely states subject to British control and intervention (see Figure 2.1).

Westernization

As successors to the Mughal Empire, the British sought to restore order, reorganize the revenue system, and create a strong central political authority. Conditions were chaotic, and the opportunities for trade were restricted by inland transit duties, a wholly inadequate road system, and the constant dangers of dacoity, or gang robbery, which rendered safe travel almost impossible. In the course of pacification, however, the British began the construction of transport facilities—roads, canals, and railroads—opening the interior for the extraction of raw materials and the development of trade.

The British wanted to establish an equitable land and revenue system. In Bengal, revenues had previously been collected by hereditary *zamindars,* who as agents of the government also held police and magisterial powers. The British mistook the zamindars for landlords and under the Permanent Settlement confirmed them in their jurisdictions, thus creating a new class of wealthy landlords at the expense of the peasants. The mistake was soon evident, and subsequently in Madras the settlement was made directly with the peasant cultivators under the *ryotwari* system.
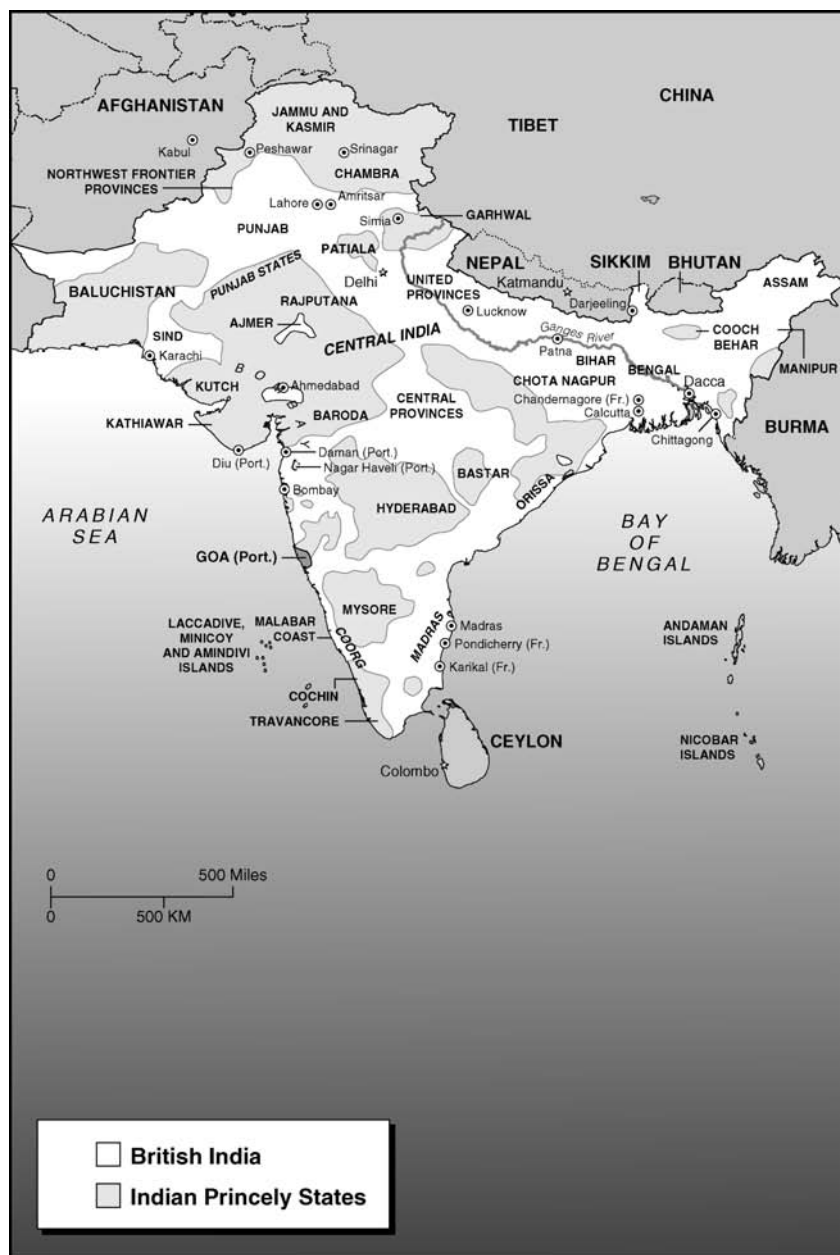
F I G U R E 2.1   India under the British

The British, content in the early years of Company rule to let most things continue very much as before, had taken a position of neutrality with regard to the religious and social affairs of their subjects. In the early 19th century, however, demands for reform, voiced in England by the Utilitarians and the Evangelicals, were soon felt in India. The Utilitarians, committed to the rule of reason, sought to secure social harmony and justice through the free development of human virtue and common sense, unfettered by superstition and tradition. The Evangelicals, driven by a personal pietism and public humanitarianism, expressed horror at the abominations of the benighted heathen. Both Utilitarians and Evangelicals found little in India that they liked; both were ready to condemn and eager to change.

Under pressure from the English reformers, the government took action against those Hindu customs offensive to Western sensibilities. The reforms brought outcries of protest from the orthodox, particularly against the outlawing of *sati,* the self-immolation of a widow on the pyre of her husband. But the measures won the support of many reform-minded Hindus, notably Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833), "the father of modern India." In general, however, the British sought to interfere as little as possible, and reform was largely negative.

The Sepoy Mutiny

The changes introduced by the British, both by accident and by design, threatened the old order, and religion particularly was thought to be in danger. Brahmins, who served in large numbers as sepoys, or soldiers, were alarmed by rumors of Christian conversion in their ranks. They feared that they would have to serve overseas and thus break the religious prohibition against leaving India. Muslim resentments were stirred by the annexation of the state of Oudh for alleged misgovernment in 1856. In this atmosphere of fear, mutiny broke out in 1857 when soldiers discovered that the cartridges for their new Enfield rifles were greased with the animal fat of both the cow and the pig, pollutants to Hindus and Muslims, respectively. "A consciousness of power," wrote one British official, "had grown up in the army which could only be exorcized by mutiny, and the cry of the cartridge brought the latent spirit of revolt into action."

In revivalist reaction, Muslims rallied to the aged Mughal emperor of Delhi, Hindus to the heir of the last Maratha *peshwa,* or head minister. Discontent was centered in Oudh, but among those in revolt there was no unity of purpose. The Maratha princes were not eager

to see a resurgent peshwa and remained aloof from the mutiny. The Sikhs, though defeated only 10 years before by the British, by no means wanted to resurrect Mughal power and thus gave active support to the British in crushing the revolt. The South remained virtually untouched by and uninvolved in the whole affair. Western education brought the Indian middle classes prospects for the enjoyment of status and privilege in a new order, and they pledged their loyalty and active support to the British. "So far from being the first war for independence or a national revolt in the modern sense, the mutiny was a final convulsion of the old order goaded to desperation by the incessant pricks of modernity."[2]

The mutiny was, as Nehru later wrote, "essentially a feudal rising," and although it had directly affected only a limited area, "it had shaken up the whole of India."[3] The East India Company was abolished, and in 1858 the Crown assumed direct control over British India. The revolt, with all its savagery, marked a fundamental change in British attitude and in the relationship between the Indians and the English. The English became deeply distrustful of their native wards, particularly of the Muslims, who were believed to have been strongly committed to the mutiny. The manner of the British response to the mutiny reflected changes in conditions and attitudes that by 1857 were already well underway. The rise of popular imperial sentiments in England would soon have brought continued Company rule into jeopardy had not the mutiny brought matters to a head.[4]

AWAKENING INDIAN NATIONALISM

The British were now determined to be in closer touch with established classes of traditional authority who could keep the masses under control. They rewarded princes for their loyalty during the revolt and guaranteed their territories. They secured landlords in their tenure on conditions of "loyalty and good service." Thus,

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[2]Percival Spear, *India, Pakistan, and the West*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 116.

[3]Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Doubleday, Garden City, NY: 1959), pp. 239–40.

[4]Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 86.

the relics of the past, the vested interests of conservatism, were tied to the British presence in India. At the same time, the British exercised new caution in Westernization. Their new policy reflected both a desire to placate the conservative upper classes and a certain disappointment and pessimism over the Indians' inability to change. "Public works rather than public morals or western values was the guiding star of the postmutiny reformer."[5] India was assumed to be changeless, perhaps irredeemable, and it was to be the "white man's burden" to bring enlightened rule to those incapable of governing themselves.

The British sought to reinforce traditional institutions, to minimize social change, and to soften the impact of the West. Their policy "went hand in hand with a new and avowedly imperial sentiment which glorified the British Raj and consigned the Indian people to a position of permanent racial inferiority."[6] While the British looked for support to the moribund traditional ruling classes, the rajas and zamindars, they virtually ignored the rising westernized middle class—the clerks and subordinate officials, the teachers, and the lawyers. "The fissure between the British and the new India began at this point."[7] British colonial rule was to have both direct and indirect consequences.

The indirect consequences were largely the result of the British presence and had their major impact in the social and economic spheres. As colonial rulers, the British lacked both the capacity and the will to reorder Indian society. The direct impact of British colonial rule resulted from British policy and had its major effects on law, administration, and education. Of all the changes brought about by the British colonial policy, the most profound was the new concern for education introduced in the 19th century under pressure from the Utilitarians and Evangelicals.

The Utilitarians advocated "useful knowledge," the Evangelicals, "moral improvement." The English language was, in the words of Governor General Bentinck, "the key to all improvements." The whole of Hindu literature was seen as less valuable than any shelf of English books. Indeed, Lord Macaulay envisaged in his famous

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[5]Percival Spear, *A History of India*, Vol.2 (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1965), p. 144.

[6]Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 324.

[7]Spear, *History*, p. 153.

Minute of 1835, "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect."[8]

In 1835 English replaced Persian as the official language of government and thereby became the vehicle of advancement and progress. In establishing schools and, later, universities, the British focused on the English education of the middle classes. The aristocrats for the most part held aloof; the masses, except for missionary concern, were largely ignored. The aspiring Hindu middle classes—particularly those castes with a literary tradition, like the Brahmins—were quick to respond to the advantages of English education. There were those of the *babu* stereotype who sought only a sinecure in the new bureaucracy, but others were eager for the knowledge of the West—science, medicine, and the values of political liberalism.

The rise of the new middle class, which Percival Spear has called "the most significant creation of the British in India,"[9] shifted the balance in the relationship of the various classes in Indian society. The old aristocratic landowning classes were rapidly losing their position of status and power.

This new Indian class was characterized by a unity of sentiment, but at the same time this unity was undercut by the growth of regional identity, self-awareness, and assertiveness among different communities, particularly religious ones. The West had a double impact on India: It introduced Western liberal thought, but it also prompted the recovery of what was valuable in tradition. The Indian response to the West came in the forms of reform and revivalism. The movement for reform sought to reconcile tradition with modernity, to eliminate those elements of tradition repugnant to reason and liberal values, and to reaffirm those that were compatible with them. Revivalism, in contrast, sought to regain the past through a traditionalistic reaction against the West, and, although often involving radical reform, it was nurtured by the nostalgia for an idealized "golden age." Reform and revival represented a quest for national self-respect and drew deeply on those who damned and those who praised Indian tradition and society. While often acutely self-critical, reformers and revivalists reacted sharply to the criticism of the Evangelicals, who saw only benighted heathen and a society of superstition and dark

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[8]John Clive and Thomas Pinney, eds., *Thomas Babington Macaulay: Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 237–51. For a discussion of the Education Minute, see John Clive, *Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian* (New York: Knopf, 1973), pp. 342–426.

[9]Spear, *India, Pakistan, and the West*, p. 110.

ignorance. They were unwilling to accept the latent, and often man-
ifest, racism that relegated the Indian to a position of inferiority and
described him, in Rudyard Kipling's words, as "half devil and half
child." In defense of Indian civilization, both reformers and revivalists
drew on the Orientalists, the European scholars who, like Sir William
Jones and Max Müller, revealed the richness of Indian antiquity and
the wisdom of the Sanskritic tradition.

Ram Mohan Roy paved the way for a century of social reform,
and in 1843 his philosophy was institutionalized in the establishment
of the *Brahmo Samaj,* or Divine Society.[10] The society, directed toward
the literate middle classes, gained a small intellectual following, but
under renewed leadership in the 1860s it became increasingly vigorous
in its advocacy of monotheism and social reform. Branches were
established throughout India, but only in Bengal and Maharashtra,
where it sparked the Prarthana Samaj, did it meet with significant suc-
cess. The Prarthana Samaj became the center of social reform in west-
ern India under the leadership of M. G. Ranade.[11] Believing revival
impossible, Ranade sought to preserve tradition through reform.
The Arya Samaj, founded in Bombay in 1875 by a Gujarati Brahmin,
Swami Dayananda, took a more aggressive and revivalist stance. The
Arya Samaj sought to lead India "back to Vedas," the earliest Hindu
scriptures, in an effort to recover and restore the Aryan past. Like
Roy and Ranade, Dayananda believed in one god and denounced
the evils of post-Vedic Hinduism—idolatry, child marriage, and the
restrictions of caste—but he also rejected Western knowledge, claim-
ing that the scientific truths of modern thought were all to be found in
the Vedas, if seen with enlightened eyes. The Arya Samaj reacted
strongly to the influences of Islam and Christianity, and its proselytic
fundamentalism contributed to the rise of enmity toward the Muslim
community, particularly in the Punjab and in the United Provinces,
where the society found its greatest success.[12]

The conflict between Hindus and Muslims, engendered by the
activities of the Arya Samaj, served only to underscore the alienation

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[10]See David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton,
NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[11]Richard Tucker, *Ranade and the Rise of Indian Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 1972).

[12]See Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1977). For a comprehensive discussion of important
movements, see Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

of the Muslim community in India. The collapse of Mughal rule brought confusion and doubt to the Muslims. The Muslim reaction to British rule was by no means uniform, but, clinging to traditions of the past and to memories of their former glory, many Muslims remained unresponsive to the changes around them. Because they regarded English as "the highway to infidelity," they failed to take advantage of English education and were soon displaced in the civil services by the rising Hindu middle class. As the resentment of the Muslim community turned suspicion and hostility upon them, the Muslim reformer and educator Sayyid Ahmed Khan sought to convince the British of Muslim loyalty and to bring the community into cooperation with British authorities. At the same time, he warned of the dangers of Hindu domination under democratic rule. Hindu rule would fall more heavily upon Muslims than the neutral authority of the British Raj.[13]

Growing Political Consciousness

The rise of the new Indian middle class and the movements for reform, while regionally based and accentuating divisions within Indian society, nevertheless served as a catalyst for the development of a national self-consciousness. Upon Bengali and Marathi regionalism, the new class grafted an all–India nationalism. "Mother India had become a necessity and so she was created."[14] Obstacles to the growth of Indian nationalism were many and difficult to overcome—the divisions between British India and the various princely states, the divisions between the linguistic regions, and the divisions of religion and caste within the society. The new middle class transcended these divisions, in part, through its unity of mind and speech. Its members' knowledge of English, commitment to liberal values, and pride in Indian civilization were the foundation for a common all-India view. Reforms served to offer the promise of a better future, and increasingly opportunities were opening in the government services for educated Indians. At the same time, however, the British in India often acted without regard to Indian opinion. Indians were

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[13]For an analysis of the early growth of communalism in India, see Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) and Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[14]Spear, *History*, p. 166. See also Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 135–36.

virtually excluded from the higher offices of civil service, and the arrogant stance of imperialist responsibility cut deeply into Indian self-respect. That the behavior of the British in India contrasted so starkly with the values of English liberalism in which the Indian middle class had been steeped served to deepen their national consciousness.

In 1876 Surendranath Banerjea, who had been dismissed—on insufficient grounds—from the Indian Civil Service, founded the Indian Association of Calcutta, which provided the groundwork for an all-India movement for the redress of wrongs and the protection of rights. "Indianization" of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was a central issue. The ICS had become the "steel frame" of British administration, and membership carried prestige and status. The Charter Act of 1833, introducing a system of competitive examinations for the service, provided that no Indian "shall by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them be disabled from holding any office or employment under the Company." This was reaffirmed in the Queen's Proclamation and in the Indian Civil Service Act of 1861.

There was, however, an obvious reluctance to admit Indians. The examinations were held only in London, and the examination itself virtually required study in England. As an increasing number of Indians successfully surmounted these barriers, admission to the Indian Civil Service was rendered more difficult when, in 1878, the maximum age for application was reduced from 22 to 19.[15] The occasion served as an opportunity for Banerjea to organize a national protest. "The underlying conception, and the true aim and purpose of the Civil Service Agitation," he wrote, "was the awakening of a spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of India." The agitation demonstrated that "whatever might be our differences in respect of race and language, or social and religious institutions, the people of India could combine and unite for the attainment of their common political ends."

It was the Ilbert bill, however, which provided the catalyst for the final development of an all-India organization. The bill, introduced in 1883, was intended to remove distinctions between Indian and European judges, thus revoking the exemption of the English in India from trial by

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[15]The Indianization of the ICS was negligible in the early years. In 1913, 80 years after the Charter Act, the proportion of Indians in the services was only five percent. By 1921 it was 13 percent, but by the time of independence, 48 percent were Indian. Naresh Chandra Roy, *The Civil Service in India* (Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay, 1958), p. 154. See also B. B. Misra, *The Bureaucracy in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

native judges. The nonofficial English community in Calcutta exploded in an outburst of racial feeling. They formed a defense association and collected funds to support their agitation against the legislation.[16] The furor led the government to withdraw the bill. The success of the agitation against the bill left the new Indian middle class with a sense of humiliation, but the effectiveness of organization as a political instrument had been impressed upon them.

The Creation of the Congress

In response, Banerjea founded the Indian National Conference in 1883. In that same year a retired English civil servant, A. O. Hume, addressed an open letter to the graduates of Calcutta University, urging the organization of an association for the political regeneration of India—which, as he later said, might form "the germ of a Native Parliament." The first meeting of the Indian National Congress, attended by 72 delegates, was held in Bombay in 1885. Soon thereafter Banerjea merged his own association with the Congress.

The Congress movement passed through three stages of development from 1885 to 1947: the period of the Moderates (1885–1905), the period of the Extremists (1905–20), and the Gandhian era (1920–47). Each stage was marked by increasing differentiation and broadening of the Congress elite and by an ever more clearly articulated set of nationalist demands.

The Period of the Moderates: 1885–1905

The Indian liberals who dominated the Congress from 1885 to 1905 had an almost unlimited faith in British democracy.[17] "England is our political guide," Banerjea declared. "It is not severance that we look forward to—but unification, permanent embodiment as an integral part of that great Empire that has given the rest of the world the models of free institutions." Even Dadabhai Naoroji, who formulated the "drain theory" of India's exploitation by British economic imperialism, remained "loyal to the backbone" and was the first Indian elected to the British House of Commons.

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[16]See Metcalf, *The Aftermath*, p. 309.

[17]The first 20 years of the Congress and its relations with the larger Indian society are examined in John R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

The Congress affirmed its loyalty to the Queen, and—with the dignity and moderation of a debating society—it sought by resolutions made at its annual meetings to rouse the British conscience to certain inequities of British rule and to the justice of Indian claims for greater representation in the civil services and in the legislative councils at the Center and in the provinces.

In these early years the government regarded the Congress favorably as a "safety valve" for revolutionary discontent, but remained unresponsive to its polite resolutions and humble petitions. Indeed, Hume was led to remark that "the National Congress had endeavored to instruct the Government, but the Government had refused to be instructed." As Congress liberals sought to bring greater pressure on the Government, the Raj expressed its official disapproval of the policy and methods of the association. The Viceroy denounced the Congress as reflecting only the interests of the educated middle class, who constituted but a rootless "microscopic minority" that could hardly be taken as representative of Indian opinion. The British conceived themselves to be the servants of truly representative Indian interests. The "real" India was not to be found among the effete babus of the city, but in the timeless villages, citadels of rugged peasant virtue.[18]

With growing disillusionment, the Congress assumed a stance of constitutional opposition to the government, but such leaders as G. K. Gokhale retained faith in the "integrity and beneficence of that which was best in the British tradition."[19] Gokhale, friend and disciple of Ranade, was deeply committed to liberal reform and, toward that end, founded the Servants of India Society in 1905. In that same year, as its dominant leader, Gokhale was elected president of the Indian National Congress.

The Period of the Extremists: 1905–20

Within Congress ranks, however, a militant Extremist wing grew impatient with the gradualism of the Moderates. The demand for administrative reform was replaced by the call for *swaraj,* or self-rule. Extremist support was centered in the Punjab, Bengal, and Maharashtra, where the militants drew inspiration not from the ideals of English liberalism but from India's past. Reform appealed to the

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[18]See Hutchins, *Illusion*, pp. 156–57.

[19]Stanley Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962),
p. 299. Also see B. R. Nanda, *Gokhale: The Indian Moderates and the British Raj* (Princeton,
NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

cultivated intellects of the English-educated middle classes, but only the passion of revivalism could capture the imagination of the masses and provide the foundation for wider participation. Aurobindo Ghose in Bengal infused the movement with a "neo-Vedantic" mysticism, and in western India, Bal Gangadhar Tilak evoked the memory of Shivaji, founder of the Maratha kingdom, and of his struggle against the Muslim invaders. Tilak recalled the days of Maratha and Hindu glory and, not without concern among Muslims, sought to stir a revival of Hindu religious consciousness to serve his political ends. Tilak castigated the Moderates for what he regarded as their cultural capitulation to the West. Struggle, not reform, was the keynote of his message: "Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it." In examining the role of Tilak, "the Father of Indian Unrest," Stanley Wolpert writes,

> His dream was not an India made in its foreign master's image, but one restored to the glory of its own true self. The quicker the British left, the happier he and his land would be. There could be no salvation for India in the self-deception of constitutional cooperation. Better to rely on the yoga of boycott.[20]

In 1905 Bengal was divided into two provinces, with East Bengal comprising what is today Bangladesh. The partition gave impetus to the boycott of British goods and advanced the *swadeshi* movement for the use of indigenous products. The partition, designed solely with regard for administrative efficiency, completely ignored the renascent Bengali consciousness. A storm of protest, under the leadership of Surendranath Banerjea and such eminent Bengalis as Rabindranath Tagore, brought widespread popular opposition to the British Raj. A boycott offered the possibility of mass participation. The emotion vented in agitation was accompanied by terrorism and, in the name of the demonic Hindu goddess Kali, assassination.

The Bengal partition brought a new urgency to the aspirations of Indian nationalists, and at their meeting in 1906 the Congress resolved to support the demand for swaraj. Gokhale and the Moderates envisioned responsible government within the British Empire—a position wholly unacceptable to the Extremists. The following year, the Congress meeting at Surat broke up in an uproar as the Extremists walked out, leaving the Moderates in control of the organization. Tilak, now in a political wilderness, was drawn increasingly toward the advocacy

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[20]Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale*, p. 304.

of violence in "political warfare" against the British. The government enacted increasingly repressive measures to bring the wave of terrorism under control, and Tilak was arrested. Released after six years, he then pledged his support and loyalty to the Congress. It was Tilak, however—given the title *Lokamanya* or Honored by the People—who more than any of the early Congress leaders had sought to reach the masses, to transform the nationalist cause into a popular movement. The Moderate position within the Congress was strengthened by the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and the rescission of the Bengal partition. From shortly after the assumption of direct rule by the Crown there had been some degree of Indian representation in government, but as Morris-Jones argues, "whether or not the British Empire was won in a fit of absent-mindedness, such a mood seems to have had a good deal to do with the establishment of parliamentary institutions in India. . . ."[21] Under the Indian Councils Act of 1861, three Indians were appointed to the advisory Legislative Council at the Center as nonofficial members. Not until 1891, however, and then largely to placate the Congress, did the government increase the number of members in the Central and provincial legislative councils and concede the principle of election, at least indirectly. The Morley-Minto Reforms, drafted in consultation with Gokhale and other Indian leaders, expanded the legislative councils, thereby increasing Indian representation; introduced direct election of nonofficials under limited property franchise; and in the provinces provided for nonofficial majorities. Recommendations of the councils, however, could be disallowed at the discretion of the Viceroy or of the provincial governor; thus, the councils were to a degree representative, but not responsible. In fact, Morley declared that "if it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system, I, for one, would have nothing to do with it."

The reforms provided limited institutional access to the new Indian middle class and sought to accommodate a range of moderate demands for representation. The Congress carried little weight, however, in the face of the highly institutionalized structures of the British Raj. The repressive powers of the bureaucracy and the army could at any time be used against the few politically active Indians. The Congress had not yet gained the political capital of widespread popular support, in the form of mass participation, that would allow it to challenge the British presence seriously. The Moderates were ready to

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[21]W. H. Morris-Jones, *Parliament in India* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957), p. 73.

work within the framework of imperial rule, making limited, though increasing, demands for greater access; the Extremists, lacking broad support and harassed by the government, had been driven underground. The British lack of more genuine responsiveness to even the limited aspirations of Indian leaders and their readiness to use the power of repressive order to suppress opposition served, however, to awaken the political consciousness of the growing middle class.

The Morley-Minto Reforms, by their acceptance of Muslim demands for separate electorates, introduced the principle of communal representation. In presenting their case before the government, the Muslim notables argued that without separate electorates the Muslim community would be submerged in the Hindu majority, which was becoming increasingly participant and vocal in its demands for representation.

To advance their position, these notables organized the Muslim League in 1906 at Dacca. The League was the first real attempt by Indian Muslims to utilize an organization to secure a more favorable position. Its membership was middle class and concerned primarily with more jobs, better educational opportunities, and higher social and economic status. More a clique than a movement, it nevertheless reflected the awakening of Muslim political consciousness.[22]

The award of communal representation to the Muslims was attacked by Congress nationalists as an attempt to weaken national unity with the strategy of divide and rule. The British had found in the Muslim community a useful counterpoise to the growing force of the Congress. Within the League, however, the position of the loyalist Muslims was soon challenged by the Young Muhammadans, who sought political confrontation, rather than accommodation, with the Raj. By 1916 the Congress seemed prepared to accept separate electorates in exchange for the support of the Muslims, who had been roused to anti-British feeling because of the war between Great Britain and Turkey. The Lucknow Pact, concluded in that year at a joint session of the Congress and the Muslim League, called for the achievement of self-government.

The Lucknow Congress, held a year after Gokhale's death, marked the reemergence of Tilak as the Congress leader. In that same year, Tilak founded the Home Rule League, and he was followed soon after by the English theosophist Annie Besant, who

[22]Wayne A. Wilcox, *Pakistan: The Consolidation of a Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 20. See also Khalid B. Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase*, 1857–1948, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

organized a Home Rule League in Madras. In alliance, Tilak and Besant reasserted the Extremist faction within the Congress, and in 1917, while interned by the British government, Besant was elected president of the Indian National Congress. Moderate leaders soon withdrew to found the Indian Liberal Federation.

The Morley-Minto Reforms, while gradually moving India closer to responsible government, did not fulfill the rising expectations of Indian nationalists. India's involvement in the First World War had brought a commitment of loyalty that soon turned to frustration and a diminished awe of imperial power, as the British called for sacrifice in exchange for vague promises of reform "after the war." Indian agitation for change was strengthened by Woodrow Wilson's declaration of the right of all nations to self-determination. As the demands for swaraj intensified with the home rule movement, Edwin Montagu, who had succeeded Morley as Secretary of State for India, announced in 1917 the government policy "of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

The first step toward implementing this policy was the enactment of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1919. Under the Act, authority was decentralized, with a division of functions between the Center and the provincial governments. At the Center there was little substantive change. Bicameralism was introduced, with an elected nonofficial majority in the lower house, but the Governor General, responsible to London, retained the overriding powers of certification and veto. In the provinces, however, the reforms introduced *dyarchy* (dual government), under which the governor retained authority over certain "reserved" subjects—largely in the areas of revenue and law and order—while "transferred" subjects such as local self-government, education, health, public works, agriculture, and industry came under the control of ministers responsible to popularly elected legislatures. Council memberships were enlarged, and the principle of communal representation was extended both at the Center and in the provinces.

For many Congress leaders the reforms were just a sop. This seemed to be confirmed by the enactment of the Rowlatt Bills in 1919, extending the emergency powers assumed during the war to permit imprisonment without trial in political cases. In protest against the repressive "black bills," demonstrations and strikes were held throughout the country. Feelings were most intense in those more

politically self-conscious regions where revivalism, and later Extremism, had gained a foothold among the masses. In the Punjab, where the situation was particularly tense, the arrest of two Congress leaders sparked a riot. Martial law was proclaimed and a ban on all public meetings was imposed. Defying the ban, an estimated 20,000 people gathered at the central park of Amritsar, Jallianwalla Bagh. Under the command of General Dyer, 150 troops suddenly appeared at the entrance and ordered the crowd to disperse. With the military blocking the only entrance, Dyer then gave the order to fire point-blank into the unarmed masses. When the ammunition was exhausted, 379 Indians were dead and some 1200 more wounded. Dyer intended the massacre "to teach the natives a lesson."

At the end of the year the Indian National Congress met at Amritsar in a mood of outrage and shock. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were denounced as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing," but Tilak, who was to live less than a year, had mellowed, and he urged a policy of "responsive cooperation" with the government. Indian restraint, however, was pushed beyond the limit of its endurance when in 1920 the House of Lords gave a vote of appreciation to General Dyer for his services. Mohandas Gandhi, the new Congress leader, proclaimed that "cooperation in any shape or form with this satanic government is sinful."

The Gandhian Era: 1920–47

Gandhi was born into a Gujarati Vaishya family in Kathiawar, where his father was the *diwan,* or head minister, of a petty princely state. After completing university studies in Bombay, Gandhi read for the bar at the Inner Temple in London. After two years, still very much an Indian, he returned to India for legal practice. But the young barrister was soon invited to South Africa to plead the case of the Indian community against discriminatory legislation. He planned to stay one year; he remained for twenty.

In South Africa, with the Gita as his "infallible guide of conduct," he began his experiments with *satyagraha,* or nonviolent resistance, which he translated as "soul force."[23] It was satyagraha that was "to

[23]Mohandas Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927), p. 195. See also Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

revolutionize Indian politics and to galvanize millions into action against the British Raj."[24] Already known for his South African victory, Gandhi was greeted with the title *Mahatma,* or Great Soul, upon his return to India in 1915. For the next three years, however, he remained a silent observer of the political scene, taking the advice of his political mentor Gokhale to keep "his ears open and his mouth shut" for a time.

During this period Gandhi became increasingly sensitive to the gap between the predominantly urban middle-class Congress and the Indian masses, and shifted his attentions to the villages and the peasants. In 1918, while introducing satyagraha in India, Gandhi courted arrest in support of the indigo plantation workers of Bihar. A year later, when the repressive Rowlatt Bills were introduced, Gandhi organized the Satyagraha Society, pledging to disobey the unjust law as a symbol of passive resistance. To mobilize mass support he called for a day of fasting and *hartal,* or general strike, in protest against the legislation.[25] The violence that marred the demonstrations led Gandhi to regard satyagraha as premature, a "Himalayan miscalculation." For others, however, it marked the turning point of the struggle for swaraj.

Gandhi regarded his participation in the 1919 Amritsar meeting as his "real entrance" into Congress politics. Thereafter, he became its guiding force. In seeking to mobilize mass resistance to the government, Gandhi gained Muslim support through his appeal on the emotionally charged Khilafat issue by denouncing the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the deposition of the Caliph, the religious head of all Muslims.[26] The noncooperation movement was launched with the call for a boycott of the impending elections and the law courts, and for withdrawal from all government schools and colleges. Middle-class Indians, institutionally co-opted by the British Raj, were now drawn into new patterns of political participation. Congress members were asked to resign from government office and to renounce all titles. More than 30,000 Congressmen, including Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal, courted arrest in defiance of "lawless

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[24]Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 59.

[25]Explaining this political tactic in the cultural context of India, Spear notes, "In theory, the soul is too shocked by some abuse to be able to attend to practical affairs for a time." Spear, *History,* p. 191.

[26]See Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

laws" and gained honor through imprisonment. The civil disobedience was accompanied by the outbreak of sporadic strikes, by the rebellion of Muslims in Malabar on the southwestern coast, by no-tax campaigns, and, on the visit of the Prince of Wales, by a nationwide hartal. In February 1922, to the dismay of Congress leaders, Gandhi abruptly called an end to the movement, as he had done before, when mob violence in a small town in Uttar Pradesh left 22 policemen dead. Gandhi declared that he would not purchase independence at the price of bloodshed. Within days he was arrested and tried for sedition.

During the two years that Gandhi was imprisoned, Hindu–Muslim unity was broken by the outbreak of communal rioting. Upon his release in 1924, Gandhi began a 21-day fast for Hindu–Muslim solidarity but to no avail. Thereafter, the Muslim League, claiming to represent the Muslim community, took an increasingly separate path from that of the Congress. The breach seemed irrevocable when the Congress refused in 1928 to accept separate communal electorates as part of the proposed constitutional change.[27]

Within the Congress the solidarity forged during the noncooperation movement gave way to division on the issue of council entry. The legislative councils, boycotted by the Congress, were growing in importance and prestige under the provincial non-Congress ministries. While Gandhi was still in prison C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru led the Congress in the formation of the Swaraja Party to contest the next council elections with the purpose of destroying the reforms from within by "uniform, consistent and continuous obstruction." The very entry of the Congress into the councils, however, increased their prestige and made them all the more difficult to subvert. Many Swarajists were led increasingly to favor a position of "responsive cooperation" with the government for the achievement of swaraj. The Gandhians, or "no-changers," opposed the Swarajist strategy and, temporarily losing their dominance in the Congress, retired to engage in "constructive work." From his *ashram,* a retreat near Ahmedabad, Gandhi worked for the uplift of the untouchables, whom he called *harijans,* or "children of God," and with his own hands performed their "defiling" tasks. While the Swarajists debated in the councils, Gandhi led his swadeshi campaign for the use of *khadi,* a homespun cloth. Clothed simply in a loincloth and shawl, he would spin for a half hour or more each day and

[27]See Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*, 1885–1930 (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991).

urged all Congressmen to do likewise. The spinning wheel, emblazoned in the center of the Congress flag, became the symbol of the society Gandhi sought to achieve—a peasant society, self-governing and self-sufficient. Purity of the soul was requisite to the attainment of swaraj; only through self-discipline could India prepare itself and make itself worthy of freedom.

In accordance with the provision of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms requiring a parliamentary review after 10 years, the Simon Commission was appointed to recommend constitutional changes. The Congress regarded the commission's all-British membership as not in accord with the principle of self-determination and resolved to boycott its proceedings. In 1928 the Congress, Muslim League, and Liberal Federation came together in an All-Parties Convention to frame a constitution for an independent India. The report, drafted by Motilal Nehru, called for responsible government and dominion status. The young radicals Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose opposed the recommendation for dominion status. With the intervention of Gandhi, the Congress agreed to accept the Nehru Report, but only if the proposed constitution was accepted in its entirety by Parliament before the end of 1929. Failing this, the Congress would launch nonviolent noncooperation in pursuit of independence.

The Governor General, Lord Irwin, announced that "the natural issue of India's Constitutional progress . . . is the attainment of Dominion status," and that toward that end a round table conference would be held in London to discuss the recommendations of the Simon Commission. In accordance with its pledge, the Congress met in December 1929 at Lahore and declared complete independence as its goal. It was resolved to boycott the legislative councils and the Round Table Conference and, under the direction of Gandhi, to begin a program of civil disobedience and nonpayment of taxes. At Lahore, the elder Nehru, with little more than a year to live, passed the chair of the Congress presidency to his son. On December 29, Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the national flag of India.

The Civil Disobedience Campaign[28] In launching the campaign of civil disobedience, Gandhi announced his intention to violate the salt tax, a burden on even the poorest peasant and a source of

[28]See Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928–34* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

bitter resentment against the Raj. He would march from his ashram to the sea, a distance of 241 miles, and there, by taking salt from the sea, would disobey the law. The dramatic march lasted 24 days, and with this act of defiance, mass demonstrations, hartals, and civil disobedience began throughout India. The government quickly responded with repressive measures. More than 100 people were killed in police firings, and indiscriminate beatings of men and women were widespread. In less than a year some 60,000 people were imprisoned.

During the Congress campaign, non-Congress representatives attended the Round Table Conference, but the Viceroy realized that any decisions would be hollow without Congress participation. In 1931 he released Gandhi and began a series of conversations that concluded in the Gandhi–Irwin pact. The government agreed to withdraw its repressive measures and to release all political prisoners except those guilty of violence. Gandhi called off the civil disobedience campaign and agreed to attend the next round table conference as a representative of the Congress. The London conference deadlocked on the question of communal electorates, and Gandhi returned "empty-handed" to India. With the renewal of government repression, the Congress reopened the civil disobedience campaign and called for the boycott of British goods. By March 1933 more than 120,000 people had been imprisoned.

At this inopportune moment, the government announced its constitutional proposals, which included a provision for separate electorates for the untouchables. Believing the untouchables to be an integral part of the Hindu community, Gandhi, in jail for civil disobedience, vowed to "fast unto death" against the provision. Gandhi began the fast despite the pleas of all. On the fifth day, as Gandhi's life was believed to hang in the balance, Dr. Ambedkar, leader of the untouchables, gave way and agreed to abandon separate communal electorates, but, to safeguard the interests of the untouchables, he demanded that a number of seats be reserved for them within the allotment of seats to the Hindu community.

The fast, while stirring concern for the untouchables, diverted attention from the issue of independence and brought the collapse of the civil disobedience campaign. Radicals within the Congress declared that Gandhi had failed as a political leader and called for a new leadership. In the radical view, the nationalist movement under Gandhi had become what was later described as "a peculiar blend of

bold advances followed by sudden and capricious halts, challenges succeeded by unwarranted compromises . . . ."[29]

British Accommodation: The Government of India Act of 1935   The British sought to respond to widening political participation and increasingly vocal demands with the Government of India Act of 1935, which adapted the high levels of institutional capability to a changing environment. Abandoning its policy of repression, the government sought to buy stability through accommodation; stability was the *raison d'état*. The Act abolished dyarchy and provided for provincial autonomy with responsible government, accountable to a greatly expanded electorate. The franchise continued to carry a property qualification, but by the Act the electorate was expanded from 6 million to 30 million, one-sixth of the adult population. The federal arrangement—never actually brought into operation—provided for the integration of princely states with British India. The all-India federation, which provided the model for the federal structure of independent India, was to consist of governor's provinces, chief commissioner's provinces, and those acceding princely states. Legislative power was divided according to detailed lists, distinguishing Central, provincial, and concurrent jurisdiction. Representation in the federal legislature was heavily weighted in favor of the princes, giving a conservative cast to the Central government. At the Center, a dyarchical arrangement was introduced by which the Governor General, responsible only to the British Parliament, was invested with a number of discretionary powers and enjoyed "reserved power" over such departments as defense and external affairs. A. B. Keith, in his study of the constitutional history of India, argues that these provisions rendered "the alleged concession of responsibility all but meaningless."[30] Nehru termed the reform act a "slave" constitution, yet many features of the 1935 Act were later incorporated into the Constitution of the Republic of India.

In a very real sense the provincial autonomy granted under the Act was a substantive move toward meeting Congress demands for swaraj. Once again, as in 1922, the Congress resolved to work within the new reforms, and in 1937 it swept the provincial elections for Hindu seats and formed ministries in seven of the eleven provinces.

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[29] A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1959), pp. 343–44.

[30] A. B. Keith, *A Constitutional History of India: 1600–1935*, a reprint of the 2nd, 1926 edition (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969), p. 474.

The Muslim League fared poorly among the Muslim electorate and failed to secure majorities in any of the four predominantly Muslim provinces. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Westernized leader of the League, offered to form coalition ministries with the Congress in each province, but the Congress refused to recognize the League as representative of India's 90 million Muslims. "There are," Nehru remarked, "only two forces in India today, British imperialism and Indian nationalism as represented by the Congress." History, however, bore out Jinnah's response: "No, there is a third party, the Mussulmans." The Congress was to pay dearly for its imperious attitude: "The opening shots had been fired in the calamitous Congress-League war which was to envelop north India in flames and ultimately result in partition."[31] In 1940, Jinnah declared that the Hindus and Muslims formed two separate nations. The Muslim League now adopted as its goal the creation of a separate and independent Islamic state, Pakistan.

During the Congress term of office, the ministries demonstrated considerable administrative ability and produced a distinguished record of achievements in social reform.[32] Inevitably, with their assumption of office, questions arose as to the relationship between the ministries and the party. Participation in provincial government was only one aspect of the Congress struggle, and Nehru emphasized that the primary responsibility of the ministries was to the Congress high command from whom they would take their directive. The high command itself was by no means united. In 1939, however, with the resignation of Bose after his confrontation with Gandhi, the two main factions—the old guard (led by Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) and the socialists (led by Nehru)—united behind Gandhi's leadership.

Bose formed a new party, the Forward Bloc and, in 1941, appeared in Germany and later in Japan to secure support for the Government of Free India, which he proclaimed in Japanese-occupied Singapore. There Bose, now called *Netaji,* or Leader, organized the Indian National Army.[33]

Renewed Demands for Independence   The tide of war imposed a new strain on the nationalist cause. In 1939 the Viceroy proclaimed

[31]Brecher, *Nehru*, p. 231.

[32]For a discussion of the Congress ministries, see Reginald Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944).

[33]See Leonard A. Gordon, *Brothers against the Raj: A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

India's involvement in the war without consulting Indian leaders. The Congress condemned fascist aggression but declared that India could not associate itself with the war effort unless it was given immediate independence and equality as a free nation. When this demand was ignored, the Congress directed the provincial ministries to resign in protest. In August 1940, Congress again offered complete cooperation in the war in exchange for at least a provisional national government. The Viceroy made vague allusions to independence "after the war," but went on to promise the Muslims and other minorities that Britain would not accept any constitutional modification to which they were opposed.

The Muslim League refused to cooperate with the Congress, and after the resignation of the Congress ministries, it proclaimed a "Day of Deliverance" from the "tyranny, oppression and injustice" of Congress rule. The departure of the Congress from provincial government at that critical time left the League in an advantageous position, one that by the end of the war would be virtually irresistible.

With the failure of the Congress offer, Gandhi again assumed leadership and opened a campaign of individual civil disobedience designed to symbolize Congress protest without disrupting the British war effort. Congress moderation was met by severe government reaction. In 1942, however, as the Japanese advanced through Burma, Sir Stafford Cripps, on mission from London, promised the establishment of a constituent assembly and full dominion status after the war. Nehru and perhaps the majority of the Congress high command were responsive to the offer, but Gandhi, firmly opposed, held the balance. Nehru held out until the last, but finally submitted to Gandhi's persuasion. In August 1942, Gandhi demanded that Great Britain "quit India" or confront mass civil disobedience. The government declared Congress illegal, and within hours Gandhi and the Congress leadership were taken into custody. They spent the rest of the war in prison. (C. Rajagopalachari, unable to support the resolution, resigned from the Congress.) The arrests detonated a political explosion. Violence erupted throughout India, and, by the end of the year, about 100,000 people had been arrested and more than 1000 killed in police firings.

The Quit India movement represented the apogee of the independence struggle in terms of mass involvement, but in a nation of nearly 400 million people the relative numbers of participants must have been small indeed. The various noncooperation movements beginning in the 1920s under Gandhi fundamentally changed the character of the Congress, transforming it from an urban middle-class

coterie into a movement with an extensive social base reaching into the villages. If by 1942 Congress had enlisted 4 to 5 million members and widespread support, many other millions, for various reasons of self-interest, remained loyal to British rule, and even greater numbers remained uninvolved or wholly unaware of the dramatic events tran-spiring around them. The nationalist movement, even in penetrating the villages, had limited impact. Those who were mobilized in the rural areas were far more likely to be the fairly prosperous peasants than the landless laborers. The mobilization of the still largely inert Indian masses to political consciousness and participation would remain the developmental task of India's leaders in the years after independence.

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SWARAJ

With the release of Gandhi in 1944, negotiations began again, as the Governor General proposed the formation of a national government. Discussions broke down when the Congress refused to recognize the League as the sole representative of the Muslim community. The war years had consolidated Jinnah's strength in the Muslim areas, however, and in the elections held at the beginning of 1946, the League swept the Muslim seats, as did the Congress with the general seats. "The two-nations theory of Mr. Jinnah had found political expression."[34]

Prime Minister Attlee now announced the appointment of a Cab-inet Mission to India "to promote, in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion, the early realization of full self-government in India." Confronted with the widening gap between the Congress and the League, the Mission sought to preserve a united India and to allay Muslim fears of Hindu domination through the proposal of a loose federation. Although dissatisfied, both sides accepted the plan, but the Congress rejected the proposals for an interim government, again over the issue of allotment of seats—the Congress, representing all India, was unwilling to accord the Muslim League its claim to rep-resent all Muslims and therefore to have the right to fill all seats reserved for Muslims in the Cabinet. The Congress announced that it would, nevertheless, participate in the Constituent Assembly to

[34]Spear, *History*, p. 231. See also Ayesha Jalal, *Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For a biography, see Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

frame the constitution. Jinnah countered by declaring a day of "direct action," unleashing a wave of communal rioting.

In September 1946, Nehru took office as *de facto* Prime Minister of the interim government. Fearing isolation, Jinnah brought the League into the government, but only to demonstrate that the Hindu and Muslim communities could not work in harmony and that the formation of Pakistan was the only solution. The obstructionist stance of the League brought negotiations to an impasse. At this point, on February 20, 1947, the British government declared that it intended to quit India no later than June 1948 and that Lord Mountbatten had been appointed Viceroy to arrange for the transfer of power to Indian hands—however prepared they might be to accept it.

Communal rioting again broke out, and the Punjab approached civil war. Gandhi was prepared to see the whole of India burn rather than concede Pakistan. Congress power, however, lay with Nehru and the more traditional Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,[35] both of whom by this time had come to accept the inevitability of partition. With their agreement, Mountbatten laid out the plan for the transfer of power. The predominantly Muslim provinces would be allowed to form a separate Islamic state and to draw up their own constitution. Bengal and the Punjab, where the two communities were almost equal in numbers, would be divided as defined by a boundary commission. In the Northwest Frontier Province, where a pro-Congress Muslim government had a precarious majority, a referendum would be held. The princely states, released from British paramountcy, would be given the freedom to accede to either India or Pakistan—or, presumably, to declare their independence. Moving with incredible speed, Mountbatten, who was to stay on as the first Governor General of the new India, moved up the calendar of British withdrawal. On August 15, 1947, India became an independent nation. "Long years ago," Nehru declared, "we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge. . . ."

The Partition and Gandhi's Assassination

The achievement of swaraj was dimmed by the tragedy of partition and the assassination of Mohandas Gandhi. The partition, in dividing Hindus and Muslims, had shattered Gandhi's dream of a free and

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[35]For a definitive biography, see Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel: A Life* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1990).

united India, but the territorial division left millions of each community on both sides of the border. In the Punjab the boundary award, as anticipated, divided the cohesive and militant Sikh community almost equally between the two states. Here, in mounting hysteria, violence, and atrocity, Muslims fell upon Sikhs and Hindus in the West, and Sikhs and Hindus upon Muslims in the East. Before the end of the year half a million people had been killed. In the movement of refugees, 4 million Hindus and Sikhs left West Pakistan for India, and 6 million Muslims moved in the other direction. Rioting broke out in Bengal, but massacre was avoided, in part because of a Bengali consciousness that transcended religious division, but also because of the presence of Gandhi in Calcutta, "a one man boundary force." The costs of human suffering were, nevertheless, enormous: More than 1 million persons crossed the Bengali border from East Pakistan into India, leaving behind most of their possessions and bringing with them a bitterness that was to infect the communal life of Calcutta for years to come.

The Punjab was brought under control, but as hundreds of thousands of refugees poured into Delhi, the Muslims, who either had chosen to remain or else could not leave, now faced a bloodbath of revenge. Gandhi sought to reconcile the two communities by his presence, to protect the Muslims and urge them to stay, and to calm the troubled city. On January 13, 1948, Gandhi began a fast, to death if necessary, to stir "the conscience of all"—Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh. The fast, which lasted five days and brought the Mahatma near death, ended only with the Indian government's agreement to release Pakistan's share of the assets of British India and with the agreement by representatives of all communities, led by Nehru, Prasad, and Azad, to "protect the life, property, and faith" of the Muslims.

Some within the Congress, such as Sardar Patel, did not approve of Gandhi's intervention on behalf of the Muslims. Others, the Hindu militants of the Mahasabha party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), openly denounced Gandhi for allegedly helping the Muslims against the Hindus. A bomb attempt was made on Gandhi's life, and then on January 30, 12 days after he had broken his fast, as he proceeded to his prayer meeting on the lawn of the palatial Birla House, Gandhi was shot by a young Hindu fanatic who had once belonged to the RSS. That evening, Nehru announced to the world, "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. . . ."

Gandhi had served to mobilize widespread support for the Congress struggle for independence, and if he did not hasten its arrival,

he nevertheless imbued the movement with moral concern and stirred the conscience of the world. By making the Congress a more representative organization, Gandhi fundamentally changed the character of the nationalist struggle for independence. He broadened the base of the party in his appeal to the masses, but at the same time served to "Indianize" the middle class. His vision of society, however, had turned him from the path of the modernists and their commitment to industrialization and Western parliamentary government, and with independence, he urged Congressmen to leave politics for "constructive work." Gandhi argued that the Congress "as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine [had] outlived its use" and that "it must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties." Gandhi's death, mourned by all, brought a national reaction against the Mahasabha and Hindu extremism. It also served to free Nehru from the constraints of Gandhi's vision—but Gandhism had entered the political culture, more a charismatic memory than a revolutionary force, espoused by every shade of opinion and utilized for every purpose.

Formation of the Indian Union

In the wake of partition and Gandhi's death, India faced the problems of consolidation, the integration of the princely states, and the framing of a constitution. Approximately two-fifths of the area under the Raj had been made up of these 562 principalities, ranging in size from a few square miles to an area as large as Hyderabad, with 17 million people. With persuasion and pressure, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel succeeded by Independence Day, August 15, 1947, in securing the accession of all states with the exception of three—Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Junagadh was a tiny state in Kathiawar with a Hindu population and a Muslim ruler, surrounded by Indian territory. When the state acceded to Pakistan, it was occupied by Indian troops, and after a plebiscite, Junagadh joined the Indian Union. Hyderabad, with a Muslim ruler, the Nizam, and a Hindu majority, presented a similar but more complicated situation. The largest of the princely states, Hyderabad, though landlocked in the heart of India, sought independence as a sovereign state and entered a one-year standstill agreement with India while negotiations proceeded. With increasing disorder in Hyderabad and the rising influence of paramilitary Muslim extremists, the Indian government moved troops into the state in a "police action" to restore law and order. Hyderabad then acceded to the Indian Union.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir, contiguous to both India and Pakistan and acceding to neither, had a Hindu ruler and a predominantly Muslim population. The Muslims were centered in the central valley, the Vale of Kashmir, with the Hindu minority concentrated in the region of Jammu to the south. As invading Pathan tribesmen from Pakistan pushed toward the capital of Srinagar, the Maharaja called upon India for military assistance. India, on the recommendation of Mountbatten, refused to send troops unless Kashmir agreed to accede formally to India. At the time of the accession, India announced its intention, once peace was restored, to hold a referendum on the choice of India or Pakistan. Because of armed conflict between the two states over Kashmir in 1948 and the subsequent demarcation of a United Nations cease-fire line, the plebiscite was never held. Since then India, over the protest of Pakistan, has come to regard Kashmir as an integral part of its own territory, arguing that Kashmir legally acceded to India and that the large Muslim population of Kashmir serves as a force for secularity in India and as a protection for the millions of Muslims left in Indian territory after partition.

Once the princely states had acceded to India, the process of integration began. Smaller states were merged with the neighboring provinces. Others were consolidated as centrally administered areas. States of another class, because of their affinity, were consolidated as new federal units; these included Rajasthan, Saurashtra, and Travancore-Cochin. Mysore, Hyderabad, and, in a separate class, the state of Jammu and Kashmir retained their integrity as separate states of the Indian Union. Each new unit developed from the former princely states was to have as its head a *rajpramukh,* elected by the Council of Rulers, which was made up of the former princes. Some princes, such as the Maharaja of Mysore, distinguished themselves in government service, and others entered political life, but most of them, provided for a time with special privileges and privy purse allowances, became relics of the past in a democratic state.[36]

The man who guided the integration of states never captured the imagination of the Indian people or the attention of the world, as did

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[36]Bejeweled maharajahs will always be a part of the romantic image of India, but they were an expensive anachronism in modern India. In 1971, after a long legal battle, the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution abolished purse and privilege. The princes were no more. See D. R. Manikekar, *Accession to Extinction: The Story of Indian Princes* (Delhi: Vikas, 1974). The broader historical context is examined in Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire: Dissolution of a Patron-Client System* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978), and Robin Jeffrey, ed., *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978).

both Gandhi and Nehru, but for the period of transition, 1947 to 1950, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel shared power with Nehru in an uneasy alliance that Brecher has termed the "duumvirate."[37] Temperamentally and ideologically the two men could hardly have been more unalike. Nehru, reflective and sometimes considered indecisive, was a man of international vision, a committed socialist, secular in approach, of aristocratic Brahmin background and European manner. Patel, of Gujarati peasant stock, plebeian and orthodox, "was a man of iron will, clear about his objectives and resolute in his actions."[38] He was the realist, the machine politician, the defender of capitalism, of Hindu primacy, and of traditionalism. In the duumvirate, created by Gandhi to hold the Congress together and sustained by his memory, Patel, the Deputy Prime Minster, held the critical domestic portfolios, which along with the party organization gave him effective control over domestic affairs. Nehru was responsible for foreign affairs. "In the broadest sense they were equals, with one striking difference. Patel controlled a greater aggregate of power in the short-run, through the party and the key ministries of government, but Nehru commanded the country at large."[39] With the death of Patel in 1950, Nehru assumed full leadership within the Congress, the government, and the nation.

One of the most important achievements of this period of transition was the Constitution. This document, the symbol of India's new freedom, embodied the basic principles for which the Congress had long struggled and provided the institutional framework for the political life of modern India. Ahead of India's leaders lay the tasks of political development: creating and sustaining an institutional structure designed not simply to maintain order, but to stimulate expanded participation, to provide access to increased demands, to secure social justice for all, and to effect a fundamental transformation of society.

RECOMMENDED READING

*Bayly, Christopher A., *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. In the superb New Cambridge History of India series, this rich volume covers the period 1700 to 1858.

[37]See Brecher, *Nehru*, pp. 389–425.

[38]Ibid., p. 392.

[39]Ibid., p. 400.

*Bose, Sugata, and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asian History: History, Culture and Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 1998. A synthesis of the modern history of the subcontinent engaging in recent interpretive debates.

*Brecher, Michael, *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959. Completed before Nehru's death, the book brilliantly utilizes the leader's life as the thread that weaves together the dramatic events of the nationalist movement and the first critical years of independence.

*Brown, Judith M., *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. Widely acclaimed as the best of the many biographies of Gandhi.

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*Gandhi, Mohandas, *An Autobiography, or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927. Although dealing only with his early life, the autobiography is a deeply revealing portrait of this highly complex and charismatic leader.

Gopal, Sarvepalli, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, vol. 1, 1976; vol. 2, 1979; vol. 3, 1984. The official biography by a distinguished Indian historian.

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*Hasan, Mushirul, ed., *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. A wide-ranging collection of essays, memoirs and literary works relating to partition.

Hodson, H. V., *The Great Divide*. London: Hutchinson, 1969. One of the best studies yet written of the events surrounding partition.

Jones, Kenneth W. *Socio-Religious Movements in British India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. A synthesis of religious revival and reform movements during colonial rule, many of which influenced the development of India's political life. New Cambridge History of India series.

Metcalf, Thomas R., *Ideologies of the Raj*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Examination of the ideological strategies used by the British to justify and legitimate their rule over India. New Cambridge History of India series.

*Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990 [1946]. Written during the time of his imprisonment, this history of India reveals Nehru's understanding of its heritage and his perspective on the nationalist struggle.

*Sarker, Sumit, *Modern India, 1885–1947*. London: Macmillan, 1983. A basic text reflecting an attempt to write Indian history from the bottom up.

Seal, Anil, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968. Examines the social roots of the Indian nationalist movement.

Subaltern Studies: Writing on South Asian History and Society, vols. 1–10. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1882–1999. Under various editors, examines the histories of the "voiceless" and oppressed, particularly questioning the historiography of "colonialist," "capitalist," and "national bourgeois" orientations.

Tomlinson, B. R., *The Economy of Modern India, 1860–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. A careful exposition of the historical evolution of the Indian economy under direct British rule and in the early years of independence. New Cambridge History of India series.

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3

The Framework: Institutions of Governance

WITH THE END OF COLONIAL RULE, LEADERS IN THE developing world were concerned with the consolidation of central control and the creation of a development program that would enhance their position, improve the welfare of their people, and increase the security of the state. Most believed that they could accomplish these objectives best by limiting rather than expanding popular participation. India was a major exception. Social pluralism, education in liberal democratic values, and the experience of the nationalist struggle shaped a leadership that favored the creation of a secular state and a parliamentary system of government based on adult suffrage.

The framework of the new system was determined by a Constituent Assembly that met for two-and-a-half years, from 1947 to 1950. During this transition period the new nation, with the unrelenting burden of mass poverty, faced a succession of crises—the violence and dislocation of partition, the assassination of Mohandas Gandhi, the integration of princely states, and the war with Pakistan. India's leaders were undaunted in their commitment to parliamentary democracy and deep in their resolve that it should be both centralized

and federal in character. The great challenges India faced demanded a strong Center; recognition and accommodation of Indian diversity required a federal structure. Against the backdrop of partition and in the face of the continuing pressures of regionalism, the nation's leaders were determined that India remain secular and united.

The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, is among the longest in the world, with 395 articles, 9 schedules, and, as of February 2006, has been amended 93 times. It continued the constitutional development that took place under the British, retaining the basic precepts of the Government of India Act of 1935 and taking from it approximately 250 articles, verbatim or with minor changes. The Constitution created a democratic republic with a parliamentary form of government. The key institutions of governance at the Center are the executive, composed of the President, the Council of Ministers (headed by the Prime Minister), and the bureaucracy; a bicameral legislature; and the Supreme Court at the peak of a national judicial system. In both theory and practice, power became concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister. Despite the advent of coalition politics in 1989, the Prime Minister continues to play the most prominent role in the Indian political system.

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The task of the Constituent Assembly was to draft a constitution that would provide a framework for democratic government and an institutional structure capable of both sustaining and accelerating change. It was to provide the instrument for stimulating increased participation and for securing the higher levels of institutionalization necessary to accommodate expanding demands.

Under the Cabinet Mission's provisions for the transfer of power, the Constituent Assembly was indirectly elected in 1946 by the provincial assemblies. Reflecting the Congress victories in the provincial elections the year before, the Congress commanded an overwhelming majority in the assembly, and Rajendra Prasad was elected president at its opening session. The boycott of the Assembly by the Muslim League clouded the first sessions, however, and anticipated the settlement that was to divide India and provide a separate constituent assembly for Pakistan.

When India gained independence, the Assembly, functioning under a modified Government of India Act of 1935, became the Provisional Parliament. Its fundamental task, however, remained that of framing the Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar chaired the drafting committee and steered the document through nearly a year of debate over its various provisions. Four leaders—Nehru, Patel, Prasad, and the Congress Muslim leader, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad—through their commanding grip on the Congress Assembly Party and the Assembly's eight committees, constituted a virtual oligarchy within the Assembly. Issues were openly debated, but the influence of the Congress leaders was nearly irresistible.[1] Although they themselves were by no means always of one mind, they sought to promote consensus, and in the end the Constitution was adopted by acclamation. On January 26, 1950, Republic Day, the new Constitution went into effect.

The preamble of the Constitution embodies the substance of Nehru's Resolution on Aims and Objectives and reflects the aspirations of the nationalist movement.

> WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMO-CRATIC REPUBLIC[2] and to secure to all its citizens:
>
> JUSTICE, social, economic and political;
>
> LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
>
> EQUALITY of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all
>
> FRATERNITY, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation;
>
> IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY . . . DO HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE
>
> TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

The new India was to be a parliamentary democracy, federal, republican, and secular. There were some members of the Assembly who pushed for a Gandhian constitution, one that would provide for a decentralized state with the village panchayat as its nucleus. The vast majority, however, were committed from the beginning to a centralized parliamentary government. India had had a lengthy experience with representative institutions, and its leadership had

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[1]Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 22.

[2]The words SOCIALIST SECULAR were not in the preamble as originally enacted, but were added through the Forty-second Amendment in 1976.

been tutored in the liberal democratic tradition. The foremost task of the new government would be to restore order and unity to the nation. Only through the centralized authority of a modern state, they believed, could India achieve the stability requisite for economic progress. Only through democratic institutions could India begin to fulfill its aspirations for social revolution. The Assembly, "with an abundant faith in the common man and the ultimate success of democratic rule,"[3] sought to break down the parochialism of local loyalties through the provision for direct election by adult suffrage.

Changes in the structure of India's government—the establishment of the dyarchy in 1919 and of a federal system in 1935—brought about a devolution of authority, but power remained centralized. To achieve the goals of social change and to overcome the "fissiparous tendencies" of communalism, the pattern of centralized authority was retained in the new Constitution. The quest for unity was tempered, however, by demands to accommodate India's diversity. Provincial politicians, substantially represented in the Constituent Assembly, had had a taste of power and were, therefore, unlikely to yield to a purely unitary constitution. Moreover, there was a fundamental suspicion of the concentration of power that had enabled a handful of Englishmen to hold down a nation of 400 million people. Most critical was the problem of integrating the princely states under a single constitution. With these considerations, the assembly concluded, "The soundest framework for our constitution is a federation with a strong Centre."[4]

The assembly determined also that India would be a republic, free and independent of the British Crown. After the transfer of power in 1947, India had become a dominion in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The head of state was the Governor General, appointed by the King on advice of the Indian Prime Minister. Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy, was asked to remain as the first Governor General, and he was succeeded by C. Rajagopalachari, who served until the promulgation of the Constitution and the accession of Prasad to the Presidency. As India was to be a republic, the government sought to retain full membership in the Commonwealth

[3]Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar in the Constituent Assembly debates, quoted in Austin, *Indian Constitution,* p. 46.

[4]Second Report of the Union Power Committee, July 5, 1947, quoted in R. L. Watts, *New Federations: Experiments in the Commonwealth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 18.

without allegiance to the Crown. The formula was expressed in India's willingness to accept the King as the symbol of the free association of the member nations and as such the head of the Commonwealth. The first former British colony to request republic status within the Commonwealth, India served as the example to others seeking a continued relationship with Britain that was compatible with nationalist integrity.

The Constitution of India provides for a secular state. Nehru, the architect of Indian secularism, rejected the demand for a restoration of a Hindu Raj as he had previously rejected, but without success, the notion that India was two nations, one Hindu, one Muslim. The creation of a Hindu nation, Bharat, as demanded by the Hindu communalists, would have vindicated the Muslim League and recognized the legitimacy of Pakistan as an Islamic nation. It would, as well, have placed India's religious minorities, particularly the 40 million Muslims left after partition, in an unenviable, if not disastrous, position. Under the Constituent Assembly, communal tension had reached a peak, and war with Pakistan was imminent. Hindu nationalists, including Sardar Patel, demanded, on the one hand, retaliatory action against Indian Muslims for expulsion of Hindus from Pakistan and, on the other, a favored position for Hindus in India. The assembly did not succumb to fanaticism, however, and adopted instead impressive guarantees of religious freedom and equal protection of all faiths. The pressures of Hindu communalism, however, have not subsided. During the last two decades the principle of secularism itself has become increasingly contested as communalism continues to remain a potent force in Indian political life.

The formal institutions of government established by the Constitution provide a framework for political behavior. These institutions, often familiar in form, are frequently unfamiliar in operation. Traditional forms of behavior merge with the modern and adapt with resiliency to a changing environment. "Nothing in India is identifiable," E. M. Forster wrote in *A Passage to India;* "the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge in something else." If modern political institutions in India are often not what they appear, however, neither are they a mere facade to cloak a resurgent traditionalism. The structure of a political system is not simply passive and dependent. It not only responds to the environment, it also shapes the environment. In the process of development, the political system through its institutions will determine whether the nation has the capacity to meet the challenges of economic growth and social justice.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED IN THE CONSTITUTION

The Indian Constitution, as Granville Austin states, is "first and foremost a social document."[5] The core of its commitment to a fundamental change in the social order lies in the sections on Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy, "the conscience of the Constitution."[6]

The Fundamental Rights, embodied in Part III of the Constitution, guarantee to each citizen basic substantive and procedural protections against the state. These rights, which apply to both the Center and the states, fall into seven categories: (1) the right of equality, (2) the right to freedom, (3) the right against exploitation, (4) the right to freedom of religion, (5) cultural and educational rights, (6) the right to property, and (7) the right to constitutional remedies. The right of equality guarantees equal protection before the law. It provides for equal opportunities in public employment, abolishes untouchability, and prohibits discrimination in the use of public places on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. The rights of minorities are specifically protected in the provisions for freedom of religion and for the right of minorities to establish and administer their own educational institutions and to conserve a distinct language, script, and culture.

The Directive Principles of State Policy delineate the obligations of the state toward its citizens. Almost a platform of the Congress Party, the Directive Principles instruct the state "to promote the welfare of the people by securing and promoting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life."[7]

The precepts of the Directive Principles are not justiciable—that is, they are not enforceable by a court, as are the Fundamental Rights. They are designed, rather, to serve as a guide for the Union Parliament and the state assemblies in framing new legislation. Although T. T. Krishnamachari, later Union Finance Minister, dismissed them as "a

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[5]Austin, *Indian Constitution,* p. 50.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Constitution of India, Article 38.

veritable dustbin of sentiment,"[8] the Directive Principles incorporated into the Constitution the aspirations of a new nation and are, according to Article 37, "fundamental in the governance of the country." In evaluating the impact of the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, Austin doubts "if in any other constitution the expression of positive and negative rights has provided so much impetus towards changing and rebuilding society for the common good."[9]

THE PRESIDENT AND THE
VICE PRESIDENT

Under the Indian Constitution, executive power is formally vested in the President, the head of state and symbol of the nation. The President exercises these powers on the advice of the Council of Ministers, with the Prime Minister at its head. Although both in theory and practice power has remained concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister, the advent of hung parliaments and coalition politics since 1989 has enhanced the discretionary powers of the presidency.

The President serves a five-year term, may be reelected, and is subject to impeachment by Parliament for violation of the Constitution. The Constitution specifies a complicated procedure for electing the President that is designed to insure uniformity among the states as well as parity between the states as a whole and the Union. The electoral college is composed of all elected members of the legislative assemblies in the states and of Parliament. The value of the assembly votes is in proportion to the population of the states; the value of the parliamentary votes is equal to the total allotment for the assembly.[10]

Members indicate on their ballots their first and second preferences. If an absolute majority is not obtained by any candidate on the tabulation of first preferences, the second preferences indicated on the ballots of the candidate with the fewest number of votes are then transferred to the remaining candidates. The procedure is repeated until the sufficient majority is obtained. A candidate could conceivably win even with fewer first-preference votes than the major opponent.

Rajendra Prasad, who had presided over the Constituent Assembly, was elected by that body as the first President of the Republic. Under the provisions of the new Constitution, he was reelected in

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[8]Constituent Assembly debates, quoted in Austin, *Indian Constitution,* p. 75.

[9]Austin, *Indian Constitution,* p. 115.

[10]The procedure is specified in Articles 54 and 55 of the Constitution.

1952 and again in 1957. Prasad was succeeded by the distinguished Oxford philosopher, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan.

The 1967 presidential election was the first to be seriously contested, but the Congress candidate, Zakir Hussain, a Muslim, was returned by a substantial majority. In May 1969, President Hussain died, and the Vice President, V. V. Giri, took over as Acting President until elections could be held. The events that followed divided the Congress and underscored the potentially decisive position of the Indian President. The 1969 contest was between the official Congress candidate, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy; V. V. Giri, running as an independent with the silent support of the Prime Minister; and C. D. Deshmukh, candidate of the right–wing opposition parties. On the first count no candidate received a majority, but on the tabulation of the second preference votes, Giri exceeded the number of votes needed to win. For a list of presidents and vice presidents, see Table 3.1.

The drama of the 1969 election was not repeated in 1974. Congress candidate Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed won an easy victory over a single, weak opponent. In 1977, only a month before the parliamentary elections that ended 30 years of Congress rule, President Ahmed died. The Janata Party sought a consensus candidate and won the support of all parties, including the Congress, for Neelam Sanjiva Reddy. Reddy, a Janata leader from South India, had been the Congress nominee in 1969—only to lose the presidency when Indira Gandhi withdrew her support. Following Indira Gandhi's return to power, Reddy submitted his resignation, and the Congress candidate Zail Singh, a Sikh, was elected President in 1982.

Zail Singh's election, behavior, and performance in office made him the most controversial President of India since independence. Given his limited formal education, background, and stature, many felt that his sole qualification was his loyalty to Indira Gandhi and the Nehru dynasty. These suspicions were reinforced by the way the President handled the succession following Indira Gandhi's assassination. The transition may have been orderly, but it was handled more like a dynastic succession and coronation than a democratic selection process. There were no meetings of the Cabinet or Congress party committees as had been the case in past successions. Nor did Singh bother to appoint a caretaker Prime Minister. Instead Zail Singh immediately called upon Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi's son, to form a government.[11] The selection process, in the words of one

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[11]See *Economic and Political Weekly,* 3 November 1984, p. 1,857, and 24 November 1984, p. 1,970.

T A B L E 3.1 **Presidents and Vice Presidents of India**

Election	President	Vice President
1950	Rajendra Prasad	
1952	Rajendra Prasad	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
1957	Rajendra Prasad	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
1962	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan	Dr. Zakir Hussain
1967	Dr. Zakir Hussain (died 1969)	V. V. Giri
1969	V. V. Giri	G. S. Pathak
1974	Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed (died 1977)	B. D. Jatti
1977	Neelam Sanjiva Reddy	
1979		Mohammed Hidayatullah
1982	Zail Singh	
1984		R. Venkataraman
1987	R. Venkataraman	Shankar Dayal Sharma
1992	Shankar Dayal Sharma	K. R. Narayanan
1997	K. R. Narayanan	Krishan Kant
2002	A. P. J. Abdul Kalam	Bhairon Singh Shekhawat

opposition political leader, disregarded both "propriety as well as precedent,"[12] and reflected the institutional decay that had become a major legacy of the Indira Gandhi era.

Shortly after Zail Singh selected Rajiv to be Prime Minister, however, friction developed between the two leaders. The exact source of the estrangement was unclear, but appeared to involve the Punjab issue and Singh's relations with Sanjay Gandhi, Rajiv's deceased brother. As Prime Minister, Rajiv stopped calling on the President, did not consult him, refused to brief him on foreign trips, and discouraged foreign and domestic presidential travel.[13]

Initially Zail Singh suffered in silence. By late 1986 and early 1987, however, he began to counterattack. Singh, an old-time Congress politician, cleverly used the prestige of his office to question

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[12]*Overseas Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), November 17, 1984, p. 16.

[13]See "Mother's Boy: A Survey of India," *The Economist* (London), May 9–15, 1987.

government assaults on such important institutions as the judiciary, the media, and the opposition parties.[14] He also began to freely meet with members of the opposition and, even worse, with Congress (I) dissidents.[15]

Although the President's counterattack forced the Prime Minister to play down the rift, the conflict escalated into a major crisis in early March, when the Prime Minister, pressed by repeated rumors of a rift, publicly assured both houses of the Indian Parliament that the President had been kept informed and briefed on all important matters. The President, however, asserted that the facts were "at variance with" what Rajiv had told Parliament and listed a whole series of major issues about which he had received no briefing.[16]

His credibility severely damaged, Rajiv rushed to heal the break. Since Zail Singh's term of office was rapidly drawing to a close and a new presidential election was scheduled for July 1987, Rajiv and his advisors feared that Zail Singh might use the controversy to run for reelection, split the Congress (I), and topple Rajiv's government. Senior Congress members quickly arranged a meeting between Rajiv and Singh in early April and urged the two to sort out any misunderstandings. Congress paranoia, however, reached a feverish pitch as the presidential elections approached and wild rumors spread that a "presidential coup" was in the making to topple the Rajiv government. Fears eased somewhat in early May when Singh issued a public statement asserting that all "reports and comments" that he intended to dismiss the Prime Minister were "utterly devoid of any basis."[17]

The crisis between the President and the Prime Minister came to an abrupt end with the presidential elections on July 13, 1987. Because of strong objections from India's Communists, the opposition was unable to persuade Singh to seek reelection. Under Communist pressure the opposition was forced to accept V. R. Krishna Iyer, a retired Supreme Court justice, as their candidate. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), however, refused to endorse Iyer, and opposition unity collapsed.[18] As a result the Congress candidate R. Venkataraman was able to sweep the polls and was sworn in as President

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[14]While the Indian President possesses no veto power over acts of Parliament, Singh's action provides the basis for what some Indian jurists see as the emergence of a *de facto* power.

[15]*India Today,* February 28, 1987, pp. 16–23.

[16]*The Overseas Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), March 28, 1987.

[17]*India Today,* May 15, 1987, pp. 24–29.

[18]*The Far Eastern Economic Review,* July 9, 1987, p. 25.

July 25, 1987. The first major threat to Rajiv's tenure as Prime Minister had come to an end. The conflict had, however, substantially eroded the Prime Minister's credibility.

In 1992, the Congress Party nominated Vice President Shankar Dayal Sharma as its presidential candidate. The opposition parties split. The Communists and their Left Front allies supported Sharma. The Janata Dal and the BJP supported the candidacy of George G. Swell, a Christian tribal from the northeastern state of Meghalaya. The Janata Dal raised the issue of caste, arguing that Sharma was a high-caste Brahmin and that it was time for the President to be selected from among the "depressed classes." The BJP, for its part, wanted to broaden its almost exclusively Hindu base into the Christian community. In the July balloting, Sharma secured 65 percent of the electoral college vote and was sworn in as India's ninth President.

Despite its internal divisions and a fragile hold on power, the Janata Dal-led United Front, a coalition of 14 regional parties formed in June 1996, was successful in electing a new President and Vice President in July 1997 without a major upheaval. On July 25, 1997, Vice President K. R. Narayanan, a 77-year-old former scholar, diplomat, and Congress politician from Kerala, was elected the first Dalit (untouchable) President of India and was the sixth Vice President to be elevated to the presidency in the history of the republic.[19] Narayanan became one of the most activist and persistently assertive presidents since independence. He was the first president to return a recommendation for the dismissal of a state government under article 356 to the Cabinet for reconsideration, he was the first president to admonish senior judges for overlooking eligible candidates from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for appointment to the courts, and he was the first president to deliver speeches on controversial issues that had not been vetted by the government.

Although many opposition parties would have liked Narayanan to stand for reelection, the BJP-led multiparty coalition government rejected his candidacy in favor of A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, a 71-year-old South Indian Muslim scientist. Kalam had endeared himself to the BJP because of his role in the development of India's nuclear program, the country's missile development, his strong advocacy of Indian nuclear weaponization, and his support for the creation of a high technology oriented military. In addition, although he was a Muslim, Kalam was a vegetarian, had a strong interest in Hindu philosophy and culture,

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[19]*Frontline* (Chennai), August 8, 1997, p. 34.

and had remained silent in the aftermath of the anti–Muslim pogrom in Gujarat in 2002. Kalam's religion, his scientific stature, and President Narayanan's decision not to seek reelection totally undermined opposition unity. In a symbolic gesture of opposition, the Communist-led Left Front nominated Colonel Lakshmi Sahgal, an 87-year-old leader of the anti-British Indian National Army in World War II, as its candidate. Kalam was elected by an overwhelming majority. He received 89.58 percent of the vote compared to Sahgal's 10.42 percent.

Kalam was India's first high-tech President, had no particular political agenda, and introduced some degree of informality into the traditional frills and pomp that had come to mark the office of President. Like Narayanan, Kalam was seen as an activist President. Shortly after his election, he demonstrated his independence by visiting relief camps for riot victims in Gujarat and began communicating directly with Members of Parliament.

The Vice President is elected for a five-year term by members of both houses of Parliament sitting in joint session. Votes are tallied according to the same system of simple majority and alternative preference. The Vice President is the ex officio chairman of the upper house of Parliament, the Rajya Sabha, and acts for the President when the chief executive is unable to carry out functions due to absence or illness. In the event of the death, resignation, or removal of the President, the Vice President assumes the responsibility of the office as Acting President until a new President is elected. Under these circumstances a presidential election must be held within six months. In August 2002 the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government elected Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the septuagenarian former BJP Chief Minister of Rajasthan, as Vice President to replace Krishna Kant, who died July 27, 2002. The new Vice President was known for his strong commitment to the BJP's hard-core Hindutva principles and was selected by the party without any formal consultation with either the opposition in Parliament or even its own allies in the NDA.[20]

Powers of the President

By oath of office the President must act "to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution." The Constitution confers an impressive list of powers on the President, but the Constituent Assembly determined that these powers should be exercised in accordance with the

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[20]*Frontline* (Chennai), September 5, 1997, p. 15, and August 3, 2002, p. 122.

advice of the Council of Ministers. "Under the Draft Constitution the President occupies the same position as the King under the English Constitution," Dr. Ambedkar stated. "He is head of the State but not of the Executive. He represents the nation but does not rule the nation."[21] This view reflected a distrust of concentrated executive power nurtured by the colonial experience, but the constitutional conventions regulating the relationship between the King and Cabinet in Great Britain were not easily translated into written form. Although there were no specific provisions in the Constitution, Prasad expressed the hope in the Constituent Assembly debates that "the convention under which in England the King acts always on the advice of his Ministers will be established in this country also. . . ."[22] It was Prasad, however, who sought as President to challenge this convention. Within two months after the preliminary draft constitution was published and subsequently throughout his tenure as President, Prasad argued that "there is no provision in the Constitution which in so many words lays down that the President shall be bound to act in accordance with the advice of his ministers."[23] He frequently spoke out on policy matters and would have assumed discretionary powers, but he was persuaded to accept a more limited role and exercise his power in accordance with convention.

Any doubt as to whether the President is bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers was eliminated in 1976 with the passage of the Forty-second Amendment, specifying that "the President shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice."[24] In practice this means that the President acts only on the advice of the Prime Minister. The President's discretion is limited, but in a situation of political instability, a range of opportunities opens for decisive presidential action. "In the ultimate analysis," M. V. Pylee states, "it is the political climate that must dictate the use of his power."[25]

There are two circumstances in which presidential discretion can come into play during periods of political instability. The first involves the power of the President to appoint the Prime Minister, and the

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[21]Quoted in M. V. Pylee, *Constitutional Government in India,* 4th ed. (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1984), p. 265.

[22]Ibid.

[23]See Austin, *Indian Constitution,* pp. 135, 142.

[24]Emphasis added. The amended constitutional article 74(1) is discussed in Durga Das Basu, *Constitutional Law of India,* 3rd ed. (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 1983), pp. 125–28.

[25]Pylee, *Constitutional Government,* p. 277.

second the power of the President to dissolve the Parliament. The first was amply demonstrated in the government crisis of July 1979. Following Prime Minister Morarji Desai's resignation, President Reddy could have dissolved Parliament and called for elections. Instead, he turned to the opposition to see whether a cohesive government could be formed. He did so with parliamentary propriety and political skill. But the new government under Charan Singh lasted only 24 days. Faced with a government crisis, President Reddy dissolved Parliament and called for fresh elections. His actions provoked a storm of controversy and denunciation from those who believed that Janata leader Jagjivan Ram should have had a chance to form another government.

A more delicate problem arose in March 1991 when the minority government of Chandra Shekhar resigned even though unchallenged by a vote of no confidence in Parliament. Although President R. Venkataraman accepted the resignation and requested the Prime Minister to continue until alternate arrangements were made, he reserved the decision on holding fresh elections. Following six anxious days of wild speculation and accusations of partisan behavior, the President announced his decision to dissolve Parliament and hold new elections. In announcing the decision, the President insisted that the delay was solely to enable Parliament to dispose of pending financial business that would avoid a financial crisis and allow time for passage of the legislation that would extend President's Rule in the Punjab.[26]

The decision by the President to call for elections following the withdrawal of Congress support from the United Front in November 1997 proceeded relatively smoothly. Following the collapse of the United Front government, the President held extended consultations, confirmed the existence of a gridlock, and indicated that a formal decision by the Cabinet recommending dissolution of the Lok Sabha would be in order. A formal request was made on December 3, 1997. On the next day the President announced new elections.

The President came to play an even more pro-active role in early 1999 when the BJP-led coalition government appeared to have lost its majority in Parliament due to the defection of one of its coalition partners. President Narayanan asked Prime Minister Vajpayee to establish his majority by seeking a vote of confidence in Parliament. When

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[26] *The Hindu* (Madras), March 23, 1991, and *India Today,* March 15, 1991, p. 26.

the Vajpayee government lost the vote of confidence by one vote, the President dissolved Parliament and ordered fresh elections.

The President appoints the Prime Minister, who then advises the President on the remaining appointments to the Council of Ministers. Under ordinary conditions the President has no discretion; the choice for Prime Minister is the leader of the majority party in the Lok Sabha, for the Prime Minister is responsible to the lower house and remains in office only as long as he or she commands its confidence. But if no party holds a clear majority, or if the majority party is torn by factional disputes, the President may play a critical role in determining who among the conflicting claimants might form a stable ministry. The Prime Minister holds office at the pleasure of the President. If the Council of Ministers has lost the support of Parliament by defeat on a major issue or by a vote of no confidence, the Prime Minister must resign but may advise the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha and call for new elections. Although the President may accept such advice, parliamentary convention would suggest doing so only after surveying the possibilities for the formation of a new government by the opposition. If formation of a new government seems doubtful, the President would then dissolve the lower house and call for elections. The defeated ministry would then be invited to continue as a caretaker government until a new ministry could be formed.

On November 7, 1990, V. P. Singh's government became the first to be voted out of office by a vote of no confidence. As mentioned before, in 1979, Prime Minister Desai had resigned before the vote was taken, and Charan Singh who succeeded him lasted only 24 days and never had a chance to even face Parliament. In the 1990 crisis, instead of disbanding Parliament, the President appointed Chandra Shekhar as the new Prime Minister. Chandra Shekhar had the support of 60 Members of Parliament (MPs) but was also backed by the 211 Congress (I) members led by Rajiv Gandhi. In 1998 the Gujral government simply resigned following the formal withdrawal of Congress support.

As intended by the Constituent Assembly, the convention that presidential power be exercised on the advice of the Council of Ministers has become well established. On the advice of the Prime Minister, the President appoints the governors of the states, the justices of the Supreme Court, and the state high courts, as well as members of various special commissions, including the Attorney General, who serves as legal advisor to the President, and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, who, as guardian of the public purse, sees that both Union and state expenditures are in accord with legislative

appropriations. The President serves as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, has the power of pardon, calls Parliament into session, and has the power to dissolve the lower house. Every bill passed by Parliament must be presented to the President, who may, except in the case of a money bill, withhold assent or return the bill for reconsideration. Parliament can override presidential veto simply by passing the bill again in both houses.

During the Narayanan presidency, there were several instances when the President raised questions about accepting the advice of the cabinet. In 1998, for example, President Narayanan returned a request from the Cabinet to invoke President's Rule in Uttar Pradesh under Article 356 of the constitution to the government for reconsideration, and on several occasions he refused to invoke Article 356 in deference to the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Bommai* case that required Governors to give state governments an opportunity to prove they commanded a majority in the state assembly before imposing President's Rule.[27] Narayanan also exerted his independence by delivering several public speeches that had not been vetted by the government. In these speeches Narayanan offered veiled criticism of the BJP government's Hindu nationalist ideology, raised doubts about the need to appoint a Constitutional Review Committee, and offended United States foreign policy officials during President Bill Clinton's March 2002 visit to India by indirectly criticizing American policies.

Under Article 123 of the Constitution the President, on the advice of the Prime Minister, may promulgate ordinances when Parliament is not in session if satisfied that existing circumstances demand immediate action. It was through such ordinances that India was largely ruled during the 1975−77 emergency. A presidential ordinance has the same force and effect as an Act of Parliament, but the ordinance must be laid before Parliament within six weeks after it reconvenes. More extraordinary powers are given to the President in provision for three types of emergency: a threat to security by war, external aggression, or by internal disturbance; a breakdown in the constitutional government of a state; and a threat to financial stability.

Under the Emergency Provisions of the Constitution (Part XVIII), the President may suspend the right to freedom and the

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[27]Katharine Adeney, "Hindu nationalists and federal structures in an era of regionalism," in Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*. (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 110.

right to constitutional remedies in situations of national emergency. In its original form, Article 352 reads:

> If the President is satisfied that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India 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.

The proclamation automatically lapses if not approved by Parliament within two months.

The emergency proclaimed on June 26, 1975, by President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed on advice of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was imposed in response to an alleged threat to internal security by the political opposition. A national emergency had been declared on two previous occasions—both in response to the threat of external aggression: the 1962 Chinese invasion and the Indo-Pakistani War in 1971 for the liberation of Bangladesh. The 1971 emergency proclamation was still in effect when the new emergency was imposed in 1975. The powers assumed by the government under this "double emergency" were unprecedented in their scope and severity. The proclamation of the emergency in 1962 was followed by the enactment of the Defence of India Act, which provided for the detention of any person

> whom the authority suspects on grounds appearing to that authority to be reasonable, of being of hostile origin, of having acted, acting, being about to act or being likely to act in a manner prejudicial to the defence of India and civil defence, the security of the State, the public safety or interest, the maintenance of public order, India's relations with foreign states, the maintenance of peaceful conditions in any part of India or the efficient conduct of military operations.

The emergency was not revoked until 1968, long after the immediate threat of invasion, and the Defence of India Rules (DIR) were used by the government to justify preventive detention (a legacy of British days) for various offenses unrelated to national security. When the emergency was finally lifted in 1968, the rules were suspended, but in 1971, during the Bangladesh war, the DIR were again imposed. Though the actual emergency had passed, the rules remained in force and were used for unintended and miscellaneous purposes, such as the arrest of striking railway workers in 1974. The majority of those arrested during the emergency of 1975−77 were detained under the

DIR. Others—including leaders of the opposition—were arrested under the provisions of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) of 1971. Both the DIR and MISA provided for detention without trial, and during the emergency, by Presidential ordinance, MISA was amended to enable the government to arrest persons without specifying charges—either to the detainee or to a court.

Before stepping down as Prime Minister in March 1977, Mrs. Gandhi lifted the internal emergency she had imposed 21 months before. Among the first acts of the new Janata government was to end the external emergency proclaimed in 1971. Soon afterward, Parliament repealed the DIR and MISA. In response to the abuses of the emergency, the Janata government enacted the Forty-fourth Amendment, substituting the words "armed rebellion" for the more general "internal disturbance" in the emergency provisions of Article 352. After the emergency was lifted, several states enacted their own preventive detention laws, and in mid-1979 Prime Minister Desai called for the enactment of preventive detention legislation at the Center in order to contain growing lawlessness. But the Constitution itself provides for preventive detention, sanctioning the confinement of individuals in order to prevent them from engaging in acts considered injurious to society. It was generally agreed in the Constituent Assembly that the times demanded extraordinary measures, but that detention procedures should be strictly controlled.[28] The experience of the 1975 emergency exposed its potential for abuse, as have, critics charge, the emergency measures imposed against terrorism in the Punjab.[29]

Under proclamation of a war emergency, such as that invoked in 1962 and in 1971, the federal provisions of the Constitution may be suspended and the area affected brought under direct Central control. Such proclamations must be laid before Parliament for approval within two months.

The President may also declare a constitutional emergency in a state if, on receipt of a report from the Governor, a situation has arisen in which the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the Constitution. The President may then (1) assume any or all of the state functions or may vest these functions in the Governor, (2) declare that the powers of the state assembly shall be exercised by

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[28]Austin, *Indian Constitution,* p. 111.

[29]See Pannalal Dhar, *Preventive Detention under Indian Constitution* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep, 1986).

Parliament, and (3) make other provisions necessary to fulfill the objectives of the proclamation, including the suspension in part or whole of any constitutional body or authority in the state except the judiciary. The proclamation must be approved by Parliament; ordinarily it expires after six months, but it may be extended by Parliament for a maximum overall period of one year. In the years of Congress dominance, President's Rule was invoked sparingly. Its most dramatic use came in the 1959 supersession of the Communist government in Kerala, when the Center intervened in what it called a breakdown of law and order. In the months immediately following the 1967 elections, however, unstable coalitions in the North toppled one state government after the other, and within two years the Center had intervened in six states, initiating tremendous controversy over the specific events of each case and the wider problem of the Center-state relationship.

From 1950 to 2003 President's Rule was evoked a total of 115 times.[30] In the early years of the republic under Prime Ministers Nehru and Shastri, from 1950 to 1966, President's Rule was used only eight times. During Mrs. Gandhi's two periods of tenure as Prime Minister, however, President's Rule was imposed 48 times, often with clearly partisan motivation. The dismissals of the opposition governments in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu during the 1975–77 emergency provide especially dramatic examples. This trend continued under Rajiv Gandhi and even the minority governments of V. P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar from 1989 to 1991. Due to the political turbulence of the early 1990s, President's Rule was invoked eight times in 1991 and seven times from 1992 to 1993. Since 1993, however, the use of President's Rule has declined sharply. From 1994 to 2000 the NDA invoked President's Rule only four times, mostly on a temporary basis to enable sharply divided state legislative assemblies time to cobble together multi-parity coalitions.[31]

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[30]See Sarkaria Commission, *Commission on Centre-State Relations Report,* Pt. 1 (Nasik: Government of India Press, 1988), pp. 161–89; B. L. Fadia and R. K. Menaria, *Sarkaria Commission Report and Centre-State Relations* (Agra: Sahitya Bhawan, 1990), pp. 77–105; Bhagwan D. Dua, *Presidential Rule in India, 1950–1974: A Study in Crisis Politics* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1979); J. R. Siwach, *Politics of President's Rule in India* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1979); Rajiv Dhavan, *President's Rule in the States* (Bombay: N. M. Tripathi, 1979); S. R. Maheshwari, *President's Rule in India* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1977); and Adeney and Saez, p. 11.

[31]M. P. Singh, "Towards a More Federalized Parliamentary System in India: Explaining Functional Change" in B. D. Dua and M. P. Singh, eds., *Indian Federalism in the New Millennium.* (New Delhi: Monohar, 2003), p. 192.

Controversy over the use of President's Rule was further sharpened by action taken by the Janata government soon after it took office in 1977. To consolidate its position, the Janata Party sought fresh elections for the assemblies in those states where Congress retained power but had suffered defeat in parliamentary polling. Congress denounced the effort to dislodge "duly constituted" state governments. Averting a confrontation with the Janata government that threatened to become a constitutional crisis, Acting President Jatti dissolved the assemblies and imposed President's Rule in nine states, pending new elections. On its return to power in 1980, Congress followed the Janata precedent. The Center imposed President's Rule and called new assembly elections in those opposition-controlled states where Congress had swept the parliamentary polls. This pattern appears to have now become an established part of the system.

The fragmentation of parties, the emergence of coalition governments at the Center and in the states, and the regionalization of the party system have further compounded the question of the central government's use of President's Rule. In October 1997, for example, the use of President's Rule almost led to a constitutional crisis between the President and the United Front government. The crisis arose in October 1997 when the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) reneged on its power-sharing agreement with the BJP and withdrew its support of the Kalyan Singh ministry. Ramesh Bhandari, the U.P. Governor, gave Singh 48 hours to prove his majority. Even after Kalyan Singh had won the trust vote in the assembly, however, the Governor recommended the imposition of President's Rule. The central Cabinet promptly endorsed the Governor's recommendation and forwarded it to the President for his signature. The President, however, instead of acting immediately on the advice of the Cabinet, returned the request to the Cabinet for reconsideration. In taking this unprecedented step the President cited a March 1994 Supreme Court decision in the case of *S. R. Bommai v. Union of India* in which the court held that in all cases where support of a ministry was claimed to have been withdrawn, "the proper course for testing the strength of the ministry is holding the test on the floor of the House."[32] A shocked United Front cabinet bowed to the wishes of the President, reconsidered the issue and decided not to impose

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[32]*Frontline* (Chennai), November 14, 1997, pp. 17–19. For a detailed account of the background, see Ian Duncan, "New Political Equations in North India: Mayawati, Mulayam, and Government Instability in Uttar Pradesh," *Asian Survey,* 37 (October 1997), pp. 979–96.

President's Rule. This was the first time since independence that a President had acted independently in defense of the Constitution.

Four months later the President went even further when he expressed his anguish over the performance of Governor Romesh Bhandari. In February 1998, the state of U.P. was again plunged into a crisis when a group of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from two parties withdrew their support. Bhandari immediately dismissed the Kalyan Singh government and swore in a new cabinet. The new cabinet, however, was immediately ousted by an interim order of the Allahabad High Court. This marked the first time that the courts were invited to intervene in the process of ministry formation. It also led the President to summon the Prime Minister to the President's house where the Prime Minister was told to consider removal of the governor. The Prime Minister refused. Given the Allahabad High Court decision that restored the ministry to power, the President did not press the case. These incidents, however, demonstrated the increasing role of presidential activism in a changing Indian political environment. While Narayanan won the respect of many analysts for his defense of the Constitution, he was accused by many politicians of politicizing his office. His actions also touched off a major debate over the possible development of the presidency as a rival power center in the Indian political system.[33] The debate intensified even further when, in September 1998, Narayanan sent back for reconsideration a cabinet recommendation for a second time when the BJP attempted to impose President's Rule in Bihar.

Because of its perceived partisan abuse by ruling parties in New Delhi prior to the 1990s, the frequent use of President's Rule became a major source of Center-state friction. Governments invoked President's Rule to resolve intra-party problems, to restore political and administrative stability, to respond to mass upsurges against maladministration, to remove assemblies that had ceased to represent the people, and to deal with the inability of a divided legislature to form an alternative ministry. Despite abuse of President's Rule, the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC) Report of March 2002 rejected abolition of Article 356. It did, however, recommend that its use be approved by Parliament and insisted that no state government be dismissed as long as it commanded a majority in the house.[34] Although partisanship continues to

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[33]*India Today* (New Delhi, March 9, 1998), pp. 22–25.

[34]Adeney and Saez, pp. 110–111.

play an important role in the decision to invoke President's Rule, growing political decentralization, the federalization of the party system, Supreme Court rulings and the refusal of the President to act contrary to court directives have made it increasingly difficult for the central government to intervene except as a last resort.

Under the Indian Constitution, the President was assigned a largely ceremonial role in the country's political system. With a few minor exceptions, most Presidents prior to 1989 were willing to perform this ceremonial role and were in no position to defy the Prime Minister. The advent of hung parliaments, multi-party coalitions and insecure governments, however, enhanced the ability of the President to exercise an increasing degree of independence. The willingness of Presidents to show restraint or become more assertive, however, has tended to depend on the personality of the incumbent. The newly changed political environment has enabled the President to become more assertive in exercising his discretionary power to designate the Prime Minister, recognize legislative majorities, insist that governments test their strength in Parliament by seeking a vote of confidence, dissolve Parliament, delay formal approval of legislation and appointments, return decisions to the cabinet for reconsideration and speak out on national issues without prior vetting of his remarks by the government. Many political observers in India have opposed the trend toward greater presidential assertiveness and have insisted that the Office of the President is ill-equipped to play a more active role despite the new political environment.[35]

PARLIAMENT

The Parliament of India, as defined by the Constitution, consists of the President and the two houses, the Lok Sabha, the lower house, and the Rajya Sabha, the upper house. The fact that the President is a part of Parliament stresses the interdependence, rather than the separation, of the Executive and Legislative in the parliamentary system.

The Lok Sabha

The Lok Sabha, or House of the People, consists today of 545 members. Of these, 543 are directly elected on the basis of adult suffrage—530 from the 28 states and 13 from the seven Union Territories. In addition, the

[35]James Manor, "The Presidency" in Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, eds., *Public Institutions in India: Performance and Design* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 105–127.

President may nominate not more than two representatives of the Anglo-Indian community, if none have been elected to the house. Seats in the Lok Sabha are allocated among the states on the basis of population, and each state is divided into territorial constituencies that are roughly equal in population. In 1976 the Forty-second Amendment froze the allocation of seats, as based on the 1971 census, until the year 2001. The action was taken so that no state would be penalized through loss of seats for effective implementation of family planning programs. On February 24, 2002, however, Parliament passed the Eighty-fourth Amendment that postponed the re-adjustment of state's seats until 2026.[36]

The term of the Lok Sabha is five years from the date of its first meeting, but, as in Great Britain, the Prime Minister may choose the most advantageous time to go to the polls and may thus advise the President to dissolve the house and call new elections. Under a proclamation of emergency the President may extend the life of the house for one year at a time, but not beyond six months after the suspension of the emergency rules. The Constitution requires the house must meet at least twice a year, with no more than six months between sessions. In practice it has held an average of three sessions each year. The business of Parliament is transacted primarily in English or Hindi, but provision is made for the use of other Indian languages when necessary. Although most members have been able to speak either English or Hindi, some have been determined to speak in their mother tongues. A few have had no other choice.

Elected by the house from among its own members, the Speaker presides over the Lok Sabha, is expected to stand above partisan conflict, and is entitled to vote only in a tie. The Speaker's powers are extensive, however, and the office's influence may be considerable. The Speaker is responsible for the maintenance of order and the conduct of business in the house. Seventeen standing committees carry the burden of most of the routine business in the Lok Sabha. Some are primarily concerned with organization and parliamentary procedure. Others, notably the three finance committees, act as watchdogs over the Executive. Specific committees scrutinize the budget and governmental economy, governmental appropriations and expenditures, the exercise of delegated power, and the implementation of ministerial assurances and promises.[37]

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[36]Alistair McMillan, "The BJP coalition: Partisanships and power-sharing in government" in Adeney and Saez, pp. 15–16, 102.

[37]See Arthur G. Rubinoff, "India's New Subject—based Parliamentary Standing Committees, *Asian Survey,* 36 (July 1996), pp. 723–38.

The Lok Sabha may conduct business only with a quorum of one-tenth of the membership, and normally questions are decided by a majority of members present and voting. The first hour of the parliamentary day is devoted to questions that bring the government to the dock of public scrutiny. At this time a minister responds to the questions that have been submitted in advance by members and faces supplementary questions from the floor that demand skill and quick judgment in answering. As in Britain, the question hour supplies information to Parliament, but more significantly it is designed as an instrument of control over the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The questions may highlight government activity in a variety of areas, but they can also serve to insure that the Cabinet will remain responsive to the opinion of the legislative majority and sensitive to the criticism of the opposition. In the hands of the opposition, questions may seriously embarrass the government, revealing inefficiency, incompetence, or scandal. Question time has become increasingly popular as the number of questions has increased almost fivefold from 71,907 in the first Lok Sabha (1952−57) to 325,234 in the tenth Lok Sabha (1991−96). During the same period the number of questions actually admitted and replied to, however, only doubled, from 43,350 to 89,118. The ultimate control of the Lok Sabha over the Executive lies in its power of censure, the motion of no confidence that can bring down the government.[38]

For a group or party to be considered an "official" party, it must have at least 50 members in the house. In the first two decades after independence, opposition at the Center was weak and heterogeneous, and it was not until the Congress party split and the breakaway Congress (O) emerged in 1969 that any party other than Congress attained sufficient strength to meet the requirements for official recognition. But whatever their strength in Parliament, members of the opposition have been consulted on the arrangement of business in the house, represented on various committees, and recognized by the Speaker in the course of debate.

Despite its extensive formal authority, the role of the Indian Parliament is very limited due to the use of Presidential decrees. In practice the Lok Sabha provides a very weak institutional check on the Executive; it has experienced a major erosion of procedural norms; its members have failed to utilize the instruments available to them; and MPs have exhibited limited interest in its institutional development.[39]

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[38]"50 Years of Freedom: House of Tumult," *Business World,* February 1−15, 1997, p. 94.

[39]Arun Agrawal, "The Indian Parliament," in Kapur and Metha, pp. 77–105.

The Rajya Sabha

The Rajya Sabha, or Council of States, 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, and social service. The allocation of the remaining seats among the states corresponds to their population, except that small states are given a somewhat larger share than their numbers alone would command. The representatives of each state are elected by the members of the state legislative assembly for a term of six years. The Rajya Sabha meets in continuous session and is not subject to dissolution. The terms are staggered, as in the United States Senate, so that one-third of the members stands for election every two years.

In the debates of the Constituent Assembly, some argued that second chambers were undemocratic bastions of vested interest and acted as "clogs in the wheels of progress." Others upheld the chamber as "an essential element of federal constitutions," declaring that it introduced "an element of sobriety and second thought" into the democratic process. In any case, as Morris-Jones wrote in his study of the Indian Parliament, "Whatever uncertainty there may have been on the purpose of an Upper House, there was at no stage any doubt that the House of the People would be the more powerful."[40] The government rests on the confidence of the popular assembly. The Council of Ministers is responsible only to the Lok Sabha, and although the Rajya Sabha has the right to be fully informed of the government's activities, it is not empowered to raise a motion of censure and has failed to evolve a distinct role for itself.

The Legislative Process

Decision making on public policy in India is concentrated at the highest levels of authority—with the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and the top echelons of the bureaucracy. It is the primary responsibility of the government to draft legislation and introduce bills into Parliament, although private members' bills are considered in an allotted period once a week. Any bill other than money bills may be introduced in either house. Most bills originate in the Lok Sabha, however, and proceed through three readings, as in the British Parliament. The bill is introduced in the first reading, usually by title only and without debate. It may then be referred to a select committee of the house, appointed specifically for consideration of the bill, or in the case of

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[40]W. H. Morris-Jones, *Parliament in India* (London: Longmans, Greene, 1957), p. 90.

bills of particular importance or complexity, to a joint committee of both houses. After the bill has been reported from the committee and accepted for consideration by the house, the second reading takes place; each clause is debated and voted on. Amendments may be moved at this stage. The third and final reading of the bill is the motion that the bill be passed. After passage, the bill is transmitted to the Rajya Sabha, where it follows the same procedure.

Differences between the bill as passed by the two houses may be resolved by sending the bill back and forth for reconsideration. If agreement is not reached, the President calls for a joint sitting of Parliament, and the disputed provision is decided on by a simple majority vote. When the bill has passed both houses, it is sent to the President for his assent. He may return the bill to Parliament for reconsideration, but if it is passed again, the President may not withhold assent.

Bills for taxing and spending—money bills—may be introduced only in the Lok Sabha. If amended or rejected by the Rajya Sabha, such a bill need merely be repassed by the lower house and sent to the President. There are certain powers relating to the position of the states, however, that are conferred upon the Rajya Sabha alone. It may, for example, declare by a two-thirds vote that Parliament should for a period of up to one year make laws on the matters reserved by the Constitution to the states. In most legislative matters, including constitutional amendments, the Rajya Sabha exercises the same power as the Lok Sabha.

Although the Supreme Court may hold an Act of Parliament unconstitutional, the Parliament may amend the Constitution with relative ease. The Indian Constitution combines both rigidity and flexibility in its amending process. The provisions may be amended in three ways: The greater portion of the Constitution may be amended by a majority of the total membership of each house and by at least two-thirds of those present and voting. Some parts, however, may be amended by a simple majority of each house, the vote required to pass ordinary legislation. For example, the Parliament may by ordinary legislative procedure, create, reorganize, or abolish the constituent states and territories of the Union if the President, after consultation with the state assemblies, so recommends. Other provisions, such as those dealing with the legislative powers of the Union and the states, may be amended only with a two-thirds majority in Parliament and ratification by not less than one-half of the states.[41]

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[41]Adeney, "Hindu nationalists and federal structures in an era of regionalism," in Adeney and Saez, pp. 102–103.

During the Nehru era, the Lok Sabha was often criticized as the Prime Minister's durbar, or princely court; but even though the Congress dominance was overwhelming, the opposition was respected, and Parliament was often the arena of significant debate that the Cabinet could not ignore. Although not genuinely a deliberative, policy-making body, Parliament occasionally played an important role in modifying legislation submitted to it for ratification. Although policy was initiated primarily from within the Executive, there existed a fairly regularized policy process, providing an open hearing and wide consultation on major domestic issues. The process began, as one author describes it:

> with the appointment of a commission of inquiry, composed of distinguished citizens, to investigate the problem. The commission takes public testimony from various groups and individuals and produces a report which includes a set of specific policy recommendations. The ministry concerned and the cabinet study the report, consider its recommendations, and note public reactions before drawing up a draft bill, which usually includes most of the recommendations of the commission. The draft bill is next submitted to Parliament. . . . [42]

The 1975–77 emergency reduced Parliament to a rubber stamp. Members were jailed, others simply chose not to attend, and press censorship helped silence the few critics who remained. In March 1977, parliamentary elections brought down the government of Indira Gandhi and ended the 21-month emergency. The Janata victory restored Parliament to a body of consequence, but with Indira Gandhi's return to power Parliament was again brought under the Prime Minister's shadow.

During the 1980s the role and status of the Indian Parliament declined substantially due to the attitude of Prime Ministers and the character and behavior of the Members of Parliament. Even after her return to power in 1980, Indira Gandhi totally subordinated the Parliament to executive domination. She showed scant respect for the institution, spent less and less time in the house, and used her majority to dominate the legislative process. Rajiv exhibited even less attention and respect for Parliament and spent very little time in the house. Although he worked in his office in the Parliament

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[42]Stanley Kochanek, *Business and Politics in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 57.

building, he was absent from the floor even during major debates. Narashima Rao was equally indifferent.

The erosion of the role of Parliament brought on by increased centralization of power in the hands of the Prime Minister has been reinforced by the lack of knowledge, interest, training, competence, discipline, and decorum of its members. Most Members of Parliament have no knowledge or training in the legislative process, fail to do their homework, and lack technical competence. Absenteeism has increased as members cultivate their home constituencies or pursue varied extra parliamentary interests. They are at times indifferent to executive abuse of the system, ignore poor drafting of legislation, and provide minimal scrutiny of the budget. As a result, complex bills are rushed through in mere minutes, perfunctory replies to questions are provided without challenge, and grants for an increasing number of ministries and departments are passed without discussion. The decorum of Parliament has often been disrupted by rowdy confrontations between the majority party and opposition MPs.

Many of these changes are reflected in the distribution of parliamentary time over the past 60 years. Although the Indian Parliament passed some 2,500 bills from 1951 to 1999, the legislative role of Parliament has decreased dramatically. The Ninth Lok Sabha, for example, once passed 19 bills in a single day.[43] Furthermore, the amount of time devoted to legislation has dropped from 1,844 hours in the First Lok Sabha to 560 in the Tenth. While the amount of time spent on the budget has not dropped as precipitously, it still reflects an overall decline from 792 hours in 1952−57 to 431 hours in the Tenth Parliament. The same is true for the time devoted to questions, which has dropped from 552 hours to 294 during the same period.[44]

Still, the government must remain attentive to Parliament. Although the more illustrious debaters once fielded by the opposition parties are sorely missed, Lok Sabha debates are closely followed in the daily press, and through the pressure of this publicity, Parliament keeps the Prime Minister sensitive and responsive to its opinion. Over the past 60 years, the focus of parliament has shifted away from legislation to exposing administrative lapses, prodding the executive, and shaping public opinion.

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[43]Agrawal, "The Indian Parliament," in Kapur and Mehta, p. 94.

[44]*Business World,* February 1−15, 1997, p. 94. See also, Arthur G. Rubinoff, "The Changing Nature of India's Parliament" in Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay et al., eds., *Indo/Pakistan/Canadian Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of Indian Independence* (Delhi: B. R. Publications, 1998), pp. 251–65.

Members of Parliament

Many of the individuals who served during the 1950s and 1960s as members of Parliament, in the opposition parties as well as in the Congress, were prominent leaders of the nationalist movement and had served in the legislative bodies both in the states and at the Center. Even in the First Lok Sabha, however, returned by the 1951–52 elections, more than half the members had never before served in a legislative body. Recent turmoil in the party system has produced a considerable degree of the elite circulation in the Indian Parliament. A profile of Lok Sabha members from 1952 to 1999 shows significant changes in education and social background over the past five decades. Contrary to expectation, however, the number of women in Parliament has not dramatically increased from the 22 (4.4 percent) in the First Lok Sabha. From 1952 to 1996 the average number of women represented in the Lok Sabha was 30 (6 percent). During the 1990s the number of women elected to Parliament increased from 27 in 1989 to 39 in 1991, to 43 in 1998 and 49 in 1999. In the 2004 elections 44 women were elected to Parliament and held 8 percent of the seats.[45]

Despite the popular perception that there has been a significant intellectual decline in the Indian Parliament, data show that the level of formal education of members of the Lok Sabha has in fact increased over the past 60 years. In 1952, 58 percent of the members of the First Lok Sabha held college degrees. By the end of 1990s this had increased to 80 percent. An even more dramatic change has taken place in the occupational background of members. Over the past 60 years the proportion of urban professionals—lawyers, social and political workers, teachers, journalists, and doctors—has declined steadily. The number of lawyers—the largest group in the First Lok Sabha—has dropped from 35.6 percent in 1952 to 12.9 in the Eleventh Lok Sabha and 10.2 percent in the Twelfth. In the Thirteenth Lok Sabha, elected in 1999, the number of lawyers increased slightly to 12.2 percent. These urban-based professionals have been replaced by representatives increasingly drawn from the rural areas. The number of agriculturists in the Lok Sabha almost doubled from 22.5 percent in 1952 to 40.4 percent in 1989. The number then dipped to 29.6 percent in 1991 only to rebound to 38.7 percent in 1996, 49.1 percent in 1998 and 42.7

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[45]M. L. Ahuja, *General Elections in India: Electoral Politics, Electoral Reforms and Political Parties.* (New Delhi: Icon Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2005), pp. 438–39.

percent in 1999.[46] These changes, noted one study, have led to a "basic transfer of political power from the urban middle-class as represented by the legal profession, to the rural agricultural class."[47]

The Indian Parliament, while becoming more representative and reflective of Indian society, has seen its role decline in influence, status, and effectiveness. On the whole, Parliament continues to draw members of considerable ability, although in recent years, as the states have become increasingly important political arenas, many of the more able and ambitious have been attracted to the state assemblies rather than to the Lok Sabha. Unlike the United States, Indian legislators have a very limited interest in serving their constituency. In 1993, for example, the Indian government launched a local area development scheme that allocated funds directly to each Member of Parliament to use in his constituency for development projects. Despite the huge size of the program, a large number of MPs failed to utilize the funds allotted to them. Under Narasimha Rao, the government allocated Rs. 7.9 billion to the program, but some 200 MPs did not bother to avail themselves of the opportunity to utilize their allotted funds to help their constituency. Although Vajpayee doubled the size of the program in 1998, only 62.2 percent of the funds allocated to the program were utilized between 1993 and 2000.[48]

THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS

Since independence, India has had 14 Prime Ministers, four of those between May 1996 and March 1998 (Table 3.2). The Constitution provides for the appointment of the Prime Minister by the President, but by parliamentary convention, and because the ministers are responsible to the Lok Sabha, the President will choose the leader of the majority party in that house or, if there is no clear majority, a member who can command the confidence of a sufficient coalition.

The Prime Minister selects ministers, who are then appointed by the President. They are not only responsible to Parliament, but are also part of it. A minister must be a member of either the Lok Sabha or the

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[46]See Press and Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, *General Elections 1998 Reference Handbook,* Vol. I, December 1997, pp. 94–95; *Business World,* February 1–15, 1997, p. 93; and Ahuja, pp. 436–437.

[47]V. A. Pai Panandiker and Arun Sud, *Emerging Pattern of Representation in the Indian Parliament* (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research, 1981), p. 101.

[48]Agrawal, "The Indian Parliament" in Kapur and Mehta, pp. 94–99.

T A B L E 3.2   Prime Ministers of India

Prime Minister	Party of Prime Minister	Dates
Jawaharlal Nehru*	Congress	1947−1964
Lal Bahadur Shastri**	Congress	1964−1966
Indira Gandhi	Congress	1966−1977
Morarji Desai	Janata	1977−1979
Charan Singh	Janata	1979−1980
Indira Gandhi	Congress	1980−1984
Rajiv Gandhi	Congress	1984−1989
V. P. Singh	Janata Dal	1989−1990
Chandra Shekhar	Samajwadi Janata Party	1990−1991
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	Bharatiya Janata Party	May 16−29, 1996
H. D. Deve Gowda	Janata Dal	June 1996−April 1997
I. K. Gujral	Janata Dal	April 1997−1998
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	Bharatiya Janata Party	March 1998−May 2004
Manmohan Singh	Congress	May 2004–

*When Nehru died, Gulzari Lal Nanda became Acting Prime Minister (May 27–June 9, 1964).
**When Shastri died, Nanda was once again Acting Prime Minister (January 11–24, 1966).

Rajya Sabha. To draw on ministerial talent outside Parliament, however, the Constitution permits the appointment of a nonmember if, within a maximum of six months, that person becomes a member of Parliament, either by nomination or through a by-election for an open seat. Although a minister is entitled to vote only in the house to which he or she belongs, the minister may participate in the proceedings of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha to answer questions or pilot a bill through passage.

The connecting link between the Ministry and the President as well as between the Ministry and Parliament, the Prime Minister, is in Nehru's words, "the linchpin of Government." The extensive powers vested in the President are in fact exercised by the Prime Minister, who, with the ministers, controls and coordinates the departments of government and determines policy through the submission of a program for parliamentary action. While commanding the majority in the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister's government is secure, but if defeated on any major issue, or if a no-confidence motion is passed, it must, by the conventions of Cabinet government, resign. Custom in Great Britain has established that the Prime Minister shall be a

member of the popularly elected lower house. It was presumed that the convention would be retained in India, and the selection of Indira Gandhi, a member of the Rajya Sabha, as Prime Minister was criticized as an unhealthy precedent. She subsequently was returned from a Lok Sabha constituency. P. V. Narasimha Rao was not a member of either house of Parliament when he was appointed Prime Minister on June 21, 1991. He succeeded, however, in winning a stunning victory in a by-election in November 1991 by one of the largest margins in the electoral history.[49]

The Council of Ministers is made up of Cabinet ministers, ministers of state, and deputy ministers. In accommodating various party factions, as well as providing representation to different regions and groups, the size of the Council grew increasingly unwieldy. In an effort to curb the continued expansion of the size of the Council of Ministers at the federal and state levels, Parliament passed the Ninety-first Amendment to the Constitution in August 2003 that limits the total size of the Council of Ministers to no more than 15 percent of the total size of the legislature.[50] In the allocation of portfolios (administrative assignments), each minister is charged with responsibility for one or more ministries of government. Typically the Prime Minister may retain certain key portfolios, such as foreign affairs. In theory, the ministers are collectively responsible for all decisions of the government, and no minister may publicly dissent from its policy. In fact, however, the Council of Ministers does not meet as a body, and although every minister is expected to accept collective responsibility, this principle has not served to protect ministers from bearing individual responsibility for policy decisions. When heavy criticism has been leveled against a particular minister, that person has frequently been dropped—as was Defense Minister Krishna Menon in the wake of the 1962 Chinese invasion—and the Ministry thereby vindicated.

The ministries and departments organized within the Central Secretariat have expanded since independence in both number and scope. Each is responsible for the execution of government policy in a particular area and is headed by a minister accountable for all that passes within the office's sphere of administration. A minister may be in

[49]For an overview, see R. N. Pal, *The Office of the Prime Minister in India* (New Delhi: Ghanshyam, 1983); James Manor, ed., *Nehru to the Nineties: The Changing Office of Prime Minister in India* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994).

[50]*India 2005: A Reference Annual* (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2005), p. 964.

charge of one or more ministries, some of which are then divided into departments. The ministry or department has as its permanent head a senior civil servant, the secretary, who acts as the principal adviser to the minister in matters of policy and administration, and who is responsible to the minister for efficient and economical administration.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet is not mentioned in the Constitution, but usage has equated its functions with those assigned to the Council of Ministers under the Constitution. The Cabinet, the inner body of the council, is composed of the principal ministers who, while holding important portfolios, are responsible generally for government administration and policy. The Cabinet has four major functions: to approve all proposals for the legislative enactment of government policy, to recommend all major appointments, to settle interdepartmental disputes, and to coordinate the various activities of the government and oversee the execution of its policies.[51]

The Cabinet must be small enough not to become unwieldy, but its size, usually 15 to 20, has more often been the result of political considerations than of decision-making efficiency. The composition of the Cabinet tends to reflect the relative strength of major majority party factions, the power of coalition partners, a degree of regional balance, and the representation of important minority communities—Muslims, Sikhs, and untouchables. A study of the changing composition of the Cabinet over the past 60 years revealed that the Cabinet continues to be dominated by highly educated full-time politicians and lawyers. At the same time, the study also revealed a gradual power shift from urban to rural elites and from upper castes to lower and backward castes. The United Front Ministry from 1996 to 1998, for example, was dominated by lower castes for the first time since independence.[52]

During the era of one-party dominance, the Prime Minister's choice of Cabinet members was further constrained by the necessity to include those members of Parliament, across the political spectrum, who commanded a position of factional strength. However, Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, to ensure that they had no rivals, appointed

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[51]Pylee, *Constitutional Government,* p. 284.

[52]V. A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra, *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance* (Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996), pp. 69–91.

ministers who were both personally loyal and without independent political bases despite the Congress dominance. In the Cabinet, as in the larger Council of Ministers, the distribution of the major portfolios and ranking was determined largely by the political weight of each claimant. Each member of the Cabinet was formally ranked. This ranking, noted Michael Brecher, appeared "to be based on a composite of the incumbent's political importance in the party and seniority, as intuitively perceived by the Prime Minister. . . . Yet formal status is not a measure of influence or involvement in the decision process."[53]

Only members are entitled to attend the weekly meetings of the Cabinet, but ministers of state, chief ministers, and technical experts may be invited to attend discussions of subjects with which they have special concern. Votes are rarely taken in the Cabinet; decisions usually are reached after discussion by a sense of the meeting. Usually a consensus is reached before the meeting and the Cabinet acts simply as a ratifying body. Panandiker and Mehra estimate that only two percent of government business is handled by the Cabinet. The rest is dealt with by the ministries and departments.[54] Only major issues are referred to the Cabinet, and frequently even these, such as the preparation of the budget, are decided by the appropriate minister in consultation with the Prime Minister. Most matters are resolved within the separate ministries and departments, and the work of the Cabinet itself is handled largely by committee.

Cabinet committees organized by Prime Minister Nehru to coordinate the functions of the various ministries were largely dominated by the same few ministers and Nehru himself was chairman of 9 of the 10 committees. His Home Minister was a member of all committees and was chairman of the tenth, and his Finance Minister was a member of seven. "Appointments to these committees have been made more on personal considerations than on considerations of bringing only the ministers concerned together in relevant committees."[55] In Nehru's last years the Emergency Committee of the Cabinet, set up in 1962 and composed of six senior ministers including the Prime Minister, came to assume the role of an inner cabinet and took over many of the decision-making responsibilities of the whole Cabinet.

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[53]Michael Brecher, *Nehru's Mantle: The Politics of Succession in India* (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 112–13.

[54]Panandiker and Mehra, pp. 69–71, 87.

[55]Asok Chanda, *Indian Administration* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958), p. 91.

As Prime Minister, Nehru exercised a preeminent role; his dominance of the Cabinet was overwhelming.

Under Shastri the Emergency Committee declined in relative importance. The Cabinet's primacy was restored in domestic affairs, as each minister was given a greater role of initiative and discretion. If decisions under Nehru had frequently been imposed from above, decisions under Shastri reflected more of a genuine consensus. The quest for consensus reflected the new balance of power between the Center and the states as well. What Brecher termed the "Grand Council of the Republic" was an informal body that came into being during the Shastri succession, made up of those who commanded decisive influence within the Congress—in the party and in the government, at the Center and in the states. It was "the collective substitute for Nehru's charisma."[56] From 1961 to 1989 the number of Cabinet committees fluctuated between 9 and 11, with a high of 14 in 1977. The role played by Cabinet committees is largely determined by the Prime Minister.[57]

The advent of multi-party coalition politics since 1989 has led to the proliferation of committees called Groups of Ministers (GOMS) as a devise to reconcile differences within the coalition, pacify coalition leaders, satisfy regional interests, and quell disputes within the cabinet. During its six years in office, for example, the NDA established 32 GOMS. The Congress-led United Progressive Alliace (UPA), elected in 2004, has created 40 GOMS in an effort to defer decisions and pacify its coalition partners. Only a small handful of these committees play an active role in decision making. The system as a whole, however, has led to time-consuming delay, endless coordination, a diffusion of responsibility, and low-quality decisions.[58]

The Role of the Prime Minister

As India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru's personality, charisma, nationalist credentials and dominant position in party and government for almost two decades played a major role in enhancing the power and legitimacy of the most critical position in the Indian political system. The authority of the office, augmented by her charisma and considerable political skills, enabled Indira Gandhi, daughter of

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[56]Brecher, *Nehru's Mantle,* pp. 123–24.

[57]Panandiker and Mehra, pp. 96–97.

[58]*India Today* (New Delhi), September 12, 2005, pp. 8–11.

Nehru, to further enhance the dominant position of the Prime Minister in the Indian political system. Indira came to exercise enormous power, bringing the Cabinet into virtual eclipse as a source of policy influence. Through constant change and the reshuffling of portfolios, Mrs. Gandhi deftly preempted the power of her lieutenants. Although by no means ever wholly free of constraints, she commanded such unprecedented personal power in that brief period following the mandate of the 1971 parliamentary elections and the subsequent euphoria of the victory over Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh that there were those who proclaimed her "Empress of India."

In consolidating her power, Mrs. Gandhi created the Political Affairs Committee, composed of a small group of senior Cabinet ministers under her chairmanship. Responsible for the coordination of major Cabinet concerns in domestic and international affairs and in defense, the committee became the "most important decision-making body in India after the Prime Minister herself."[59] After 1972 Mrs. Gandhi made increasing use of an informal inner circle of trusted advisers, but even their positions were tenuous and rested on personal favor.

The Cabinet and its committees are assisted by the Cabinet Secretariat. Headed by the Cabinet Secretary, a senior member of the administrative service, the Cabinet Secretariat is a formal part of the government and serves as an institutional mechanism for coordinating the business of the Cabinet. Within the Cabinet Secretariat is the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's CIA. Established in 1968, with responsibility for external intelligence, RAW performed with a high level of accuracy during the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, but few people even knew of its existence. Under Mrs. Gandhi, RAW reported directly to the Prime Minister, and during the 1975−77 emergency it assumed domestic political surveillance operations. RAW has now been reorganized, and these internal surveillance activities have been restricted.[60]

Following Nehru's death, the position of Cabinet Secretary was eclipsed somewhat by the rise of the non-statutory Prime Minister's Secretariat, which later became known as the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). In an effort to ease the burdens of transition, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Nehru's successor, decided in 1964 to set up the Prime Minister's Secretariat, analogous to the White House staff. Although the

[59]Kochanek, *Business and Politics,* p. 57.

[60]See Asoka Raina, *Inside RAW: The Story of India's Secret Service* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1981) and Maloy Krishna Dhar, *Open Secrets: India's Intelligence Unrevealed* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2005).

formal functions of the Secretariat involved the preparation "of important speeches, statements and letters," the organization carried with it the seeds of "influence," recalling the days of the "steel frame" under the British Raj, demonstrating "the reemergence of the Civil Service as a powerful pressure group on policy."[61] The Prime Minister's Secretariat was augmented in technical expertise and strengthened under Indira Gandhi, and became the "nerve centre of political and administrative power" in India.[62] The Secretariat guarded access to the Prime Minister and was composed of senior advisers, headed by the Principal Secretary, together with a large staff. It was the responsibility of the Secretariat to keep the Prime Minister informed on policy issues and to shape the options for decision by the Prime Minister. Virtually every matter of importance passes through the Prime Minister's Secretariat, and under a succession of able Principal Secretaries the office has come to be an important locus of decision making within the Indian government.

As the power of the Prime Minister became increasingly personalized under Indira Gandhi, a small extraconstitutional body of advisors known as the Prime Minister's Household (PMH) came to play an increasingly important role in influencing government decisions and especially the posting of senior government officers. The decision in 1975 to impose the emergency, for example, was made within the "household"—Mrs. Gandhi's inner circle. No member of the Cabinet was consulted. During the emergency the circle closed to a half-dozen persons, of whom Sanjay Gandhi, the Prime Minister's 29-year-old son, was dominant. For many decisions—perhaps even her call for elections in 1977—Mrs. Gandhi kept her own counsel.

Despite emphasis on the need for decentralization, Rajiv Gandhi not only continued his mother's tendency toward the centralization of power but took a variety of steps to concentrate even more power in the hands of the Prime Minister. This was done by strengthening the role of the Prime Minister's Office, further eroding the authority of Cabinet ministers and the collective responsibility of the Cabinet, and selecting for key government positions young, inexperienced members of Congress with little base of support in the party in the name of management efficiency.

Rajiv Gandhi's system concentrated power in the Prime Minister's Office rather than in the Cabinet. The PMO was used as a mechanism to monitor almost all activities of government and also served as

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[61]Brecher, *Nehru's Mantle,* pp. 115–20.

[62]C. P. Bhambhri, "A Study of Relationship between Prime Minister and Bureaucracy in India," *The Indian Journal of Public Administration,*17 (1971), p. 369.

Rajiv's private think tank. Initially the PMO was staffed by members of Rajiv's personal coterie, who came to exercise enormous power. In a major reorganization of his government in September 1985, however, Rajiv reverted to his mother's system of appointing top-level civil servants to all key posts in the PMO, while at the same time moving his former close advisers into official positions in the party and the government. The result of this reshuffle was to reduce the enormous informal power wielded by some of Rajiv's immediate political coterie, while strengthening the hand of the more controllable bureaucrats who replaced them.

The strengthening of the role of the Prime Minister's Office was accompanied by a reduction in the authority of Cabinet ministers and the collective responsibility of the Cabinet. In the early years of Rajiv's system, although senior members of Congress held most key Cabinet-level portfolios, they had little independent power or control of their ministry. Cabinet ministers lost the right to allocate work among their junior ministers, and in several cases junior ministers controlled all the key functions of the ministry. Perhaps the most glaring example of this new phenomenon was revealed in the reorganization of the Home Ministry in 1986, traditionally one of the most important ministries in the government of India. The appointment of a variety of young ministers of state assigned direct responsibility for a vast variety of specific subjects clearly reduced the power and importance of senior Cabinet members. This was true not only in the case of Home Affairs but also in the cases of several other ministries. The decrease in power of senior ministers and the increase in power of the Prime Minister's Office run by bureaucrats placed Rajiv in a dominant position, and substantially reduced the collective responsibility of his Cabinet.

In a series of major Cabinet reshuffles, Rajiv's manipulative style of management was repeatedly applied to the Council of Ministers and Cabinet. In his first three years, the Indian Cabinet was reshuffled at least a dozen times and each change was accompanied by a promise that additional adjustments would follow. Every Cabinet minister had been transferred at least once, and some ministers had changed jobs four times.[63] No one was in office long enough to learn the job or take any meaningful action. The pattern continued throughout Rajiv's term in office, and by 1989, he had made changes in the Cabinet 36 times—an average of once every seven weeks.

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[63]See Myron Weiner, "Rajiv Gandhi: A Mid-Term Assessment" and Francine Frankel,
"Politics: The Failure to Rebuild Consensus," in Marshall M. Bouton, ed., *India Briefing,
1987* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 1–23 and 25–48.

The game of musical chairs that plagued the party, the Council of Ministers, and the Cabinet also affected the higher echelons of the civil service. During the first half of Rajiv's term alone, an estimated two-thirds of India's top civil servants were reposted. This mad search for talent, however, appeared to have totally unclear objectives. The criteria for selection remained a mystery. People with backgrounds in agriculture were posted to culture; those with an expertise in finance were sent to education. People who became inconvenient were simply sent back to their home states. The demoralization caused by frequent transfers was reinforced by alteration of promotion lists, disregard for seniority, and a considerable amount of lateral entry at the top.

As Prime Minister, therefore, Rajiv Gandhi centralized power to an even greater extent than did his mother. Almost all files had to go up to the Prime Minister, and power was concentrated in the hands of a very small, narrowly based group of inexperienced personal advisors in the Prime Minister's Secretariat. This pattern of decision making enfeebled his administration and further weakened India's political institutions.

The election of the Janata government in 1977, the end of Congress dominance and the emergence of a new era of coalition politics since 1989 have altered the role of the Prime Minister in the Indian political system. While the role of the Prime Minister has remained central, the Cabinet, coalition co-coordinating committees, and formally dormant governmental institutions have begun to reassert themselves. Under Morarji Desai's Janata Party government, for example, the Cabinet acquired new importance. With few exceptions its members had independent bases of political power and were leaders of the Janata Party's major factions. Finance Minister Charan Singh (who served also as Deputy Prime Minister) and Defense Minister Jagjivan Ram were the Prime Minister's major rivals. Indeed, in the clash of personalities, the Cabinet was less a decision-making body than an arena for factional conflict.

Neither V. P. Singh nor Chandra Shekhar was in a position to replicate or sustain the Indira/Rajiv Gandhi style of leadership and decision making. Both Prime Ministers headed minority governments and did not enjoy the overwhelming political authority of their immediate predecessors. V. P. Singh attempted to manage conflict and maintain his authority by playing off competing interests in the party, the government, and among his opposition party supporters. Although V. P. Singh came to power determined to reduce the power and size of the PMO, which he felt had acquired undue importance under Rajiv, within four months of coming to office he concluded that

the PMO had to become more assertive.[64] In short, over time the PMO has become a critical device through which the Prime Minister has come to exercise power over the government.

During his brief tenure in office, Chandra Shekhar sought to retain control by a deft combination of the illusion of consultation and a process of vague compromises. With only 60 supporters in Parliament, Chandra Shekhar was subject to the dictates of Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress (I), which provided the essential votes to keep him in office.[65]

The election of P. V. Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 and the formation of a minority Congress (I) government after the national elections in June marked another major change in the role of the Prime Minister in the Indian system. Elected as a consensus candidate, Rao was expected to share power. Initially Rao was haunted by the Sonia factor—the attempt by Rajiv's supporters to maintain their influence by pressing the widowed Sonia Gandhi to become the leader of the Congress (I). Sonia's refusal to enter politics and Rao's massive by-election victory in November 1991 helped the new Prime Minister to emerge gradually from the shadow of the Gandhi family. He acted to restore democracy to the Congress (I) by holding the first party elections in 20 years, delegated greater power to his ministers in selecting their top civil-servant staff, and introduced a major economic reform package. Gradually, however, Rao began to assert his authority and concentrate power in his own hands and in the Prime Minister's Office. During his five years in power, Rao came to exercise even more control over party and government than Indira Gandhi.

Despite his dominance, however, Rao's authority began to erode as a result of a series of state assembly election defeats, charges of rampant corruption in his government, and his own indecisive, consensus leadership style that gradually became seen as the politics of inaction. The cautious Prime Minister appeared to believe that things would work out for the best if simply left alone and his decision-making style was reduced to decision making by sheer manipulation. Rao applied this decision-making style to a variety of major issues including the Ayodhya crisis, a major stock market scam, GATT negotiations, the Narmada dispute, and Kashmir. Over time, Rao's decision-making style, which initially seemed to have ushered in a new era of consensus

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[64]B. G. Deshmukh, *From Poona to the Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004), p. 254.

[65]Dipankar Sinha, "V. P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, and No-Where Politics in India," *Asian Survey,* 31 (July 1991), p. 598.

politics following decades of centralized dynastic rule, resulted in alienating his Congress supporters and led the party to the worst electoral defeat in its long and distinguished history in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections.[66]

Neither H. D. Deve Gowda nor I. K. Gujral, the two Janata Dal leaders who became United Front Prime Ministers, was able to remain in office long enough to establish any significant precedents. Both were compromise candidates, both headed a coalition government composed of 14 diverse parties, both were totally dependent upon Congress (I) support to remain in power, and both had no real agenda apart from survival. H. D. Deve Gowda was a 63-year-old, homespun, rustic, provincial politician and the first low-caste Prime Minister in India since independence. He referred to himself as a "simple farmer," spoke halting English, had no personal ideology and had no real political ambitions beyond his home state of Karnataka prior to being selected by the United Front to become Prime Minister. Although Gowda enjoyed a close rapport with Congress President P. V. Narasimha Rao, consulted him often, and saw him almost as a father figure, the tenuous hold of the United Front on power and the coalition's own internal divisions forced the new Prime Minister to concentrate primarily upon his own survival. With Rao's resignation as Congress President in September 1996 due to corruption charges and the election of Sitaram Kesri as Rao's successor, the United Front felt its days were numbered. It was not until December when it became clear that the Congress (I) would not withdraw its support that the United Front ceased to be a government by default and settled down to governing. The United Front embarked upon a period of hectic activity that reinvigorated the economic liberalization policies begun by Rao culminating in the highly acclaimed 1997 budget. Following the presentation of the budget, however, politics once again took command. In March 1998, in a desperate attempt to split the United Front and regain power, Congress President Sitaram Kesri withdrew his party's support of the Gowda government. At age 77 Kesri was not prepared to wait for the United Front to collapse of its own weight and was also fearful of corruption investigations initiated by the Gowda government against him and other Congress (I) leaders.[67]

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[66]See *India Today* (New Delhi), December 31, 1994, p. 30, and *Business India* (Mumbai), May 20–June 2, 1996, pp. 41–42.

[67]George Skaria and Rohit Saran, "*Reforms 97:* The Inside Story," *Business Today* (New Delhi), March 7–21, 1997, pp. 74–89.

Kesri's gamble, however, proved to be a total failure as the United Front held fast and he was forced to settle simply for a change of leadership. In April 1997 the United Front selected I. K. Gujral, a 77-year-old Punjabi refugee and former Congress (I) politician and diplomat, as the new United Front Prime Minister. Gujral had no independent political base and was seen as a conciliator who could keep the Congress (I) at bay. A combination of coalition politics and indecision enabled Gujral to survive until late November 1997 when the Congress (I) again withdrew its support and India was forced to go to the polls in the hope of breaking the deadlock.[68]

The 1998 Lok Sabha elections, however, led to an even more fractured mandate than in 1996. With some difficulty the BJP, under the leadership of the popular Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was able to cobble together another 14-party coalition of regional and caste parties to form a government in March 1998. Vajpayee was seen as the moderate voice of the BJP and an excellent consensus builder. The very trait that made him acceptable to the electorate and to the BJP's coalition allies, however, also proved to be a major hurdle once in office. During his initial months as Prime Minister, Vajpayee failed to act decisively and was increasingly seen as ineffectual. The Indian middle class that had supported the BJP expected good governance, and the BJP seemed to fall short of those expectations. Disappointment briefly turned to euphoria in May 1998 when India dramatically conducted a series of nuclear tests and declared itself to be a nuclear weapons state. The coalition, however, was inherently unstable, and in April 1999, a party on which the BJP government depended withdrew its support. On losing the vote of confidence in Parliament, Vajpayee resigned as Prime Minister. President Narayanan asked him to continue as caretaker until a new government could be formed following elections.

The 1999 elections led to a major victory for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a broad-based coalition of 24 regional and caste parties led by the BJP. The election victory marked a continuation of BJP rule that would last for a full five-year term. As Prime Minister and leader of a new-style dominant party coalition, Vajpayee had to manage both the complex relationship with his alliance partners as well as factions within his own party and the Sangh Parivar, a family of Hindu nationalist organizations. Vajpayee's ability to dominate the coalition was based on his popularity, management style, position as Prime Minister, and use of the Prime Minister's Office as an

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[68]See *India Today* (New Delhi), December 8, 1997, pp. 8–16.

institutional base. Although his coalition partners were able to exercise a veto power over some decisions, Vajpayee was able to use the power of the office of the Prime Minister over policy development, patronage, and the allocation of ministerial portfolios to dominate decision making. As Prime Minister, Vajpayee made a series of major decisions without consulting his coalition partners. These decisions involved the conduct of the May 1998 nuclear tests, major foreign policy initiatives involving India's relations with the United States and Pakistan, the selection of A. P. J. Abdul Kalam as President, and a refusal to yield to alliance pressures to dismiss the BJP government of Gujarat following the Muslim pogrom in 2002.

Vajpayee used the power of the Prime Minister to allocate ministerial portfolios as an effective device to exercise his authority over decision making and to appoint key supporters to important ministerial positions. He also used it to change the direction of his government's economic reform policies, to respond to factional pressures from within his own party, and as a means of reacting to political and organizational change. Despite opposition from the Sangh Parivar, for example, Vajpayee moved away from his party's commitment to Swadeshi by appointing reform-minded ministers and enacting a variety of economic reform measures including patent legislation, the Insurance Act, telecommunication legislation, privatization of public sector enterprises, and policies that encouraged foreign direct investment.

Despite the dominant position of the Prime Minister in the coalition, Vajpayee also found it necessary at times to yield to the demands of his alliance partners on a variety of issues including changes in core BJP policies. Vajpayee's Finance Minister was forced to roll back key budget proposals that attempted to increase petroleum and fertilizer prices; his Education Minister had to withdraw his Hindutva education agenda; the BJP government in Gujarat was forced to rescind its decision permitting state employees to participate in the activities of the RSS; and Vajpayee found it necessary to rule out a government ban on religious conversion, temper his position on Ayodhya, and limit his use of Article 356.

The defeat of the NDA in the 2004 elections led to the formation of a government by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), a Congress-dominated coalition of 13 regional and caste parties supported from outside by the Commuist Party of India (Marxist)-dominated Left Front. The new UPA government was headed by Manmohan Singh who, unlike Vajpayee, was a technocrat and did not command the same political stature as the popular and charismatic BJP leader.

Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister only after Sonia Gandhi, the President of the Congress, renounced the prime ministership because of the controversy surrounding her foreign origins. Sonia chose instead to become the chairman of the newly created National Advisory Council (NAC), an alliance coordinating body established to give her a formal role as leader of the coalition with cabinet rank, an office, and staff. Ever since independence Congress Prime Ministers have tended to totally dominate both party and government. Singh, therefore, became the first Congress Prime Minister in postindependence Indian history to be chosen by the party president and forced to share power. Like Vajpayee, Singh was also forced to deal with the cross pressures generated by intraparty factional pressures as well as demands emanating from his alliance partners. Unlike Vajpayee, he also had to contend with pressures generated by his Left Front supporters outside the government.

Despite political cross pressures, Manmohan Singh has successfully utilized his close relationship with Sonia Gandhi and the power of the Office of the Prime Minister to gradually assert his authority. As Prime Minister, he selected his own Cabinet and key policy advisors, created a strong PMO, and has taken the initiative in the formation of the country's foreign and national security policies. On the domestic front, Singh's initial actions were focused on implementing the promises contained in the coalition's election manifesto to improve the lot of the underprivileged. One of the first acts of the new UPA government was the passage of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Program which assures employment at the minimum wage for 100 days for one member of each rural household. Factionalism, populism, and ideological conflict within the coalition, however, brought most of the Prime Minister's efforts at economic reform to a halt. While Singh was able to take some actions by administrative decree, any decision that required legislative action or political approval was stymied. Like the NDA, moreover, decision making within the UPA became increasingly bogged down in a myriad of some 40 committees composed of groups of ministers leading one observer to proclaim the UPA to be a "GOMRAJ" characterized by delay, endless coordination, and inaction.[69]

Like Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh, in January 2006, attempted to break the stalemate by reshuffling his cabinet. With the prior approval of Sonia Gandhi, Singh embarked upon a new policy direction by making major changes in his cabinet and shifting his government's rhetoric away from empowering the underprivileged to economic reform, growth and an emphasis on strategic partnership with the United States.

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[69]*India Today* (New Delhi), September 12, 2005, pp. 8–11.

The Prime Minister's cabinet reshuffle not only accommodated several Sonia loyalists to key positions in the government but also enabled him to appoint ministers who shared his economic and foreign policy priorities. Although Singh's initiative and new style of functioning upset elements within the coalition and factional groups within his own party, neither the Left Front nor the left within the Congress was prepared to risk a confrontation that might bring down the government.[70]

In short, the Indian Constitution assigns a prominent role to the Prime Minister in the country's parliamentary system. The power of the Prime Minister to appoint ministers, allocate ministerial portfolios, and control the direction and implementation of policy has enabled the Prime Minister to dominate the government. The formal powers that have assigned a central role to the Prime Minister in the Indian political system have been reinforced by the fact that over the past 60 years India has had a series of very strong, charismatic Prime Ministers who have further enhanced their authority through the development of the Prime Minister's Office as a powerful institutional support system. The PMO, which is independent of the Cabinet Secretariat, has proven to be especially important in enhancing the role of the Prime Minister in the new era of coalition politics.

THE PUBLIC SERVICES

During the struggle for swaraj, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was condemned as an instrument of imperialism and exploitation, and its Indian members were condemned as traitorous agents of a "satanic government." At the time of independence, Sardar Patel rose to defend the service. "Remove them," he said, "and I see nothing but a picture of chaos all over the country." Nehru, who had once denounced the ICS for its "spirit of authoritarianism," declared, "the old distinctions and differences are gone. . . . In the difficult days ahead our Service and experts have a vital role to play and we invite them to do so as comrades in the service of India."[71] Those who had once governed were to become servants. The instrument for law and order was to become the agent of change and development.

The structure of the public services, the "steel frame" of the British Raj, was left largely intact. The services are characterized by "open entry based on academic achievement; elaborate training

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[70]*Frontline* (Chennai), February 24, 2006, p. 25.

[71]Jawaharlal Nehru, *Independence and After* (New York: John Day, 1950), p. 9.

arrangements; permanency of tenure; responsible, generalist posts at central, provincial, and district levels reserved for members of the elite cadre alone; a regular, graduated scale of pay with pension and other benefits; and a system of promotion and frequent transfers based predominantly on seniority and partly on merit."[72] The services are divided into three categories: state services, central services, and all-India services. Each state has its own administrative service, headed in most cases by the chief secretary to the government, and a variety of technical, secretariat, and local government services. The central government services include the Indian Foreign Service, the Central Secretariat Service, the Postal Service, and the Indian Revenue Service. Each has its own recruitment procedure, rules, and pay scales. There are also separate technical and specialist services.

The Constitution specifies two all-India services, the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS). Additional all-India services can be created by Parliament provided there is approval by two-thirds of the Rajya Sabha. But the states have tended to oppose the creation of additional all-India services. They have argued that the higher pay for all-India officers would impose a financial strain, but in fact the states resist sharing control over the services with the central government. They also fear that local candidates may fail in an all-India competition and that the posts will be filled by candidates from outside the state.[73]

The Indian Administrative Service

At the time of independence the Indian Civil Service was 52 percent British in membership, but few chose to continue their service under the new government. With the departure of the British and the loss of Muslim officers at partition, the ICS cadre was reduced from 932 to 422. These officers retained their prestigious ICS designation and were integrated into the new Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Most of the initial appointments to the IAS were made on an emergency basis without the usual examination, but the entrance examination was soon resumed. Out of a total of almost 19 million public

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[72]David C. Potter, "Bureaucratic Change in India," in Ralph Braibanti, ed., *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1966), p. 142. See also David C. Potter, *India's Political Administrators, 1919–1983* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), and Hugh Tinker, "Structure of the British Imperial Heritage," in Braibanti, *Asian Bureaucratic Systems,* pp. 23–86.

[73]Chanda, *Indian Administration,* pp. 102–104.

sector employees in India in 2002, the IAS had a total authorized strength of less than 5,159 officers, representing the elite cadre of the bureaucracy.

The IAS is composed of separate cadres for each state, and recruits are permanently allocated to a particular state by the Center. To promote national integration and to secure freedom from local influence, one-half of the IAS cadre in each state should come from other states. This provision has long been under pressure, for with the reorganization of states on a linguistic basis, the vernacular became the language of administration within each state, displacing English and imposing serious hardships on those civil servants with less-than-perfect command of the local language. Moreover, the states have exerted increasing pressure for a policy of local recruitment. Seventy percent of the IAS officers serve the state governments and are under their administrative jurisdiction. There is no central cadre for the IAS; senior posts are filled by officers on deputation from the states who rotate, at least theoretically, between their states and the Center. IAS officers tend to stay longer at the Center, and in practice the Center and the states are engaged in a "tug-of-war" to keep the best people. At both levels IAS officers occupy the highest positions in the bureaucracy. In recent years, however, the states have drawn more heavily upon the state services to fill top administrative posts. Because the proportion of IAS officers that alternate between the state and the central government has declined considerably in recent years, many feel that the services are increasingly becoming "all-India" in name only.[74]

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), an independent advisory body appointed by the President, is responsible for all matters relating to recruitment.[75] The commission also concerns itself with disciplinary matters affecting members of the services and functions to protect the services and the merit system from political interference. Its relations with the government are coordinated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, but in its day-to-day work the commission deals directly with the various ministries and departments through its own secretariat.

Despite the pervasive corruption, political interference, and comparatively low pay that has weakened the Indian bureaucracy over the past two decades, the public services continue to attract men and

[74]K. P. Krishnan and T. V. Somanathan, "Civil Service: An Institutional Perspective" in Kapur and Mehta, pp. 258–319.

[75]See M. A. Muttalib, *Union Public Service Commission* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967).

women of impressive ability, and at the highest levels India is well served. But senior officers earn a fraction of the salaries of their private-sector counterparts, and the result has been an unprecedented hemorrhaging of the IAS. Some of India's most competent government servants retire early or simply resign to make a lateral shift to high-level management positions in business and industry.

Recruitment to the elite all-India services is by competitive examination. Until 1978 the exams were conducted in English only, but the UPSC now permits candidates the option of writing in one of the regional languages. Recruitment can still be highly selective. In 1996 some 244,472 applicants applied to take the Higher Civil Service exam, 120,712 actually appeared at the exam and only 738 or 0.61 percent were selected.[76] Of these, fewer than 150 went to the IAS. Competition is limited to college graduates between the ages of 21 and 30. Although once the highest position to which one might aspire, the IAS has lost much of its attractiveness for India's brightest youth, who may now find business offering both greater prestige and financial reward. The service continues to be dominated by the urban, westernized, and wealthy classes, but the social background of recruits has begun to change. Since the mid-1990s, the number of positions reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes and for candidates from the depressed classes has increased from 22 percent to about 50 percent due to "Mandalization."[77] Approximately 20 percent of recruits to the IAS were women As a result of these changes, the services are no longer as socially homogeneous as they once were, nor are recruits as westernized and "sophisticated" as their predecessors. The services are being "Indianized," but if often their members are less polished by European standards, they are not necessarily less competent.[78]

The IAS examination reflects the generalist orientation of the service; English and general knowledge examinations are required as well as an essay that tests logic and expression. In addition, candidates may be tested on a wide range of nonadministrative subjects. Scores are considered in combination with a screening interview, but a candidate can no longer fail on "personality" alone. Recruits, on probation, receive a year of training at the service academy at Mussoori,

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[76]Krishnan, p. 280.

[77]Ibid., p. 284. Mandalization refers to India's affirmative action.

[78]Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., *India under Pressure: Prospects for Political Stability* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 104–105.

where they take a foundation course that provides a basic background on the constitutional, economic, and social framework of modern India; broad principles of public administration; and the ethics of the profession. On completion of the course, recruits must pass a written examination and qualifying tests in Hindi and the language of the state to which they will be allotted. A riding test, a relic of the past, lingered until the mid-1970s.

After completing their training period the recruits are assigned to one of the state cadres for one or two years to receive training in the field. The state program is organized to provide on-the-job training at every administrative level in a wide range of practical problems.[79] In the British "tradition of the amateur" the IAS officer is a jack-of-all-trades, rotated between the district and the state secretariats, between the state and the Center. At each level the demand for specialized training is far greater than in the days of the British Raj. The chief task of administration is no longer simply the maintenance of order, but development.[80]

Bureaucracy

The mistrust of the bureaucracy that characterized the period of the nationalist movement has been perpetuated in the public mind by the rigidities of the system, impersonal treatment, preoccupation with form and procedures, and unwillingness of lower officials to accept responsibility. This image of the officialdom has opened "a chasm between the administration and the general public."[81] The achievement of development goals, however, depends on the growth of mutual attitudes of support and responsiveness between citizens and administrators. The results of various surveys, although inconclusive, suggest that increasing contact between a citizen and an official tends to mobilize the citizen's support if that person believes the official responsive. If the official is unresponsive, as is often the case, increased contact can serve to widen the gap between aspiration and

[79]See S. P. Jagota, "*Training of Public Servants in India,*" in Braibanti, *Asian Bureaucratic Systems,* pp. 83–84.

[80]For an examination of the All-India Services, their recruitment and training, see S. R. Maheshwari, *Problems and Issues in Administrative Federalism* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1992).

[81]Rajni Kothari, "Administrative Institutions of Government," *Economic Weekly,* 27 May 1961, p. 825. The tensions between the use and abuse of bureaucratic power are examined in O. P. Dwivedi and R. B. Jain, *India's Administrative State* (New Delhi: Gitanjali Publishing House, 1985).

achievement, causing criticism, cynicism, and hostility.[82] Expanding participation has brought larger numbers of people into contact with the bureaucracy. If it is to cope successfully with the increasing demands made upon it, the bureaucracy must be more open, flexible, and less centralized in its decision-making responsibility. An increased specialization of function, with structural differentiation; a decline of the tradition of the amateur; and an opening of the ranks of the services to a broader social base have all served to enhance the capacity of the bureaucracy to meet the problems posed by expanded participation, but the bureaucracy remains essentially an instrument of order rather than of democratic responsiveness. It has not yet successfully adapted to the new political environment, and because it has lost much of its prestige and once-legendary efficiency, some have argued that the "steel frame" has become a cheap alloy.

The structure of an administration is an important determinant of its capabilities. At the lower rungs of the bureaucracy, formalism has served to stifle bureaucratic initiative and imagination. Procedure involves "the hierarchical movement of paper."[83] Unwilling to accept responsibility even for minor decisions, petty bureaucrats refer the files, neatly tied in red tape, to a higher level. In India, it is said, "the British introduced red tape, but we have perfected it." Responsibility is diluted in delay and inaction. "Red tape becomes a technique of self-preservation," writes Kothari, "and reverence for traditional forms is matched only by attachment to strict routine and an unwholesome preoccupation with questions of accountability."[84] Paul Appleby argues that it is not a question of too much hierarchy, but rather that there is an irregular hierarchy, disjointed and impeding effective communication.[85] Administrative structure is not truly pyramidal, for authority is overly concentrated at the top. The permanent secretary to a state or central government department or ministry is accountable to a minister who holds that portfolio. The permanent

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[82]See Samuel J. Eldersveld et al., *The Citizen and the Administrator in a Developing Democracy* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1968), pp. 133–34. John O. Field finds that those who are most inclined to make demands on government in the sense of believing it to be relevant to the solution of various problems and in the sense of actually participating in politics beyond mere discussion or voting . . . are the people who are most likely to credit government with good intentions and satisfactory performance. "Partisanship in India: A Survey Analysis," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1973, p. 427.

[83]Paul Appleby, *Public Administration in India: Report of a Survey* (New Delhi: Government of India, Cabinet Secretariat, 1953), p. 18.

[84]Kothari, "Administrative Institutions," p. 824.

[85]Appleby, *Public Administration,* p. 28.

secretary may exercise considerable influence over the formation of policy through advice, but more frequently the minister intervenes in the administrative process to make particular decisions rather than general policy and, when criticized, shifts responsibility to the civil servants—a situation hardly calculated to sustain morale. In an atmosphere of distrust the civil servant may seek to separate policy and administration, sabotaging the former for the protection of the latter.[86]

A relationship characterized by mutual respect between the politician and the bureaucrat is critical. The civil servant must be neither arrogant nor slavish in a democratic system subject ultimately to non-bureaucratic control. Over the past 30 years the bureaucracy has been increasingly penetrated, as politicians—ministers and legislators—have interfered in day-to-day administration. The moral dilemma of the public servant was dramatized in 1981 when a senior IAS officer in Bihar refused to accept promotion to a higher post because of his "disillusionment over the utterly subservient role and the insignificant authority to which the public servants in the state have been reduced."[87] In later writing of his experience, the officer, A. K. Chatterjee, identified the root of the problem as the departure from norms and a weakening of the rule of law by politicians seeking favor for their relatives and friends—friends who often consist of criminal elements, "mafia-kings and smugglers, bribe-takers and underhand-dealers." "The choice before the public servant in such a state is awkward." If yielding to political pressure in violation of law, the civil servant may not only get a share of the "grease-money," but also enter the politician's circle of friends. "That enables him to wield greater effective power through the counter-system and to 'get things done' for his own friends in contravention of rules, regulations and norms. . . . Or else, he may try to resist the privileged deal." By doing so, however, the civil servant earns the politician's wrath and "is branded as tactless and obstructive, becomes unacceptable to the political executive, and is fated to face continuous harassment and frequent transfers, leaving him no opportunity to show results and get any job satisfaction. Sooner or later, he feels demoralized, for in the eyes of the people too, he has been a 'failure' in service."[88]

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[86]Morris-Jones, *Government,* p. 133.

[87]Quoted in R. B. Jain, "Role Relevance and the Moral Dilemma of Public Services in India," in R. B. Jain, ed., *Public Services in a Democratic Context* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1983), p. 16. The essays in this volume were presented in a seminar organized by IIPA in 1982. Among the 60 participants were 20 senior civil servants from both Center and state levels.

[88]A. K. Chatterjee, "Tinkering with the Rule of Law," in Jain, *Public Services,* pp. 23–26.

Political interference is present to some degree in the administration of most states and at the Center. Politicians (mostly ministers) have gained leverage over bureaucrats by the threat of transfer to the *mofussil* (the "boondocks") and by control over the avenues of appointment and promotion. In Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, particularly dramatic cases, legislators as well as ministers have been able to transfer civil servants in order to bring in political cronies, to oblige relatives, or to extort favors. The result has been a decline in bureaucratic morale and efficiency. In the most extreme cases, such as Bihar, ministerial incompetence and venality have gutted effective administration.

At the same time that the bureaucracy in many states has been eroded by political interference, corruption, and low morale, its power at the Center (and in some states) has grown—so much so that it has been described as "civil service raj." Bureaucrats were subjected to enormous political pressures during the 1975−77 emergency; most acquiesced to whatever orders came down from above; some were overzealous in their exercise of newfound power. Following the change of political power to the Janata Party in 1977 and back to the Congress in 1980, punitive transfers took their toll on bureaucratic morale, but by 1982 Mrs. Gandhi—in part to restore morale, but primarily to further centralize executive authority—began to insulate senior civil servants at the Center from ministerial interference. Indeed she increasingly bypassed ministers to deal directly with the highest echelons of the bureaucracy. The secretaries of each ministry came to play increasingly important decision-making roles and were linked to the Prime Minister through the Prime Minister's Secretariat, which also opened channels to the state chief secretaries, strengthening the civil-service tie between the Center and the states.

During the transition from Congress to Janata and back again, the bureaucracy provided continuity in administration, as it did in 1947 with the transfer of power from the British to an independent India. During the last months of the Janata government and under the caretaker government of Charan Singh, the bureaucracy provided stability in a period of political crisis. Ministries and ministers may come and go, but the bureaucrats remain to provide "permanent government."[89]

Under Rajiv Gandhi the civil service again became increasingly demoralized by frequent transfers, alteration of promotion lists, disregard for seniority, and, even more devastating, Rajiv's petulant

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[89]Hardgrave, *India under Pressure,* pp. 106–107.

outbursts and public humiliation of high-level officials. The most dramatic incident occurred in February 1987 when Rajiv publicly announced the replacement of A. P. Venkateswaran, who had been Foreign Secretary for only 10 months, before a nationally televised press conference. Venkateswaran, who was at the press conference, was absolutely stunned. The incident touched off a public uproar and fueled the growing sense of resentment in the civil service, adversely affecting the implementation of Rajiv's policies.

Although the highest levels of the Indian bureaucracy continue to command respect, that respect has diminished in recent years as cases of corruption have tarnished the image of the elite services. Corruption has long been endemic in the lower and middle levels of bureaucracy, but it has begun to reach higher, especially in those states in which there has been considerable political interference in administration. All generalizations about India are subject to qualification in terms of regional variation, and this is especially evident in judging the character of state governments. Within the Indian federal system, states range from the reasonably well administered to those that are in virtual collapse. Most states are served by senior officers of capability and integrity, but every state administration is under pressure. In some state ministries corruption is widespread and cynically accepted as a fact of life.[90]

While most people continue to see government service as prestigious, their confidence in it is low. Public servants are described as ineffectual, self-seeking, and dishonest. In a survey of residents of Delhi State, almost 60 percent felt that at least half the government officials were corrupt.[91] Corruption may be greatly exaggerated in India because economically frustrated individuals seek a scapegoat in official misbehavior, but A. D. Gorwala argues that "the psychological atmosphere produced by the persistent and unfavourable comment is itself the cause of further moral deterioration, for people will begin to adapt their methods, even for securing a legitimate right, to what they believe to be the tendency of men in power and office."[92] Moreover, the public may decry corruption, but traditional attitudes often condone it, and fatalism may lead many to accept it as inevitable. Nepotism is officially condemned, but in traditional terms it may be viewed as loyalty to one's family, friends, and community.

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[90]Ibid., p. 105.

[91]Eldersveld, *Citizen,* pp. 29–30.

[92]*Report on Public Administration* (New Delhi: Government of India, Planning Commission, 1953), p. 13.

In India, as in any country in which the power of a public servant far exceeds income, corruption is a major problem. The scope of corruption is greater at points where substantive decisions are made in such matters as tax assessment and collection, licensing, and contracts. "Speed money" to expedite papers and files, even when nothing unlawful is involved, is perhaps the most common form. And it probably takes its greatest toll from the poor, who can least afford it. The government has engaged in vigorous anti-corruption drives, yielding numerous complaints of petty graft. Less easily substantiated are the reports of corruption at the highest levels of government. Stories circulate in the bazaars about ministers who grow rich in office and favor their family and caste fellows.

Corruption in itself constitutes an informal political system. It opens channels of influence, but access is limited to only those with the right connections and sufficient wealth to bend political decisions to their favor. Corruption serves to augment, through illegal means, the advantages those of wealth already command through more institutionalized means of access: the press, elections, and pressure-group activity. Its consequence is fundamentally conservative.[93]

Since 1947 the central government has set up more than 20 committees and commissions to examine the bureaucracy and recommend administrative reform. Beyond ad hoc adjustments of nuts and bolts, however, few reforms have been implemented. Politicians are faced with more pressing demands, and bureaucrats resist any change that would weaken their power, prerogative, and privilege. As S. R. Maheshwari writes, "The bureaucracy is a cluster of vested interest which officials zealously protect and even promote."[94] By the mid-1990s the diminished independence, increased interference, growing corruption, rising provincialization and communalization, diminished social prestige, the rise of consumer society, and the erosion of confidence and morale have come to increasingly plague the civil service.[95]

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[93]See James C. Scott, *Comparative Political Corruption* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1972), pp. 2–35; Stanley A. Kochanek, "The Politics of Regulation: Rajiv's New Mantras," *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 23 (November 1985), pp. 189–211; Stanley A. Kochanek, "Briefcase Politics in India: The Congress Party and the Business Elite," *Asian Survey,* 27 (December 1987), pp. 1278–1301; and Vinod Pavarala, *Interpreting Corruption: Elite Perspectives in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996).

[94]S. R. Maheshwari, "Strengthening Administrative Capabilities in India," *Public Administration and Development,* 4 (1984), p. 62.

[95]Bhagwan D. Dua, "A Study in Executive-Judicial Conflict: The Indian Case," *Asian Survey,* 18 (April 1983), pp. 463–83. The *Judges' Transfer* case is cited as *S. P. Gupta and others v. Union of India, All India Reporter,* 1982, *Supreme Court* 149, and Krishnan, p. 303.

A recent study of India's civil service, however, concluded, "the actual number of principled, neutral, fair, and honest officers is still surprisingly high."[96]

THE SUPREME COURT AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The Supreme Court of India stands at the apex of a single, integrated judicial system. Although India is a federation, the centralized judiciary is regarded as "essential to maintain the unity of the country."[97] The 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 Great Britain, where no court may hold an Act of Parliament invalid, all legislation passed in India by the Center or the states must be in conformity with the Constitution, and the constitutionality of any enactment is determined under the power of judicial review by the Supreme Court. 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, and it did so in 1975 in striking down provisions of the Thirty-ninth Amendment.[98]

The scope of judicial review in India is not as wide as in the United States. The detail of the Constitution gives the Court less latitude in interpretation, and the emergency provisions severely reduce the Court's review powers in the area of personal liberty. The declaration of emergency itself is not justiciable. Through its power of judicial review, however, the Court exercises control over both legislative and executive acts. The Court first invoked its power of supremacy in 1950 when it held a section of the Preventive Detention Act invalid and unconstitutional.

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[96]Krishnan, p. 311.

[97]Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly debates, quoted in Austin, *Indian Constitution,* p. 185.

[98]*Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain, All India Reporter* 1975, *Supreme Court* 2299. On the "basic structure" doctrine, see Upendra Baxi, *Courage, Craft, and Contention: The Indian Supreme Court in the Eighties* (Bombay: Tripathi, 1985), pp. 64–110; and S. P. Sathe, *Constitutional Amendments, 1950–1988: Law and Politics* (Bombay: Tripathi, 1989), pp. 68–94.

The Court has since held hundreds of Center and state acts invalid, either in whole or in part, and most of its decisions have been unanimous.

During the first two decades following the adoption of the Constitution, tension between the courts and Parliament focused on the Supreme Court's decisions with regard to the protection of the Fundamental Rights—Articles 12 through 35—especially the Court's attempt to protect property rights from assault by a reformist, socialist oriented government. Out of the first 45 amendments to the constitution, about half were aimed at reducing the power of courts, which Nehru referred to as the "third House of Parliament." The very first amendment to the Constitution was a response to a Court decision that invalidated state laws to abolish zamindari estates on the basis of the equal protection clause of the Constitution. The amendment denied the Court the power to declare government acquisition of property invalid on the ground that it abridges any of the Fundamental Rights.[99] Two subsequent amendments, the Fourth and the Seventeenth, were required to free land-reform legislation from court jurisdiction. Then in 1967, in the historic *Golaknath* case,[100] the Supreme Court ruled that the Fundamental Rights cannot be abrogated or abridged by Parliament—even by constitutional amendment.

The continuing controversy between the Court and Parliament over the right to property was again confronted dramatically in 1970 when the Supreme Court struck down the bank nationalization law and the Presidential Order abolishing the privy purse and privileges of the princes. The measures had been among the most popular of Indira Gandhi's new policy proposals, and they provided the vehicle by which she could secure basic changes in the Constitution. To secure these changes, the Prime Minister sought a mandate in the 1971 parliamentary elections. With an overwhelming majority in Parliament, Mrs. Gandhi led the passage of the Twenty-fourth Amendment, effectively securing for Parliament the power to amend any provision of the Constitution, including the provisions of Part III relating to Fundamental Rights. In the landmark *Kesavananda* decision,[101] the Court upheld the Twenty-fourth Amendment, but declared any amendments passed by Parliament that attacked the "basic structure" of the

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[99]H. C. L. Merillat, *Land and the Constitution in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 126–33.

[100]*Golaknath v. State of Punjab, All India Reporter,* 1967, *Supreme Court* 1643. See also G. C. V. Subba Rao, "Fundamental Rights in India Versus Power to Amend the Constitution," *Texas International Law Forum,* 4 (Summer 1968), pp. 291–339.

[101]*Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala, All India Reporter,* 1973, *Supreme Court* 1641.

Constitution would be invalid. The issue was again taken up under the 1975–77 emergency with the passage of the Forty-second Amendment (1976), which sought to bar the Supreme Court from reviewing any constitutional amendment. In the 1980 *Minerva Mills* case,[102] however, the Court struck down this portion of the Forty-second Amendment, reaffirming the doctrine set forth in *Kesavananda* that the basic structure of the Constitution cannot be altered.[103]

The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice and 25 associate justices. Each judge is appointed by the President after consultation with the judges of the Supreme Court and the high courts of the states, as deemed necessary. Consultation with the Chief Justice is obligatory. The judges hold office until retirement at age 65, as specified in the Constitution, and may be removed only by Parliament on grounds of "proved misbehaviour or incapacity." Appointments to the Supreme Court are usually made from the benches of the high courts of the states. Although not constitutionally binding, the appointment of the Chief Justice has come to be automatic, with the elevation of the senior most judge to that office on the retirement of the incumbent. Precedent was broken in 1973 when the President, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, appointed A. N. Ray to succeed, superseding three senior judges, who then resigned in protest from the Court. The appointment provoked an outcry of "political motivation" from the legal profession. The Prime Minister defended the action—though hardly satisfying her critics—as being in the interest of "social justice." Again in January 1977, Indira Gandhi bypassed the senior most judge in appointing a new Chief Justice. In 1978 the Janata government returned to the principle of seniority in selecting Y. V. Chandrachud as Chief Justice, despite criticism that the justice had been less than vigorous in opposing the 1975–77 emergency.

Until 1982 the government's power to appoint judges appeared almost absolute. In the years that followed, however, the power of the Executive to appoint judges to the High Court was gradually eroded by a series of judicial decisions that all but transferred the power of appointment to the court itself. In a series of cases known as the judge's case the courts first ruled that the power of the government to appoint judges required a "meaningful" process of consultation with the Chief Justice and other judges. In a subsequent case the court ruled that the

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[102]*Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India, All India Reporter,* 1980, *Supreme Court* 1789.

[103]See Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, "Judicial Review versus Parliamentary Sovereignty: The Struggle over Stateness in India," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 19 (November 1981), pp. 231–56.

President was bound by the decision of the Chief Justice and other judges in making all judicial appointments, which all but officially transferred the power of appointment to the court itself.[104]

The virtual capitulation of the Supreme Court to political pressures during the 1975–77 emergency eroded its credibility. Embarrassed by its record during the emergency, the Supreme Court began playing a more activist role in promoting social and economic justice. The change in the Court's role was later reinforced by the end of Congress dominance, the rise of coalition politics, and the weakening of political parties and governmental institutions. These changes created new political space for the rejuvenation of not only the judiciary but also other dormant institutions including the office of President and the Election Commission. Beginning in the late 1970s, the Court began to reinterpret the fundamental rights, the Directive Principles of State Policy, and Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution to include the concepts of equal treatment under the law and due process. Under this reinterpretation of the Constitution, the judiciary cooperated with, encouraged, and promoted public interest litigation (PIL) by inviting class action suits, treating letters written to judges as writ petitions, acting upon newspaper reports, appointing committees to investigate the facts of a case, and summoning experts to obtain their views. Social action litigation in India has been an expression of judicial activism, as it has been primarily "judge-led and even judge-induced."[105] Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer took the lead toward judicial populism and from the late 1970s, with Justice P. N. Bhagwati, opened the Court to petitions from the downtrodden, expanding the protection of fundamental rights and personal liberty under the Indian Constitution. The result has been a massive expansion of civil, political, economic, and social rights as the court increasingly supported citizens' rights against arbitrary encroachment by the state. The Court has ruled on behalf of bonded laborers, tribals, women, the homeless, and "undertrials"—those jailed, sometimes for years, while awaiting trial.[106]

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[104]S. P., Sathe, *Judicial Activism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 296–97 and Pratap Bhanu Mehta "India's Judiciary: The Promise of Uncertainty" in Kapur and Mehta, pp. 158–193.

[105]*India Today,* March 31, 1991, pp. 44–45. Also see *India Today,* February 15, 1991, p. 41.

[106]"The Supreme Court: The Conflicts Within," *India Today,* November 15, 1984, p. 96. In 1996, India had an estimated 163,000 undertrials (unconvicted prisoners) or 72.3 percent of all prisoners. Many have spent more time in jail than their alleged crimes would require if convicted. See *India Today* (New Delhi), August 17, 1998, pp. 27–32.

Since the early 1990s the judiciary has become even more active in governance by playing a major role in combating corruption. While many corruption cases came to the courts via PIL, others were the result of the courts taking notice of complaints. In the process, the courts began to enlarge their supervisory role. In the *Jain Hawala* case, for example, the Court on December 6, 1994 ordered the director of the CBI to report personally its progress directly to the court. When the CBI's investigation seemed to be moving too slowly, the Court on January 30, 1996 ordered the CBI to spare no one, and on March 1, 1996 it instructed the CBI to report to no one else but the Court. The results were staggering as corruption cases exposed higher levels of government from ministers, to top bureaucrats, to opposition political leaders, and to the arrest of former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao. As the courts increasingly became a major instrument of establishing accountability, however, the United Front government attempted to curb its role by introducing the Constitution Eighty-second Amendment bill. The attempt failed.[107]

The Indian judiciary continues to face a variety of daunting problems. First, judicial activism has generated considerable opposition. Critics charge that the judiciary has digressed from its traditional duties, has entered a field in which it has no competence, and has ceased to exercise any self-restraint. Second, public interest litigation has reached ridiculous limits. In July 1997, for example, a PIL petitioned the Court to convince the Congress (I) to join the United Front Government in the interest of collective responsibility.[108] Third, the higher judiciary itself, it was charged, was not free of corruption and needed to develop a system to ensure against judicial indiscipline. In 1991, for example, the Supreme Court was shaken by an unprecedented motion of impeachment filed by 108 Members of Parliament against a sitting justice. The motion was taken in response to charges in a government audit that Justice V. Ramaswami had, during his tenure as Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, misused state funds. Ramaswami received a temporary reprieve with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1991 but, observed *India Today,* "the motion has clearly opened a new chapter in India's constitutional history."[109] The move to impeach Ramaswami was

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[107]See *India Today* (New Delhi), October 31, 1996, pp. 20–26; see also Poornima Advani, *Indian Judiciary: A Tribute* (Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 1997).

[108]*India Today* (New Delhi), July 28, 1997, p. 24.

[109]*India Today* (New Delhi), March 31, 1991, pp. 44–45. Also see *India Today,* February 15, 1991, p. 41.

later revived but failed in May 1993 when a divided ruling Congress (I) abstained when a group of Tamil Congressmen charged that the case reflected a North Indian bias against the South. The Chief Justice responded by refusing to assign any cases to Ramaswami, who finally decided to resign.[110] Other ethical questions involve such issues as close relatives of High Court justices practicing in their courts.

The politicization of the judiciary has had a devastating impact on state courts. Judges feel that their recommendations are increasingly ignored, and critics argue that political considerations, caste, community, and nepotism have come to dominate the appointment process. As a result, there is a growing perception that the caliber of judicial appointments has declined and that faith in the judiciary is being undermined. In the 1980s, a series of major controversies came to threaten the credibility of the judiciary. For the first time since independence, the integrity of High Court judges was called into question. Exemplary of the problem is the 125-year-old Bombay High Court, rocked by scandal in 1990 involving a property dispute that led the major bar association in Maharashtra to pass a resolution that expressed "complete lack of confidence" in four judges and asked them to step down or face a boycott.[111]

A fourth problem facing the courts is the impact of PIL and judicial activism on a court system that is already overburdened by cumbersome procedures and a staggering case load. India has only 2.7 judges per 100,000 of population compared to a worldwide average of 6.8 and there are some 20 million cases pending in Indian courts of which 3.2 million cases are pending in India's High Courts.[112] Where the U.S. Supreme Court accepts less than 200 cases from the 4,000 or more petitions it receives each year, the Indian Supreme Court accepts as many as 100,000 cases in a year, and those unresolved are added to the expanding backlog of cases. By the late 1990s, the number of cases pending before the Supreme Court had increased to over 150,000.

The judges of state-level High Courts are appointed by the President, usually from lower benches, after consultation with the Chief Justices of the Supreme Court and the state High Court and with the Governor of the state. The selection process, however, has become increasingly politicized as state Chief Ministers have sought to place

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[110]Bhabani Sen Gupta, *India: Problems of Governance* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996), p. 229.

[111]See "The Judiciary: Crisis of Credibility," *India Today,* July 15, 1990, pp. 18–23.

[112]Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "Judiciary," in Kapur and Mehta, pp. 160–177.

their political cronies on the bench. Although the total number of authorized judges and additional judges in India's High Courts in 2004 was 771, only 494 judicial positions had actually been filled.

The jurisdiction of the High Courts is not detailed in the Constitution, but it is provided that they retain their general appellate jurisdiction as established during British rule. In addition, the High Courts have original jurisdiction on revenue matters; superintend all courts within the state; and have the power to issue writs or orders for the enforcement of the Fundamental Rights guaranteed under the Constitution. Below the High Courts are the district and subordinate courts, similar in structure throughout the country. At every level the case load is staggering.

The modern judiciary, established by the British as a rule of law— universal, impersonal, and impartial—is today accepted as legitimate throughout India. Indeed, Indians make ready use of the courts and have developed an almost unrivaled capacity for litigation. Although the modern legal system has largely displaced that of tradition, traditional groups have used the modern system for their own ends. Marc Galanter argues that "the new system is Indian: it is a unique system, peculiarly articulated to many of the interests and problems of modern India; and it is a new kind of unifying network through which various aspects of the civilization may find new expression."[113] Although the judiciary in India continues to be held in high esteem and judges enjoy a considerable degree of respect, by the early 1990s, the system had come under increasing public criticism for the first time since independence.

Over the past 60 years the Indian judiciary has carved out a significant degree of autonomy for itself in the Indian political system. It has established the principle of judicial review, limited the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution, held the executive accountable, limited the role of the executive in judicial appointments, and become the custodian of constitutional values. Despite its enhanced power, the Indian judiciary continues to exercise considerable restraint in the use of its power and has attempted to function within the parameters of the popular political consensus. At the same time, the courts in India remain plagued by delay, inefficiency, a massive backlog of cases, poor enforcement, institutional weakness, limited budgets, problems of accountability, and a legal culture that is resistant to change.[114]

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[113]Marc Galanter, "Hindu Law and the Development of the Modern Indian Legal System," unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 9–12, 1964, p. 86. See also Upendra Baxi, *The Crisis of the Indian Legal System* (New Delhi: Vikas, entry/pub-date>), pp. 58–83.

[114]See Pratap Bhanu Mehta "judiciary," in Kapur and Mehta and Sathe.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Each of India's 28 states reproduces in miniature the structure and organization of the Union government.

The Governor

In his relationship to the Chief Minister, the state council of ministers, and the state legislative assembly, the Governor holds a constitutional position much like that of the President at the Center. The Governor is usually from another state, free from local political commitments, and, presumably, able to view the problems of Union-state relations with detachment and objectivity.[115] Appointed by the President for a term of five years, the Governor may be dismissed before the expiration of the term. Until the 1970s it was the practice to consult the Chief Minister of the state as to a candidate's acceptability. Under Indira Gandhi, however, Governors were regarded as agents of the central government.[116]

Like the President, the Governor holds the formal executive power. Although this power is, in fact, exercised by the council of ministers, the Governor has important discretionary powers to perform as the agent of the central government. It is the Governor's decision as to what lies within personal discretion. The Governor formally appoints the Chief Minister. If no clear majority is returned to the state assembly, the Governor may exercise discretion in the selection of a leader who can form a stable ministry, and although the confidence of the assembly is required, the Governor's role may be critical.

As early as the 1967 elections, the role of the Governor was brought into controversy. Five states were without clear majorities after the election, and in other states subsequent liquidity of support, with the defection of members to the opposition in floor-crossings, brought on so much instability that governors had considerable room to act. In the states without clear majorities governors had to assess which of the competing coalitions could marshal majority support; in the other states they had to determine whether

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[115]M. V. Pylee, *Constitutional Government in India,* 4th ed. (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1984), p. 394.

[116]L. P. Singh, "Role of the Governor," unpublished manuscript, 1984, pp. 7–8. Also Douglas V. Verney, "The Role of the Governor in India's 'Administrative Federalism': A Comparative Perspective," *Indian Journal of Public Administration,* 31 (1985), pp. 1, 243–68, and "Federalism," *Seminar* (May 1989), p. 357.

the ministry retained the confidence of the assembly and, if not, whether a new ministry could be formed. If no government can be found, the central government may invoke Article 356 of the constitution and place the state under President's Rule. The Governor, as agent of the Union, then assumes the emergency powers of administration. From 1967 to the early 1990s the use of Article 356 became a familiar one and what was once an extraordinary measure of central intervention became almost a regular occurrence. Since the end of Congress dominance and the federalization of Indian politics, however, the abuse of Article 356 has declined significantly in response to judicial action and the changed political environment.

It was the intention of the framers of the Constitution that the Governor exercise authority independently of central control. During the era of Congress dominance, however, the Governor frequently functioned as "the eyes and ears" of New Delhi and was so regarded in the states. The use of the Governor's discretionary power to dismiss a ministry has long been a subject of controversy, but the politicization of the office was never more evident than in 1984, when the Center intervened to bring down popularly elected governments in Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, and Andhra. The action in Andhra brought a national outcry of protest against "the murder of democracy." When the deposed Chief Minister, T. N. Rama Rao, successfully demonstrated that he retained his majority in the legislative assembly, he was reinstated—but not before the Governor submitted his resignation. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi claimed to have had no role in the affair, but the mark of central intervention was clearly evident. Increasingly, the Governor has functioned as an agent of the ruling party. Each time there is a change of government at the Center, governors considered inconvenient are replaced or transferred, and a Governor who refuses to accept central direction is forced to quit.

In addition to emergency powers, the Governor also has certain legislative powers, including the power to promulgate ordinances. Every bill passed by the assembly goes to the Governor for assent. Most bills are government-sponsored, and refusal to assent would bring the Governor into conflict with the state ministry. However, the Governor is empowered to return any bill except a money bill to the assembly for its reconsideration. If, in the Governor's opinion, a bill threatens the position of the high court, it may be reserved for the assent of the President.

While many critics have demanded the abolition of the office of Governor, the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State Relations concluded that the Governor served as "a vital link between the union

government and the state government" and, therefore, the office must be retained.[117] It argued that most of the problems that have arisen could be solved by the development of proper traditions and conventions. Governors must not misuse their authority by acting as agents of the dominant party that controls the central government; rather they must restrict their administrative role in the states to real emergencies. Similarly, the Governor must not act in ways that would thwart the popular mandate of state-level parties, and should develop a responsible parliamentary role as titular leader of the state.

Since the end of Congress dominance, the emergence of coalition politics, and the growing regionalization of the party system, the role of the Governor has begun to change. These changes in the political environment have been reinforced by a series of court decisions that have also begun to define the role of the Governor and set limits on his discretionary powers. Although the central government may still attempt to use the office of Governor for partisan purposes, some Governors have begun to exercise their powers more independently. This has been true especially when there have been weak governments at the Center. In addition, the courts have also intervened to set limits on the discretionary powers of the Governor, especially in appointing the Chief Minister. The courts have ruled that the Governor cannot appoint a Chief Minister that does not command a majority in the legislature; he must verify all claims of majority support; he cannot refuse to allow the formation of a government or override the claim of majority support based simply on his own subjective assessment that the majority was cobbled together by illegal or unethical means; and he cannot appoint a noncitizen, a person convicted of a grave criminal offense, or a person declared a lunatic as Chief Minister.[118]

The Chief Minister

The Chief Minister occupies a position in the state comparable to that of the Prime Minister at the Center. Appointed by the Governor, the Chief Minister is responsible, along with the ministry, to the popularly elected legislative assembly. Until 1967 the number of ministers in each state averaged about one dozen. In the process of ministry

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[117]*Commission on Centre-State Relations Report,* Pt. I (Nasik: Government of India Press, 1988), p. 118.

[118]M. P. Singh in Dua and Singh, pp. 192; Ravi P. Bhatia "Federalism in India and the Supreme Court Rulings," in Dua and Singh, pp. 234–36, and *India Today* (New Delhi), January 24, 2006.

formation after the 1967 elections, however, the ministries were greatly expanded as additional posts were offered to counter opposition attempts to lure members into defection through the promise of ministerial positions in new governments. The Janata Dal government in Bihar, elected in 1989, had a record 76 ministers, 26 of Cabinet rank. In October 1998 Kalyan Singh, the BJP Chief Minister in U.P. expanded his ministry to include 92 MLAs in a desperate effort to hold his 222 supporters in line. In an effort to check this abuse, the BJP government passed the Ninety-first Amendment to the Constitution that limits the total number of ministers, including the Chief Minister, to 15 percent of the total number of members of the legislature. The Amendment also applies to the central government.[119]

The Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council

The Constitution provides that in each state there shall be a Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha). Five states also have a second chamber, the Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad). The assembly is directly elected for a five-year term, with a membership of not more than 500 nor fewer than 60. In order to maintain uniformity in the population represented, the constituencies are reapportioned with each election in accordance with the census.

In those five states with a bicameral legislature the upper house, the Legislative Council, is selected by a combination of direct election, indirect election, and nomination, with a total membership not more than one-third of the number in the Legislative Assembly but not fewer than 40. The council is not subject to dissolution, and like the Rajya Sabha, it renews one-third of its membership every two years. Unlike the Rajya Sabha, however, the upper house of the states exercises what in fact is an advisory role alone. At most, it can delay the passage of a bill and has been attacked as a "costly ornamental luxury."

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Members of the state legislative assemblies command positions of increasing importance, for it is the assembly rather than Parliament that is the legislative unit closest to the people. Likewise, assembly elections are viewed within the states as far more critical than parliamentary elections. A recent study of MLAs in five states shows that the social character of assembly members is not as different from MPs as

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[119]Adeney in Adeney and Saez, p. 103.

had long been assumed. MLAs in the study had levels of formal education identical to or marginally higher than MPs. In addition, contrary to the traditional rural, rustic image of MLAs, the majority of MLAs (57 percent) lived in urban or metropolitan areas, and only 30 percent were agriculturalists—a percentage lower than the 38.7 percent in the Twelfth Lok Sabha. The MLA is highly astute politically, and it is through this office that the masses make their most effective contact with the elite.[120]

> In what might be seen as an unsympathetic and generally inaccessible political system, the MLA has become a focal point of grievances from the society. Even though his influence is limited, he has become one of the 'safety-valves' that prevent societal pressure from building up to violent proportions or at least helps in the process that contains it. By virtue of being an elected representative, he is also performing a useful function in providing legitimacy to the political system. It is in these indirect consequences of his position that he seems to be serving the maximum purpose. Clearly then, apart from being partisan supporters of their party policies and actions, the MLAs appear to serve two main functions: they have become transactional intermediaries through whom out-of-turn favours may be obtained; and their ready availability as listening-posts means that their constituents bring to them, mostly in hope not in expectation, many personal problems and complaints against the administration.[121]

Increasingly, argues Chopra, politics is becoming a lucrative career offering employment opportunities for those whose job prospects in the rural hinterland are limited. This profitability is also a factor in the growing criminalization of state politics. In several states, most notably Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, patronage networks and jobbery have been the conduit by which criminal elements—goondas, dacoits, and mafia chiefs—have entered public life. In the Bihar Legislative Assembly in the early 1990s, some 35 members were known to be criminals with offenses that range from robbery and extortion to kidnapping and murder.[122] And mafia dons—the term has become a part

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[120]Vir K. Chopra, *Marginal Players in Marginal Assemblies: The Indian MLA* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1996), pp. 59–82.

[121]Ibid., pp. 332–33.

[122]*Far Eastern Economic Review,* March 5, 1992, p. 22. Also see "Bihar: Domain of the Dons," *India Today,* January 31, 1992, pp. 37–41.

of Indian parlance—hold sway over extensive areas of the state. No political party has been immune from the infection, and the mix of crime and politics in Bihar and in other parts of northern India is both notorious and deeply rooted. According to the Indian Election Commission, in the mid-1990s some 40 MPs and almost 700 MLAs faced criminal charges or had been convicted of crimes. In the 14th Lok Sabha elected in 2004 136 MPs had a criminal background. In U.P. 180 of the state's 424 MLAs had criminal records.[123]

The states have become increasingly turbulent arenas of conflict, as new entrants—especially from the "weaker sections" of society—have sought political access. But few states, if any, have developed the institutional and resource capacity to accommodate expanded participation and new and varied demands.

UNION TERRITORIES

In addition to the 28 states, there are seven Union Territories administered by the central government through an appointed Lieutenant Governor or Chief Commissioner. The President makes the appointments on the advice of the Prime Minister. The territories have councils of ministers and legislative assemblies—or their equivalent, such as Delhi's Metropolitan Council—but although these assemblies may make laws with respect to matters in the state field insofar as they are applicable, Parliament may also legislate on such matters.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The system of local government in India today retains a fundamental continuity with the past. Its hierarchical structure was built by the British on the foundations of Mughal administration and has been refined by independent India to suit the needs of a developing society.

The Local Administrative Hierarchy

The major unit of local administration is the district. There are 604 districts in India, varying in size and population from state to state and often within a state. The average area of a district, however, is about 2,000 square miles.

Under the British, a single district officer, commonly referred to as the collector, was charged with keeping the peace, collecting

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[123]Gautam Adhikari, "India: A New Test Begins," *Current History* (December 1997), p. 413 and *India Today* (New Delhi), August 21, 2006, pp. 21.

revenue, and administering justice in each district. With the combined roles of magistrate, collector, and judge, the collector represented the highest quality of the Indian Civil Service. For most Indian villagers the "Collector Sahib" was in fact the government. Subordinate to the collector were the district superintendent of police and the chief engineer. In the latter years of the 19th century, specialized departments for education, agriculture, and health were established, and their district field representatives were coordinated by the collector. Today, following the constitutional Directive Principle that "the state shall take steps to separate the Judiciary from the Executive in the public services,"[124] most states now have a district judge, in no way subordinate to the collector. However, the collector continues to be the most important government official in local administration. As the government has taken increased initiative in rural development and social welfare, responsibilities have been greatly enlarged, and the collector carries an almost overwhelming workload. At the same time, the role has become increasingly ill defined as both power and responsibility in local government have been decentralized, and the collector has become increasingly subject to political intervention from above.

The collector is appointed by the state government from the Indian Administrative Service or the State Civil Service. As an agent of the state, the collector is responsible for all government action in the district. The powers of office are extensive and, to some extent, discretionary. The Bombay Revenue Department Manual specifies, for example, that "nothing can or should pass in the District of which the Collector should not keep himself informed."[125] He must frequently be on tour, accessible to all villagers, and responsive to their needs. Daily visitors may include wealthy businessmen, influential politicians, or a delegation of illiterate villagers. They come to seek favor, to register a complaint, or simply to make their presence known.[126]

In the structure of local administration, the district is divided into taluqs (or tehsils). The taluq, usually comprised of 200 to 600 villages, is headed by a taluqdar, who is responsible for the supervision of land records and the collection of revenue. The government representative in the village is the patwari, "the eyes and ears of the Collector." Although no longer possessing the power today of the colonial period, the patwari, or "village

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[124]Constitution of India, Article 50.

[125]Quoted in David C. Potter, *Government in Rural India* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1964), p. 68.

[126]Ibid., p. 71.

accountant," is still "the general busybody of government."[127] Primarily concerned with land records, however, the patwari thus has a position of power with an opportunity for graft that is often difficult to resist. Traditionally the village is also served by a headman, whose position is hereditary, and by a police officer, who is really a watchman.

Village Government: Panchayati Raj

In the centuries before British rule, the village communities, although subject to periodic visitation by tax collectors, were left to govern themselves through a council of elders, the traditional panchayat, meaning literally "council of five." The panchayats declined under the British Raj, however, as a result of improved communications, increased mobility, and a centralized administration that emphasized the individual in society and not the elders of the village. By the mid-19th century the panchayats had ceased to be of real importance. At that point, however, the British sought to revitalize the institutions of local self-government. Lord Ripon declared that it was "our weakness and our calamity" that "we have not been able to give to India the benefits and blessings of free institutions." In pursuance of his Resolution of 1882, elected district boards were established to give representation and practical experience in self-government to the Indian people. The district boards (which were retained for a period after independence) were given responsibility for public works, health, and education. There were also some attempts to revive panchayats on a statutory basis as popularly elected bodies. In villages where the older, unofficial panchayats of elders still existed, these new bodies were frequently constituted as parallel panchayats, giving official recognition to matters that had been decided informally by the traditional leadership.

During the independence movement, the panchayats of ancient times were eulogized as democratic "little republics." Gandhi sought to recapture that ideal in a revitalization of village life, but for many, like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the village was "a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and communalism." According to Nehru, the Congress had "never considered" the Gandhian view of society, "much less adopted it."[128] At the Constituent Assembly a

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[127]E. N. Mangat Rai, *Civil Administration in the Punjab,* Occasional Papers in International Affairs, No. 7 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for International Affairs, 1963), p. 13.

[128]Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1960), p. 509.

Gandhian constitution was offered, based on the principle of economic and political decentralization. The village panchayat was to be the basic unit in a hierarchy of indirectly elected bodies. A national panchayat at the top was to be responsible for such matters as currency and defense.[129] The assembly did not accept the Gandhian proposal. Stability, unity, and economic progress demanded a more centralized government, but the Constitution directed the states "to organize village panchayats and to endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."[130] The aim was to foster democratic participation, to involve villagers in the development effort, and to ease the administrative burden on the states. Institutions of local self-government were to be both instruments of economic development and social change and agents of community mobilization. They were intended to stimulate participation and provide channels for meaningful political expression.

In 1959 the government introduced a new system of panchayati raj, a three-tier model of local self-government. The three tiers were linked by indirect elections. The popularly elected village panchayat was the basic unit. All elected chairs of the panchayats within a block area constituted the second tier, the panchayati samiti. The third tier, the zila parashad, congruent with the district, included all the samiti chairs in the district. In its operation, given India's size and diversity, unevenness in performance was inevitable. Structures and functions changed over the years, and it was pursued more vigorously in some states than in others. Resources available to elected bodies were meager, and MPs and MLAs generally perceived the emerging panchayati raj leadership as a threat to their own political positions. After an initial phase of ascendancy, panchayati raj passed into stagnation and then decline by the mid-1960s.[131] Some critics have argued that the first efforts to decentralize in the 1950s and 1960s through community development and panchayati raj failed to

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[129]Austin, *Indian Constitution,* p. 39.

[130]Constitution of India, Article 40.

[131]For a review and evaluation of its operation, see *Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions,* Asoka Mehta, Chairman (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, 1978). The phases are periodized on p. 4. The Communist Party (Marxist) Government in West Bengal was the first in India to allow political parties to compete in panchayat elections and used the panchayats as a basic element of its overall political and development strategy. The CPM has used these "red panchayats" to consolidate its base within rural West Bengal. Atul Kohli, "Communist Reformers in West Bengal: Origins, Features, and Relations with New Delhi," in John R. Wood, ed., *State Politics in Contemporary India: Crisis or Continuity?* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 93–96.

take hold because they were unaccompanied by land reforms, given insufficient revenue or tax base, and had little real authority because state governments were unwilling to decentralize.

A second major effort at decentralization was begun in the late 1970s and 1980s by the Communist-controlled government of West Bengal and the Janata government in Karnataka. These reform schemes handed over major powers and resources to elected bodies at district, intermediate, and village levels. The West Bengal system added the important innovation of making the district collector chief executive of the zila parashad. In May 1989, Rajiv Gandhi attempted to preempt this popular reform initiated by the opposition in preparation for parliamentary elections. Rajiv introduced the Sixty-fourth Amendment bill, which would have created a nationwide program of decentralization. In the statement of objectives, the bill argued that a review of the existing system of panchayati raj had shown that the system had been unsuccessful in many states because of a failure to hold regular elections, prolonged supersessions, inadequate representation of vulnerable minorities, lack of financial resources, and inadequate devolution of power and responsibility. The new bill, argued the government, was designed to correct these defects. The bill would make it mandatory for all states to establish a three-tier system of village-, intermediate-, and district-level local bodies. Representatives would be directly elected to these bodies for five-year terms, and seats would be reserved for women, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes. These local government bodies would be given power to prepare plans for local development and would receive financial grants from the state governments to help them carry out these plans. Elections to these local bodies would be supervised by the National Election Commission, and financial records would be reviewed by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. While the idea of greater decentralization was very popular in India, Rajiv's proposal came under attack from a variety of quarters. Critics charged that Rajiv's plan was a propaganda ploy designed to steal a popular reform introduced by opposition parties in the states. The proposal sought to legislate on a subject that was reserved to the states, and it bypassed the state governments by making local governments directly responsible to the Center. Rajiv's bill was seen by critics as a formula for greater centralization of power in the name of decentralization. The bill was defeated in the Rajya Sabha and was never implemented.[132]

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[132]See "The Panchayati Revival," *Seminar,* 360 (August 1989).

Upon its return to power in June 1991, the Congress (I) introduced and passed the Seventy-third Amendment Act (1992), which formalized the panchayat system as a third tier of government. The Panchayat Act prescribed a minimum number of features that the states had to guarantee in their own system. The Act laid down a list of 29 subjects that states were required to transfer to panchayats in order to enable them to pursue programs of economic development and social justice. The Act also made periodic elections mandatory, provided reservation of seats for weaker sections including women, and required the creation of state-level finance commissions to recommend allocation of financial resources to panchayats. Despite the passage of the Seventy-third Amendment, however, progress toward developing a third tier of democratic institutions has been "patchy and uneven".[133]

While political decentralization has brought about some benefits, it has not been matched by effective financial and administrative decentralization, which continues to limit the power and responsibilities of local elected bodies. These elected institutions have also been held in check by the influence of local elites who continue to exercise considerable influence through proxy representatives. While a small group of states have made considerable progress in implementing local government reforms, most states, especially those in the North India Hindi-speaking belt, have made little progress. The success of local government reform requires leadership commitment, effective government institutions, and an active civil society. In short, despite a decade of effort, local government reform in India has met with mixed results and the future of panchayati raj remains uncertain.[134]

Urban Government

India remains an overwhelmingly rural society and the vast majority of the country's people continue to live in some 600,000 villages. According to the 2001 census only 28 percent of India's population lives in towns and cities, and two-thirds of the urban population is concentrated in 393 cities with a population of 100,000 or more. Although the pace of urbanization slowed in the 1980s and 1990s,

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[133]Balveer Arora and Douglas V. Verney, eds., *Multiple Identities in a Single State: Indian Federalism in Comparative Perspective* (Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1995), p. 115 and Mark Robinson, "A Decade of Panchayati Raj Reforms: The Challenge of Democratic Decentralization" in L. C., Jain, ed. *Decentralization and Local Governance: Essays for George Mathew.* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005), p. 27.

[134]Jain, pp. 10–30.

it is estimated that India's urban population will increase to 41 percent of the population by 2030, which would add an additional 300 urban residents. Greater Mumbai (Bombay) is the largest city in India with an estimated population of 16.4 million in 2001, followed by Kolkata (Calcutta) with 13.2 million, Delhi with 12.8 million, and Chennai (Madras) with 6.4 million. The larger cities are governed by municipal corporations, composed of a popularly elected council and a president or mayor, elected from within the council. A commissioner, appointed by the state government, is the chief executive, and the state may supersede the municipal corporation if it is deemed incapable of maintaining order and effective government. Smaller towns are governed by municipal committees or boards.[135] City governments are responsible for the safety, health, and education of their citizens. They are charged with the maintenance of sanitation facilities, streets and bridges, parks, and public facilities—responsibilities that they are increasingly unable to meet effectively.

The weakness of urban government in India is related to the fact that the key to formal power is at the state level, external to the city. As Rodney Jones has argued, "The narrow scope of municipal government limits the service and patronage opportunities of municipal politicians to build durable political constituencies or to organize loyal clienteles. Governmental functions and services that impinge most continuously and vitally on the bulk of the urban population are not directly accessible to municipal politicians."[136] During the 1980s, as Center-state relations became increasingly distorted by the centralization and personalization of power in New Delhi, the states increasingly penetrated the autonomy of local government. At any one time, as many as half of all municipal bodies in India are in receivership—superseded by state authority and their elected assemblies dissolved in a state version of President's Rule over the cities. In an attempt to deal with these problems, the Congress (I) passed the Constitution Seventy-fourth Amendment Act (1993), which attempted to revitalize urban self-government. The act provided for three types of municipalities to cover para–urban units, smaller urban areas, and large cities. This Amendment paralleled the Seventy-third Amendment, which dealt with rural self-government.

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[135]The distinction between "larger" cities and "smaller" towns is not uniform but varies considerably from state to state.

[136]Rodney Jones, "Linkage Analysis of Indian Urban Politics," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 17 June 1972, p. 1,198. See also Jones, *Urban Politics in India: Area, Power, and Policy in a Penetrated System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

It is within the city that tradition is most severely challenged by rapid change and heterogeneity of values and behavior. The cities are the locus of new economic and cultural values, of new social roles, and of new action patterns. The availability of mass communications and the density of urban populations have facilitated the mobilization of city-dwellers for political action. India's cities have been centers of opposition and political unrest. Demonstrations, strikes, and riots have become daily occurrences as demands rise beyond the government's capacity to respond. The city may offer rural migrants a chance for a better life, but for the middle classes it can nourish explosive frustrations. Municipal governments, stagnant and lacking adequate authority and finance, cannot begin to meet the problems before them. The state governments, responsive to the rural base of their support, have been unwilling to assume the burden of the deepening urban crisis. A high and accelerating level of political participation and a low and static level of institutionalization pose the problem of political development in stark form.

THE RESPONSIVE CAPACITY OF INDIA'S GOVERNMENTAL FRAMEWORK

While British colonial rule and the history of nationalist resistance set the stage for the creation and evolution of the Indian political system, the Constitution adopted in 1950 provided the formal framework for an independent India.[137] Once created, however, the new political institutions of the republic had to develop support and legitimacy; socialize the people into new modes of action and identity; develop linkages between the state and society, elite and mass, center and periphery; and generate policies and programs capable of meeting internal needs and external challenges. At the time of its adoption, one of its prime architects, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, warned that "democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic." "Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated."[138] The Constitution was to be the agent of that cultivation. Democracy was to be achieved through its exercise.

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[137]See K. Subrata Mitra, *The Puzzle of India's Governance: Culture, Context and Comparative Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[138]Constituent Assembly debates, quoted in Pylee, *Constitutional Government,* p. 7.

Over the six decades since Indian independence, the institutions of government, established by the Constitution on the framework of the British Raj, have taken root in the Indian soil. Although transplanted, they are no longer regarded as foreign imports; they have gained legitimacy and widespread acceptance by the people across the ideological spectrum and throughout India. Their meaning and operation, however, have undergone a variety of stresses and strains as they have gradually adapted to the Indian environment, and they are still taking form.[139]

Since independence, increased political competition and mass democracy have transformed India's governmental institutions. The country has experienced a massive upsurge of political mobilization and popular participation; the end of one-party dominance; a proliferation of regional, caste, and religious parties; the federalization of the party system; and the emergence of a new era of coalition politics. The combined impact of these political changes has been a decline and weakening of some political institutions and the strengthening of others that have expanded to fill the vacated political space. This changing political environment has resulted in a decline in the overwhelmingly dominant position of the Prime Minister, the erosion of the role of the national Parliament, and a reversal of the overcentralization of power in the Indian political system. At the same time, these changes have been accompanied by the rise of other institutions that have become energized by dynamic personalities, circumstances, and the character of institutional structures. These enhanced institutions include the Indian President and referee institutions like the Election Commission and the judiciary. These institutions have emerged to fill part of the void left by others.

Increased political competition and mass mobilization have also had the effect of enhancing individual efficacy and political legitimacy. While 27 percent of the Indian electorate see political parties as having little effect on governmental accountability, some 60 percent have come to see voting as having an effect on government and 69 percent have come to see political parties and elections as significant.[140] This rising sense of political efficacy, however, does not appear to translate into a high degree of trust in governmental

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[139]For a discussion of how the institutions of Indian government took root and developed in the first phase after independence, see James Manor, "How and Why Liberal and Representative Politics Emerged in India," *Political Studies,* 38 (1990), pp. 20–38.

[140]Mitra, pp. 199–200.

institutions. While 46 percent of the electorate expressed a sense of trust in the Election Commission, 42 percent in the judiciary, 39 percent in local governments, and 37 percent in state governments, only 35 percent express a sense of trust in the central government. Even more disturbing is the low level of trust in elected representatives (20 percent), political parties and government officials (17 percent), and the police (13 percent). In short, the Indian electorate tends to have a higher sense of trust in institutions then politicians and government officials. Studies also indicate that levels of trust in governmental institutions vary considerably by state.[141]

India is in the midst of a continuing political, economic, and social revolution that has seen power pass from the hands of the urban based, professional, upper castes that dominated the Indian political scene in the early decades of independence to an increasingly rural, landed, and politically conscious group of lower castes. These changes in the composition of the governing elite have been accompanied by the end of Congress dominance, the federalization of the party system, hung parliaments, and a new era of coalition politics. Despite popular endorsement of the Indian political system, many members of the Indian elite feel that the country is facing a crisis of the system and have called for a total revision of the constitution. Critics like Romesh Thapar, for example, have argued that India is too heterogeneous and complex to "function under the Westminster model with any degree of coherence,"[142] and the BJP-led NDA went as far as to appoint a Constitutional Review Commission. Industrialists like J. R. D. Tata and political leaders like R. K. Hedge, the former Janata leader of Karnataka, and L. K. Advani, former President of BJP, have called for the creation of a presidential system.[143] In the past, calls for a shift to a presidential system also came from the Congress (I), which many critics saw as a move designed to preserve dynastic rule. Calls for a fundamental revision of the Indian constitutional system have repeatedly failed to gain support.

While many members of the Indian elite saw a systemic crisis, others insisted that the fundamental problem was a crisis of leadership

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[141]Ibid., p. 199.

[142]Statement of "The Problem" for the topic, "A Second Republic," *Seminar,* 336 (August 1987), p. 13.

[143]Among those who have argued for a presidential system is B. K. Nehru, a distinguished civil servant, former Ambassador to the U.S., and Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. See, for example, "A Fresh Look at the Constitution," *Mainstream,* January 25, 1992, pp. 9–18. Also see A. G. Noorani, *The Presidential System: An Indian Debate* (New Delhi: Sage, 1989).

that had undermined the constitutional framework, and they called for institutional reform to strengthen the existing system. Among the reforms proposed were term limits on the President and Prime Minister, electoral reform to reduce the number of parties, decentralization of power to the states and local bodies, state funding of political parties, strengthening of the judiciary, and the creation of a new development consensus.

The flexibility, adaptability, and resiliency of the Indian political system have proven to be unique among developing nations. Its primary strength rests in its ability to channel, manage, and reconcile conflict within a set of accepted political institutions. Its chief weakness lies in the threat of paralysis that might occur should the party system totally fragment and prove incapable of producing a stable and effective central government. However, one thing seems certain: A more centralized, brittle system is unlikely to perform more effectively in such a large, culturally diverse, pluralistic society as India without at the same time threatening to balkanize the country.

The political system has been resilient in the face of rapid change and increasing demands, but its increasing capacity is fragile, for India is only now beginning to feel the full impact of rapidly expanding political participation. The rising level of demands and their deepening intensity may strain the system beyond endurance. On gaining independence, India inherited a highly institutionalized imperial regime. Relatively low levels of participation and demands provided India with a period of grace during which the institutions of order were adapted to new democratic functions. But India has, if not fallen from grace, at least outrun its institutional advantage. The revolution of rising expectations now places continuous challenge upon these institutions to respond. India's institutions are today weakened and under pressure. Indeed, in the words of Rajni Kothari, "This is the basic crisis facing India—institutional erosion in the face of massive change."[144] At the same time, India appears to have overcome many of the strains that it encountered in the 1980s and 1990s, and it has entered the 21st century in a much more optimistic mood. This new optimism has been fueled by accelerated economic growth and the country's increasing ability in managing the complexities of coalition politics, the federalization of the party system, and the forces of globalization.

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[144]Rajni Kothari, "The Crisis of the Moderate State and the Decline of Democracy," in Peter Lyon and James Manor, eds., *Transfer and Transformation: Political Institutions in the New Commonwealth* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p. 42.

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* Available in paperback edition.

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The Challenge of Federalism

ELITES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN determined to create strong centralized states in order to sustain national integration, ensure security, and direct development. Yet even in the West, the history of state making has demonstrated that these efforts will always be resisted by antecedent social forces.[1] In India the nationalist elite, drawing upon their colonial experience and faced by the chaos of partition, the integration of princely states, and demands for the creation of unilingual states, created a highly centralized parliamentary federal system. Initially this decision faced only minimum opposition from existing constituent units. As the immediate postindependence crisis passed and the nationalist elite accepted the demand for redrawing the administrative map of India along linguistic lines, the politics of mass franchise gradually began to strengthen the federal base of the Indian polity. During the 1970s, however, Indira Gandhi sought to reverse this process of devolution of power to the states, thus bringing about increased tensions in center–state relations and a crisis in Indian federalism. Since the 1980s the regionalization

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[1]See Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); and Raymond Grew, ed., *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

of politics, the loss of authority of central government institutions, the rise of separatist movements in the Punjab and Kashmir, the erosion of cultural unity by religious and caste identities, and the fragility of federalism itself, marked by the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., Yugoslavia, and the Czechoslovakian federation, have evoked increased fear among Indian intellectuals over the future of the country. These fears have been reinforced by the impact of the economic liberalization policies of the 1990s, which have enabled provincial governments to emerge as powerful actors in the economy—competing with each other for federal funds and foreign direct investment—and by the emergence of coalition governments at the center made up of essentially regional parties. The result has been the gradual devolution of power and a growing federalization of the Indian political system. Thus, of all the decisions made by the Constituent Assembly, the federal compact has come under the severest pressure and may have to be renegotiated.

THE ORIGINS AND NATURE
OF FEDERALISM IN INDIA

The Indian Constitution provides for a parliamentary, federal system with certain unitary features and a formal bias in favor of the Center. A unitary system of government places all legal power in the central government. Lower units of government are created by the Center. They derive their power from the Center and exist for its administrative convenience. In contrast, a federal system is one in which powers are divided between a central government and certain units of local government, typically states. Each level of government exercises some powers independently of the other. Federations take many forms, and the division of powers between the Center and the states may be very unequal.

Due to its origins, traditions, and development, federalism in India has evolved a unique form. Federalism did not evolve as a device to control power or as a result of the congealing of a group of independent states, but through a gradual process of the devolution of power from a highly centralized colonial regime. From the earliest Governmental Regulatory Acts of 1773 until independence, India was governed as a unitary and not as a federal state. Although

provinces existed in British India, they were primarily administrative rather than political units. They had no legal rights and acted solely as agents of the central government.

The idea of a federal solution for India's problems was first introduced after World War I. The debate did not become pronounced until the 1930s, when the principle was finally accepted. Federalism emerged as a possible political formula to solve two of the most intractable problems that existed in British India: the future of the semiautonomous princely states and the Muslim demands for greater autonomy.[2] Prior to independence the Indian subcontinent was divided into two separate entities—the provinces of British India and 562 princely states. The provinces of British India were under the direct control of the British Crown. The princely states were under the rule of local Indian princes who enjoyed a great deal of autonomy within their states, while at the same time accepting the paramountcy of the British Crown over their defense and foreign affairs. The princes controlled about two-fifths of the Indian subcontinent and ruled over some 60 million people.

The Muslims represented one of the two major religious communities of India and totaled 24 percent of the Indian population prior to partition. Although most of the Muslims were concentrated in western and eastern India, large numbers were also located in the states of Hyderabad and Kashmir, with the remainder largely scattered across the great Gangetic Plain. As a minority, the Muslims feared being submerged in a Hindu sea, and demanded a variety of constitutional safeguards that the federal principle seemed to provide.

In an attempt to satisfy the demands of these two important constituencies, the British introduced a set of political reforms in 1935. The reforms were contained in the Government of India Act of 1935, and marked a sharp break with the former unitary tradition of British control. For the first time since the British conquest, there was to be created a federal union consisting of the autonomous provinces of British India and those Indian princely states that agreed to join it. Because the reforms of 1935 assumed continued British rule, however, the federal system envisioned was highly centralized and provided for a wide variety of special powers to be exercised by the Governor General, the representative of the British Crown in India. Although the full provisions of the Government of India Act

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[2]S. P. Aiyar, "The Federal Idea in India," in S. P. Aiyar and Usha Mehta, eds., *Essays on Indian Federalism* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1965), pp. 1–33.

of 1935 never came into force, the Act established the principle of federalism for the Indian subcontinent.

Despite the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan and the integration of the princely states into these successor republics of British India, the idea of federalism seemed to be taken for granted by those who drafted a constitution for free India. However, the form of federalism that emerged from the Constituent Assembly was highly centralized. In theory, the system was so highly centralized that some critics characterized it as quasi-federal[3] or even unitary.[4] Others have called it cooperative federalism.[5] Several factors contributed to the particular pattern of federalism that emerged in India after 1947. In the first place, the British colonial pattern of centralization had a substantial impact on the Indian political leadership, and their immediate colonial experience tended to influence their decision. Second, states' rights never loomed large in the early debates on the future government for a free India and did not emerge until much later. Issues of states' rights were primarily subordinate to the larger issue of communal rights and communal status between Hindus and Muslims. Once partition took place, the need for federalism seemed less urgent, whereas partition itself had demonstrated the inherent dangers of separatism. Third, the Indian provinces carved out by the British were primarily administrative units rather than linguistic, cultural, or ethnic units. Therefore they lacked the natural basis of identity that emerged later with the creation of unilingual states. Fourth, the series of crises that followed independence and occurred while the Constituent Assembly deliberated predisposed the political leadership toward centralization. The chaos of partition, communal frenzy, the India-Pakistan war, and the problem of integrating the princely states into the Indian Union all combined to create an atmosphere that favored a centralized form of federalism. Fifth, the goals of economic development and modernization seemed to require a strong central authority capable of directing the economy. Finally, the creation of a British-style parliamentary system in which power was concentrated in the hands of the prime minister and cabinet focused attention on the role of national parties. This national focus in turn was reinforced by the existence of a highly centralized, dominant, mass party and

[3]K. C. Wheare, *Federal Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 28.

[4]Asok Chanda, *Federalism in India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965), p. 124.

[5]Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 187.

the absence of strong state and regional parties that combined to rein-force a centralized federal formula. In short, although no one seemed to seriously question the notion that India should be a federal republic, a variety of factors combined to ensure that the form of federalism would be highly centralized.[6] Although there are numerous special features of the Indian Constitution that give it its highly centralized form,[7] the two most important are the distribution of powers between the central government and the states and the financial provisions affecting the distribution of revenues.

In India the states do not have their own separate constitutions.[8] The Constitution of India defines the powers of both the Center and the states, and it provides for the governmental structures of each. Under the Constitution the division of powers between the Center and the states is laid down in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution in three lists exhausting "all the ordinary activities of government." The Union List gives the Center exclusive authority to act in matters of national importance and includes among its 97 items defense, for-eign affairs, currency, banking duties, and income taxation. The State List, with 66 items, covers public order and police, welfare, health, education, local government, industry, agriculture, and land revenue. The Concurrent List contains 47 items over which the Center and the states share authority. The most important are civil and criminal law and social and economic planning. The residual power lies with the Union, and in any conflict between Union and state, Union law pre-vails. The paramount position of the Center is underscored by the power of Parliament to create new states, to alter the boundaries of existing states, and even to abolish a state by ordinary legislative pro-cedure without recourse to constitutional amendment.

Not only does the central government have a wide range of powers in its own right under the Union List, but these powers are also enhanced by the fact that the central government is vested with a variety of powers that enable it, under certain circumstances, to

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[6]Austin, *Indian Constitution,* pp. 188–94.

[7]Other centralizing features of the Indian constitution include: a single integrated hier-archical judicial system; all-India administrative services that provide officers at the national, state, and district levels; a national police force; and a national Election Commission that supervises all national and state elections. The states play a role in the amending process with respect to only a few constitutional provisions, and certain state bills require presidential assent.

[8]Kashmir, with its own constitution, is the exception. The terms of accession in 1947 granted Kashmir special status in the Union of India, and Article 370 exempts Kashmir from various provisions of the Indian Constitution.

invade the legislative and executive domain of the states. These special powers take three forms: the emergency powers under Articles 356, 352, and 360; the use of Union Executive powers under Articles 256, 257, and 365; and special legislative powers granted under Article 249.

The emergency powers in the Indian Constitution enable India, under certain circumstances, to transform itself into a unitary state. There are three types of constitutional emergency powers that combine to create this centralized pattern of federalism: (1) an emergency, under Article 356, arising out of a failure of the constitutional machinery in a state; (2) a national emergency, under Article 352, involving the security of India or of any part threatened by war, external aggression, or internal disturbances; and (3) a special emergency, under Article 360, involving a threat to financial security, stability, or credit. Under these provisions, the Union Executive and the Parliament can direct a provincial government in the use of its powers or assume all of its powers, with the Union Executive acting for the Provincial Executive and the Parliament enacting legislation as though it were the provincial legislature.

Under Articles 256, 257, and 365 the central government may take on Union Executive powers that give direction to state governments and invoke substantial penalties for noncompliance. Articles 256 and 257 state that the executive power of a province must be exercised so as to comply with Union laws and so as not to impede or prejudice the exercise of Union Executive authority. To ensure that both of these stipulations are obeyed, the Union Executive may give direction to a state government as to the manner in which it should act, and if a state government does not comply with these directions, the Union government, under Article 365, may take over control of the state.

Finally, under Article 249, the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian legislature, may give the Parliament special legislative powers over any matter included in the state legislative list. Thus, if legislation is called for on a national scale, the central legislature has the power to enact it, even if it is in the State List.

In addition to its constitutional right to modify the distribution of powers between the Center and the states under certain circumstances, the central government also has vast powers over the collection and distribution of revenues, which make the states heavily dependent on the central government for financial support.[9] Under the Indian

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[9]See P. K. Bhargava, "Transfers from the Center to the States in India," *Asian Survey,* 24 (June 1984), pp. 665–87.

Constitution, financial assistance flows from the central government to the states in two major ways. The first is through a system of divisible taxes and grants-in-aid under Article 275. In India the Union government acts as a banker and collecting agent for the state governments. With the exception of taxes concerned with land, sales taxes, and certain taxes levied by the Union but collected by the states, most taxes in India are levied and collected by the Union government. Part of the revenue collected is retained by the Union government, but substantial portions of this revenue are redistributed to the states, based on a formula determined every five years by a semijudicial adjudgment of the Finance Commission. Funds distributed yearly according to the Finance Commission's formula are used to finance normal state budget expenditures and account for a significant portion of the state's annual budget.

In many ways, however, the devolution of revenue under Article 275 has been superseded by Article 282, which gives the Union government the power to make grants for any public purpose, even when the purpose is one for which Parliament cannot normally legislate. Under this provision the central government allocates vast amounts of development funds to the states as part of the Indian Five-Year Plans drawn up by the Planning Commission, an extraconstitutional advisory body of the central Cabinet. The resources available under the plan are substantial because of the significant taxing power of the central government, as well as its control over foreign aid and deficit financing, which represent an important part of plan investment. Thus, the discretionary control of grants to the states far exceeds the amounts that are transferred through divisible taxes and grants-in-aid under Article 275, and the decisions of the Planning Commission have a far greater impact on what the states can do than do the recommendations of the constitutionally based Finance Commission.

In short, several factors combine to impart to Indian federalism a highly centralized form: the constitutional right of the central government to invade the legislative and executive domain of the states; the power of the Center to intervene in state affairs and exercise supervisory powers over the states; and the heavy dependence of the states on central financial assistance, both for their regular budgetary needs as well as for capital expenditures. Moreover, the existence of a parliamentary system and a dominant party that controlled both the central government and almost all of the state governments reinforced these constitutional provisions at the political level in the first two decades after independence.

Despite the unitary features of the Indian Constitution, a parliamentary system, the centralizing impact of planning, and the existence of a dominant party, the Indian political system evolved a distinctly federal style. Several factors combined to give the Indian political system an explicitly federal character that we might more accurately describe as cooperative federalism rather than as a quasi-federal or unitary system. These factors included the limited but significant constitutional powers enjoyed by the states under the State List, the critical administrative role performed by the states, and the political devolution of power that followed the introduction of a mass franchise and the creation of unilingual states.

Despite the constitutional powers of the central government, the states of India are not without significant constitutional powers of their own. In fact, they control some of the most important functions of the state, such as education, agriculture, and welfare. In addition, the central government depends heavily on the states to implement many of its policies. As Paul Appleby observed, "No other large and important government . . . 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 programs of great importance to the nation."[10] Because state political leaders were sensitive to their own bases of political support, they were often independent and refused to carry out policies recommended by the central government that might undercut their political support. This reluctance was clearly reflected in the case of such major policy areas as land reforms and the taxation of agricultural incomes, both of which are within the constitutional jurisdiction of the states. The central government, in turn, exercised considerable restraint in attempting to impose its will on the states. Thus, the political and administrative dependence of the central government on the states in critical policy areas resulted in a cooperative federalism based on a bargaining process between the Center and the states.[11]

The essentially federal character of the Congress Party, with its strong party bosses (before the split in 1969), provided the political base for this bargaining process. It was a politics of accommodation, but one weighted toward the Center. The bargaining process between the Center and the states involved a complex balance based on

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[10]Paul Appleby, *Public Administration in India: Report of a Survey* (New Delhi: Government of India, Cabinet Secretariat, 1953), p. 21.

[11]Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 233–66, 407–47.

political and functional interdependence. The states in India are not homogeneous entities but are divided along social, religious, subregional, and ethnic lines that are a source of conflict. The factional and alliance styles of politics within each state enabled the central government to penetrate state political systems, and the states themselves were constantly forced to turn to the central government for assistance in containing the forces that threatened their political control. Thus, although state leaders were powerful, they were so vulnerable to factions that they needed the brokerage role of the Center to keep them in power or to restore stability. Moreover, collectively, state leaders were divided. They were noted for their lobbying efforts to secure benefits for their state, and they were too busy trying to stay in power to confront the national leadership on major questions.[12] Thus, though new state elites developed greater regional self-consciousness and self-assertiveness, they were not separatist.[13] They were primarily parochial and concerned with distributive politics in an effort to stay in power. Although state leaders were dependent on the central government to stay in power, the central government was dependent on the state leaders for policy implementation and the development of political support. The central government could not sustain unpopular governments in the states or maintain central rule indefinitely. Although it might intervene to assist in the restoration of stability, it could not create that stability by itself. Thus, political and functional interdependence was a critical part of Center-state relations in India.

Until 1967 the bargaining process of Center-state relations took place primarily within the framework of the dominant Congress Party, supplemented at the governmental level by the constitutional and extra-constitutional devices that collectively resulted in cooperative federalism. As long as the Congress Party controlled the central government and almost all of the state governments, differences over issues of policy or Center-state relations could be handled almost as a "family quarrel" to be mediated by Congress elders.[14] With the

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[12]Norman K. Nicholson, *Rural Development Policy in India* (De Kalb, IL: Center for Governmental Studies Northern Illinois University, 1974), pp. 17–26.

[13]Selig S. Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 3–11.

[14]Kochanek, *Congress Party,* pp. 421–22. Myron Weiner explored this process in the context of five districts in *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). Atul Kohli reexamined those districts more than 20 years later to reveal dramatic changes in *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

gradual loss of Congress hegemony, however, problems once dealt with quietly as intra-party affairs required relatively public negotiations by a process of Center-state bargaining through officially constituted governmental mechanisms such as the Conference of Chief Ministers, the National Development Council, and the newly constituted Inter-state Council (ISC). The National Development Council dealt with all issues involving economic planning whereas the Conference of Chief Ministers handled nonplanning political issues requiring national uniformity, coordination, and Center-state cooperation. Although the Indian constitution provided for the creation of an Inter-state Council to co-ordinate interstate relations, many of the functions of such a Council were eclipsed by the extraconstitutional NDC until the 1990s, when the Inter-state Council began to function.[15]

Even under the best of circumstances, Center-state relations generated a variety of tensions. These tensions were bound to increase as more and more states came under the control of opposition political parties, particularly when the opposition party was purely regional in its support, appeal, and program. It is not surprising, therefore, that Tamil Nadu, governed for the most part since 1967 by a regional political party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and its off-shoot, the All-India Anna DMK (AIADMK), has been among the most vocal of the states. As early as 1967, C. N. Annadurai, founder of the DMK, called for the federal system to be restructured so that the central government would only have powers relating to defense, foreign affairs, interstate communication, and currency. All residual powers would be in the hands of the states, and the federal and state governments would be completely independent of each other in their respective spheres.[16] Similar demands were voiced by leaders of the Communist government of West Bengal and, from time to time, from other states on the periphery of India's Hindi-speaking heartland.

Supporters of greater states' rights insisted that their demands were not designed to encourage secession or to jeopardize national integrity. However, the central political leadership, the bureaucracy, the military, urban intellectuals, and the Indian industrialist elites tended

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[15]See Rekha Saxena, "Role of Intergovernmental Agencies in Federal India," in B. D. Dua and M. P. Singh, eds., *Indian Federalism In New Millennium* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003). pp. 221–27.

[16]Government of Tamil Nadu, *Report of the Center-State Relations Inquiry Committee* (Madras: Director of Stationery and Printing, 1971), p. 7.

to see demands for greater state autonomy as a threat to national unity and integrity. These elites favored a strong central government. Three wars with Pakistan (1948, 1965, and 1971) and a major border war with China (1962) had created a fear of foreign incursions and a deep concern for national security. In addition, the increased level of caste, language, religious, and regional conflicts raised new fears of "fissiparous tendencies" and political separatism. These fears, combined with the slow and erratic pace of economic development, led these elites to demand a stronger and more forceful central government. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi capitalized on these fears.

Indira Gandhi was a centralizer. She believed in a strong central government and the concentration of power in both party and government in her hands. Following the split of the Congress Party in 1969 and her highly personal electoral victories in 1971 and 1972, she set about reversing the earlier tradition of cooperative federalism, and restructured the federal base of the Indian polity. All elected bodies within the Congress organization ceased to be elected and were appointed from New Delhi; party tickets were allocated by the central party headquarters under Indira Gandhi's supervision; and state chief ministers became the personal appointees of Mrs. Gandhi, regardless of their ability to build a local base of support. In fact, such efforts were discouraged, and those who attempted to build an independent base of support were quickly removed from office. No individual or organization was to be in a position to challenge Indira Gandhi's centralized control.[17]

The result of this pattern of centralization was the disintegration of state Congress governments, the rise of mass protest, and an authoritarian response on the part of the central government when it appeared that the opposition might successfully challenge continued Congress rule. The emergency period from 1975 to 1977 accelerated the move toward the centralization and personalization of power in Indira Gandhi's hands. Mrs. Gandhi's defeat and the end of the emergency brought a temporary halt to this process, but, following her return to power in 1980, the decay in Center-state relations became even more acute. "Mrs. Gandhi's style," W. H. Morris-Jones observed, "has transformed these relations from one of political bargaining to one akin to feudal

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[17]See Stanley A. Kochanek, "Mrs. Gandhi's Pyramid: The New Congress," in Henry C. Hart, ed., *Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraisal* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1976), pp. 93–124; and Bhagwan D. Dua, "India: A Study in the Pathology of a Federal System," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 19 (November 1981), pp. 257–75.

tutelage."[18] Under Indira Gandhi the politics of manipulation displaced the politics of accommodation. The centralization of power centralized problems, nationalizing issues that were once locally resolved within the context of a state or in bargaining between the Center and the state. The inability of personally appointed retainers to cope with local problems created a range of new and increasingly dangerous headaches for the central government. At the same time, the Center's intransigence or insensitivity in handling these disputes resulted in a deepening crisis for the Congress Party and the nation.

President N. Sanjiva Reddy warned in 1981 that the vastness and diversity of India "made it almost impossible for a Central authority in distant Delhi to deal with the multifarious problems in different parts of the country promptly and efficiently."[19] And in 1983, the non-Congress chief ministers of the four southern states met to voice their demands for greater state autonomy. At the same time, the movement for greater state autonomy in the Punjab took on an increasingly violent character. In response, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi named retired Supreme Court justice R. S. Sarkaria to head a commission to inquire into Center-state relations and to recommend appropriate changes consistent with the framework of the Constitution. The commission addressed such concerns as state financial dependence on the Center; the capacity of the President to withhold assent to bills passed by state legislatures; the assignment of all-India services to state administration; central appointment of state high court judges; and the role of the Governor. The Sarkaria Commission, in its 1988 report, emphasized the importance of a strong Center "to preserve the unity and integrity of the country" and cautiously recommended an approach that would enhance "co-operative federalism."[20] Those who saw in the commission an opportunity to redress the balance between the Center and the states were sorely disappointed. The commission did urge that measures be taken both to provide a more equitable sharing of revenues and to prevent the arbitrary dismissal of state governments. Although even the measured proposals of the Sarkaria Commission were largely

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[18]W. H. Morris-Jones, "India—More Questions than Answers," *Asian Survey,* 14 (August 1984), p. 811.

[19]*Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), November 1, 1981.

[20]*Commission on Centre-State Relations Report,* 2 vols. (Nasik: Government of India Press, 1988). Also see B. L. Fadia and R. K. Menaria, *Sarkaria Commission Report and Centre-State Relations* (Agra, India: Sahitya Bhawan, 1990).

ignored, since the 1990s many of its recommendations, some have argued, have become almost self implementing. [21]

Rather than addressing the federal relationship in a comprehensive way, the central government has responded to demands for greater autonomy and the creation of new states on an ad hoc basis in response to political and electoral exigencies. Over the years the Government of India has repeatedly yielded to demands for statehood based on ethnicity, language, religion, tribe, and ecological or cultural distinctiveness in its effort to deal with the country's diversity. As a result, the map of India has been substantially modified over the years as state boundaries have changed and new states formed.

STATES REORGANIZATION: THE CHANGING MAP OF INDIA

The process of creating an integrated, federal republic began in 1947 with the accession of the princely states and the adoption of a new constitution. The new Indian Union was divided into four categories, depending on their makeup and their relationship with the Center. Some—former Governor's provinces and princely states alike—retained their boundaries. Others, however, were formed from the union of various contiguous states. A number of the smaller territories remained under Central administration. (Figure 4.1 shows India in 1951, after integration.) Over the decades, however, the map of India had to be redrawn several times in response to persistent demands for change.

Despite the Congress Party's longstanding commitment to the formation of linguistic provinces, the newly integrated states of the Indian Union were ethnically, linguistically, and culturally heterogeneous. From the 1920s, and as late as 1945, the Congress Party had called for the formation of linguistic provinces and the provincial branches of the party were reorganized on a linguistic basis in 1921. Following independence, however, the government appointed the Dar Commission to advise the Constituent Assembly in its deliberations on demands for linguistic states. The commission's report, submitted at the end of 1948, warned that linguistically homogeneous provinces would have a "subnational bias," threatening national unity, and that, in any case, each state would have minorities. The report was received with general disappointment. The issue had become critical, and the

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[21]See M. P. Singh, "Towards a More Federalized Parliamentary System in India: Exploring Functional Change," in Dua and Singh, pp. 187–204.
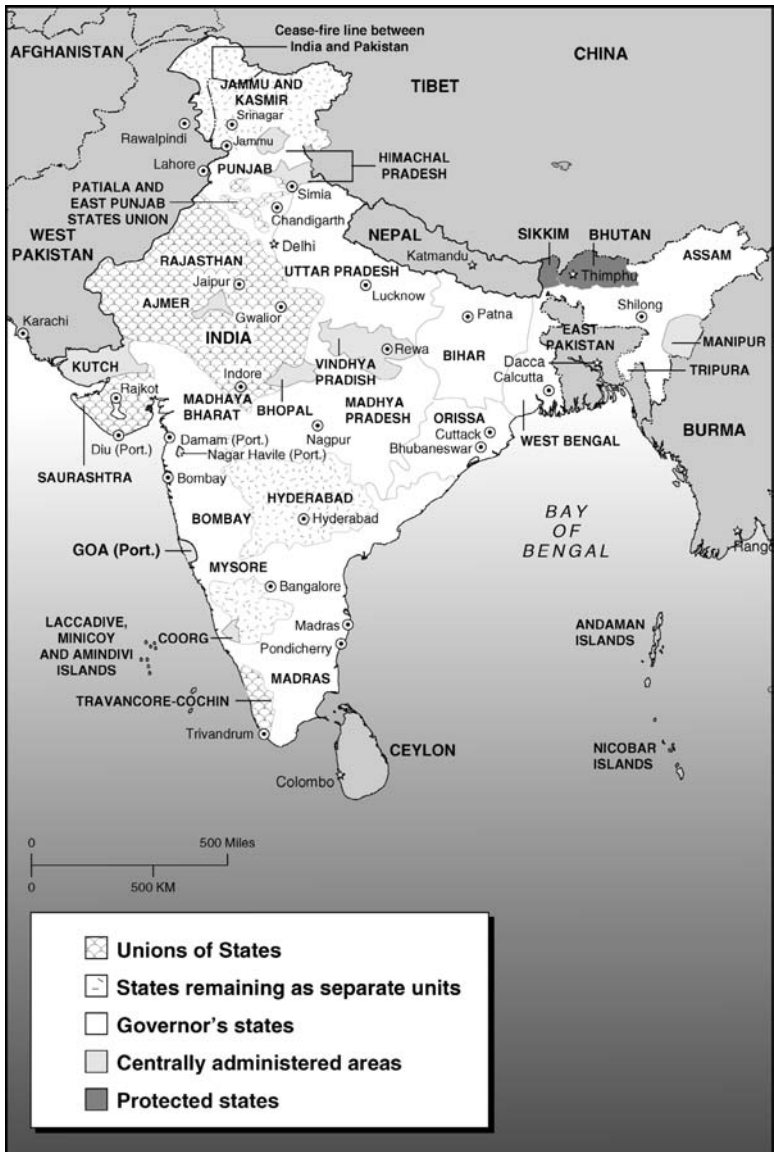
FIGURE 4.1 India 1951 (After Integration)

Congress appointed the "JVP" Committee composed of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and the party president, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, "to examine the question in the light of the decisions taken by the Congress in the past and the requirements of the existing situation."[22] The committee fundamentally concerned with the problem of national unity, reaffirmed the position of the Dar Commission. "It would unmistakably retard the process of consolidation [and] let loose, while we are still in a formative stage, forces of disruption and disintegration. . . ."[23] It conceded, however, that a strong case might be made for the formation of Andhra from the Telugu-speaking region of Madras, and that, if public sentiment was "insistent and overwhelming," this and other cases might be given further consideration. "This was the opening wedge for the bitter struggle for the bitter struggle for States Reorganization which was to dominate Indian politics from 1953 to 1956."[24]

The demand for a separate state of Andhra had deep roots among the Telugu people. It had won the agreement of the Madras government and obtained the support of the Tamilnad Congress Committee, but only after a fast-unto-death by one of the leaders of the Andhra movement did the Center finally respond. In 1953 the state of Andhra was ceated. Nehru argued against the "foolish and tribal attitudes" of provincialism. The states, he said, were only for administrative purposes—but the demand had been recognized, and other linguistic groups would now have nothing less.

The State Reorganization Commission, appointed by Nehru to examine the question, sought a "balanced approach" between regional sentiment and national interest. In its 1955 report, the commission rejected the theory of "one language one state," but recognized "linguistic homogeneity as an important factor conducive to administrative convenience and efficiency. . . ."[25]

The commission recommended that the political divisions of the Union be redrawn generally in accordance with linguistic demands.

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[22]Quoted in Joan V. Bondurant, *Regionalism versus Provincialism: A Study in Problems of Indian National Unity,* Indian Press Digests—Monograph Series, no. 4 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 29.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 481. For a broad view of that struggle, see Joseph E. Schwartzberg, "Factors in the Linguistic Reorganization of Indian States," in Paul Wallace, ed., *Region and Nation in India* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH, 1985), pp. 155–82.

[25]*Report of the States Reorganization Commission* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1955), p. 46.

The States Reorganization Act, as it was finally passed by Parliament in November 1956, provided for 14 states and six territories. The boundaries of each state were to be drawn so that they would conform to the region of a dominant language. Following the recommendations of the commission, however, Bombay and the Punjab, two of the most sensitive areas, were not reorganized on a linguistic basis. The demands for separate tribal states, including Jharkhand and Nagaland, were also bypassed.

The decisions of the States Reorganization Commission proved to be far from final as agitation for the bifurcation of Bombay into separate states of Maharashtra and Gujarat, the creation of a Punjabi Suba, and tribal demands for the creation of new states in India's northeast tribal belt continued into the 1960s and 1970s.

The States Reorganization Commission had opposed the division of Bombay into Marathi and Gujarati states largely because of the critical question of Bombay City. Marathi speakers constituted its largest language group, but the city was dominated by Gujarati wealth. Bombay politics were polarized linguistically, and only after widespread rioting and continued agitation did the Congress, in 1960, give way to the demand for reorganization. Gujarat and Maharashtra were constituted as separate linguistic states, with the city of Bombay included as part of Maharashtra.

In the Punjab, the Akali Dal, the political party of Sikh nationalism, had long demanded a Sikh state within India, if not the independent Sikh nation it sought at the time of partition. The demand for a separate state of the Punjab (Punjabi Suba) was voiced not in communal but in linguistic terms. There was no real language problem in the Punjab, however; it was rather a problem of script and, fundamentally, of religion. Punjabi is the mother tongue of Sikhs and Hindus alike, but communal passions had led large sections of the Hindu community to renounce the Punjabi language by naming their mother tongue as Hindi for census tabulation. As spoken, the languages are very similar, but Punjabi is distinguished by the use of Gurmukhi, the script of the Sikh holy books. Hindus in the Punjab write in Urdu or in Devanagari script. "The only chance of survival of the Sikhs as a separate community," it was argued, "is to create a State in which they form a compact group, where the teaching of Gurmukhi and the Sikh religion is compulsory. . . ."[26]

The States Reorganization Commission contended that the formation of a separate Punjabi-speaking state would solve neither the

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[26]Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs,* Vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 304–5. For an analysis of the issue, see Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).

language nor the communal problem, but "far from removing internal tension, which exists between communal and not linguistic and regional groups, it might further exacerbate the existing feelings."[27] In the 1956 reorganization, the states of PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) and the Punjab were merged into a single state; the Sikhs, forming only about one-third of the population, were concentrated in the western districts. Punjabi and Hindi were both official languages. But the Akali Dal, encouraged by the bifurcation of Bombay in 1960, began agitating again for Punjabi Suba. Akali volunteers courted arrest and filled the jails, while Sikh leaders Sant Fateh Singh and Master Tara Singh engaged in abortive fasts. Agitation continued, but without response from the government. Then, abruptly in 1966, supposedly as a concession to the valor and suffering of the Sikhs in the Indo–Pakistan war of 1965, but partly in response to the growing demand in the Hindi areas for a separate state of Haryana, the government announced that the Punjab would be divided into two units, Punjabi Suba and Haryana, corresponding to the regions of language dominance. The Sikhs at last constituted a majority in the Punjab—though barely more than 50 percent of the population. The hill districts of the old Punjab became part of Himachal Pradesh, stimulating a demand there for full statehood that was fulfilled in 1971. Chandigarh, the modern capital designed by the French architect Le Corbusier, became a Union Territory and joint capital for the Punjab and Haryana. The Sikhs had their Punjabi Suba, but the failure of the Akalis to secure political power again brought the Punjab to crisis in the 1980s, confronting India, as we shall later see, with the greatest challenge to its national integrity since independence.

Reorganization gave the states a political identity congruent with their culture and language.

> [It] brought State politics closer to the people, and made it easier for traditional leaders and influential regional groups to capture control, or, at least, exercise much influence over the use of power. . . . Thus, in a sense, reorganization made State politics more democratic, but less western in style. It meant, for one thing, that State politics would be increasingly conducted in the regional language rather than English; thus power was now open to others than the small English-speaking elite.[28]

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[27]*Report of the States Reorganization Commission,* p. 146.

[28]Duncan B. Forrester, "Electoral Politics and Social Change," *Economic and Political Weekly,* special number (July 1968), p. 1,083.

States Reorganization provided the framework for expanded participation. It made the people more accessible to political mobilization and, at the same time, provided them with increased institutional access for the articulation of demands—but demands that have often reflected the parochialism of region and language.

The reorganization of states on the basis of ethnicity, language, and religions community in the 1950s and 1960s was followed by a major reorganization of the northeast tribal belt in the 1970s and 1980s. The first new state to be created in northeast India was the state of Nagaland. The Naga tribes in the hills along the Assam–Myanmar border had never been completely brought under control by the British, and they were eager to assert their independence from the new Indian government. The situation was further complicated by the conversion of many of the Nagas to Christianity by American Baptist missionaries. Their missionary tie gave the Nagas outside leverage. When the government sought to bring formerly unadministered areas of the Naga hills under its control, the Nagas appealed to the United Nations, protesting what they called an Indian invasion, and the Naga National Council was organized to function as a parallel government with Assam. With money and arms secured by the Naga leader A. Z. Phizo, who later set up an exile government in London, the rebellion became increasingly serious. In 1956 the Indian government sent troops in to pacify the area. The Naga People's Convention, representing the more traditional leadership of the Naga tribes, opposed Phizo and proposed a settlement "within the Indian Union." The Nagas were finally released from Assamese administration, and in 1963 the state of Nagaland came into being.

Violence among the tribes continued, however, and Mizo rebels launched a guerrilla action in a bid for secession. In 1972 the northeastern region was reorganized in an attempt to secure the support of moderate tribal leaders. The Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura and the Meghalaya section of Assam gained full statehood, the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) was formed into the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh, and the Mizo district of Assam became the Union Territory of Mizoram. But in Mizoram armed clashes between the Indian Army and insurgents of the Mizo National Army took on new intensity in the late 1970s. The Mizo National Front—outlawed in 1979—called for an independent Mizoram. In 1984 renewed negotiations between the Front and the Government of India opened the way for a political settlement, and in February 1987, Mizoram gained statehood, with Laldenga, leader of the Mizo insurgency, as its first Chief Minister. At the same time, Arunachal

Pradesh was also raised from the status of Union Territory to that of a state, an action that drew protest from China, which asserted its own claim to the disputed area.

In the northern hill district of Darjeeling in West Bengal, the ethnically dominant Nepalis (Gurkhas) have periodically voiced demands for greater autonomy. In 1986, frustrated by economic exploitation and lack of political power, the Gurkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) launched a struggle for the creation of a separate state of Gurkhaland to be carved out of West Bengal. After two years of violence, in which more than 300 people were killed, the GNLF accepted the West Bengal government's proposal to form what would be, in effect, an autonomous region within the state of West Bengal. Its elected Darjeeling Gurkha Hill Council was granted wide powers in finance and control over such matters as education, health, agriculture, and economic development.

The political map has been modified over the years as boundaries have changed and new states formed. In 1975 India acquired new territory with the addition of Sikkim to the Indian Union. Sikkim had been a protectorate of India. In effect, having inherited the status of paramount power from the British, India exercised control over Sikkim's foreign affairs and defense. Although the state formally retained "full autonomy in regard to its internal affairs," India, in fact, exerted extensive influence through Indian administrative officers and advisers to the Chogyal (Maharaja) of Sikkim. In addition, India provided an annual subsidy. In 1973–74, when the Nepali majority within the state began to agitate for political rights, India tightened its hold over Sikkim's internal affairs. The Chogyal, stripped of his power, had no choice but to yield. The position of the Indian government was that Sikkim was no different from those princely states that had acceded to India in 1947. In response to the request by the Sikkim Assembly and a later plebiscite, India extended an ambiguous "associate" status to Sikkim, and in 1975, through the Thirty-sixth Amendment, full statehood.[29]

In May 1987, Goa became India's 25th state, and the other former Portuguese colonies of Daman and Diu (with which Goa had been formerly administered) were made a separate Union Territory. Despite its emphasis on the need for a strong centralized state, the BJP election manifesto in 1998 promised to divide big states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. This commitment became part of

[29]For a critical account, see Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1984).

the National Agenda of the BJP government and resulted in the introduction of legislation in July 1998 to grant full statehood to Delhi and create three new states. The new states were Uttaranchal, to be carved out of the hill districts of Uttar Pradesh; Vananchal, to be carved out of the southern districts of the Bihar as a truncated Jharkhand state; and Chhattisgarh, a tribal area of eastern Madhya Pradesh. The demand for the creation of Jharkhand out of the Chota-Nagpur region of southern Bihar and the contiguous tribal districts of Orissa had been a long standing demand that had grown out of an increasing self-consciousness on the part of the scheduled tribes in the area. The Jharkhand party, organized by a wealthy, Oxford-educated Munda tribesman, Jaipal Singh, secured various concessions from the Bihar government, but had not succeed in its demand for a separate state.[30] The BJP's attempt create new states in North India, however, encountered stiff resistance in Parliament, and the BJP government fell before any action was taken. Upon its return to power following the 1999 elections, however, the BJP succeeded in enacting legislation that created the 3 new states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal.

As a result of the repeated reorganization of states, the map of India has changed considerably since 1947 and the Indian union is now made up of 28 states and seven Union Territories. (See Figure 4.2 and Table 4.1).

The cultural distinctiveness and economic and social disparities that nourish regionalism in India continue to be found within a number of states. With heightened political consciousness and increased competition, demands for the creation of new states or for autonomous regions within states remain a catalyst for social unrest. Separate statehood movements, varying greatly in support and intensity, exist throughout India and frequently involve depressed regions, such as the tribal areas in Central and Eastern India; the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh; the Saurashtra region of Gujarat; the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra; and the Telengana region of Andhra. Of a somewhat different character is the demand by some in Haryana for adjacent districts of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in order to create Vishal (greater) Haryana.

In the non-Hindi states the forces of nationalization and centralization have reinforced a consciousness of their distinct cultural identities. With it has come a plethora of chauvinistic movements, rivaled perhaps only by the chauvinism of the Hindi region itself. Such movements are nourished by heightened competition for resources and

[30]See Susan B. C. Devalle, *Discourses of Ethnicity: Culture and Protest in Jharkhand* (New Delhi: Sage, 1992). For a more general discussion of tribal aspirations across India, see K. S. Singh, ed., *Tribal Movements in India,* 2 vols (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982).

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FIGURE 4.2 India: States and Union Territories

aggravated by slow economic growth, widening regional disparities, and the sense of relative deprivation that they inevitably engender.

Nativist "sons of the soil" movements have arisen in regions where culturally distinct migrants from outside the state are perceived as blocking opportunities for "locals" to advance. They are almost wholly urban and express the frustrated aspirations of an expanding, educated lower-middle class. A number of states—Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal—have enacted legislation providing educational and employment preferences for "natives." The most virulent movements have been the Shiv Sena in Mumbai (Bombay) and the Kannada Chaluvaligars in Bangalore. Although now quiescent, they could again erupt in violence. Under the pressure

T A B L E 4.1 **States and Territories of the Indian Union and Their Principal Languages**

States	Principal Languages
Andhra Pradesh	Telugu and Urdu
Arunachal Pradesh	Monpa et al.
Assam	Assamese and Bengali
Bihar	Hindi
Chhattisgarh	Hindi
Goa	Konkani and Marathi
Gujarat	Gujarati
Haryana	Hindi
Himachal Pradesh	Hindi and Pahari
Jammu and Kashmir	Kashmini, Dogri, and Urdu
Jharkhand	Hindi
Karnataka	Kannada
Kerala	Malayalam
Madhya Pradesh	Hindi
Maharashtra	Marathi
Manipur	Manipuri
Meghalaya	Khasi, Garo, and English*
Mizoram	Mizo and English*
Nagaland	Naga dialects and English*
Orissa	Oriya
Punjab	Punjabi
Rajasthan	Rajasthani and Hindi
Sikkim	Bhutia, Nepali, Lepcha, and English
Tamil Nadu	Tamil
Tripura	Bengali, Kakbarak, and Manipuri
Uttaranchal	Hindi, Garhwali, Kumaoni
Uttar Pradesh	Hindi and Urdu
West Bengal	Bengali

Union Territories

Andaman and Nicobar Islands—Hindi, Nicobarese, Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu	Delhi—Hindi, Punjab, Urdu, and English
Chandigarh—Hindi, Punjabi, English	Lakshadweep Islands—Malayalam, and Mahl
Dadra and Nagar Haveli—Gujarati, Hindi	Pondicherry—Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, English, and French
Daman and Diu—Gujarati	

*English is the language used for administrative purposes as a result of both practical necessity and missionary influence.

SOURCE: Government of India, *India 2005: A Reference Annual.* (New Delhi: Publicatons Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2005), pp. 776–897.

of competition for jobs, similar movements could grow throughout India. As aspirations rise, social conflict is likely to deepen.

In order to counter these divisive tendencies and deal with interstate disputes, the Government of India has created a number of coordinating bodies over the years. The States Reorganization Act, for example, established five zonal councils to promote cooperation and coordination of policies, and a Northeastern Council was established in 1972 to deal with the special problems of the region. Each council consists of the Union Home Minister, acting as chairman, the chief ministers of the states within the zone, and other ministers from each state nominated by the Governor. The councils have only an advisory capacity, and the results have been less than impressive.

Interstate disputes are principally of two types. Border disputes are the inevitable product of the creation of linguistic states, when boundaries are unable to make precise divisions between ethnic groups, as seen in the conflict between Maharashtra and Karnataka over the ethnically mixed Belgaum District. Perhaps more serious are disputes over the allocation of river water—a major issue, for example, between the Punjab and the neighboring states of Haryana and Rajasthan. The Constitution empowers the Center to settle such disputes, and it does so through appointed tribunals, with the consequence that state frustrations and demands are often directed toward the Center, converting interstate conflicts into issues of Center-state relations.[31]

This was the pattern in the century-old dispute over the waters of the Cauvery River in South India. When, in December 1991, the tribunal handed down an interim award favorable to Tamil Nadu, the Karnataka government protested and called a general strike, precipitating a wave of arson and violence against the Tamil minority in the state. Tamil Nadu reacted with demands that the Center intervene to protect the Tamils, and the ruling party in each state threatened to withdraw support from the Congress government at the Center unless the Prime Minister came down on its side in the dispute. For each state it was a matter of pride.

THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE

The creation of linguistic states has reinforced regionalism and has stirred demands for increased state autonomy—expressed most stridently by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in West Bengal;

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[31]Fadia and Menaria, *Sarkaria Commission Report and Centre-State Relations,* p. 24.

by the DMK and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, evoking the earlier call for secession and the creation of an independent Dravidian state; the Telugu Desam in Andhra; and by the Akali Dal in the Punjab. Almost every state has spawned a militant nativist movement directed against outsiders. The fundamental issue has been employment for local people, and many state governments, either officially or unofficially, have supported the protection of jobs for the "sons of the soil."[32] Of the movements, one of the most virulent has been the Shiv Sena, founded in 1966 in Mumbai. Exploiting Maharashtrian grievances and economic frustration, the Shiv Sena, under the banner "Maharashtra for the Maharashtrians," directed its attack, both verbal and physical, initially at South Indian immigrants and in recent years at Muslims.[33] The movement expanded its influence in several urban areas outside Mumbai in the 1970s and 1980s and increasingly took on a more antiminority, Hindu nationalist color. The Shiv Sena became more prominent in the 1990s as a result of its strong support of the Ayodhya issue, and in March 1995, in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Shiv Sena won the assembly elections in Maharashtra and took power as the ruling party in the state.

Language has been the subject of continued conflict in the states of the Indian Union. India has 1,652 "mother tongues," and of these, the government has recognized 18 regional languages as "official" in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The most recent additions to the list came in 1992, with the inclusion of Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali in response to growing political pressure.

During the years of British rule, the language of administration and educated elites was English. For Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party, English had usurped the rightful place of the indigenous languages. Hindi, as the most widely spoken of the Indian languages, was to replace English with independence. The Constitution embodied this aspiration in Article 343, which stipulated that "the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in the Devanagari script."

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[32]See Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); and Myron Weiner and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *India's Preferential Policies: Migrants, the Middle Classes, and Ethnic Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[33]See Ram Joshi, "The Shiv Sena: A Movement in Search of Legitimacy," *Asian Survey,* 10 (November 1970), pp. 967–78; and Mary F. Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Policies in Bombay* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979).

The Constitution also provided that English should remain the language of administration for no longer than 15 years.[34]

The South, where English standards in school remained high and where there was little knowledge of Hindi, was uneasy. The change-over from English to Hindi would place those for whom Hindi was not a mother tongue at a severe disadvantage, especially in competition for coveted positions within the public services. In response to growing opposition—especially in Tamil Nadu—to the "imposition" of Hindi, Nehru assured the South that English would remain "as an alternative language as long as the people require it...." In 1961 the National Integration Council recommended the adoption of the "three-language formula," which would require in all schools compulsory teaching in three languages: the regional language and English, with Hindi for the non-Hindi states and another Indian language for the Hindi-speaking states. The northern Hindi advocates demanded that the South make Hindi a compulsory part of its curriculum, but they themselves refused to adopt the three-language formula, feeling Hindi alone was sufficient.

Nehru's assurance had eased the fears of Tamil Nadu, but on Republic Day, January 26, 1965, in pursuance of the Constitution, Hindi became the official language of India. In the two months of anti-Hindi demonstrations and riots that followed in Tamil Nadu, more than 60 people were killed in police firings, and unofficial reports placed the number of deaths as high as 300. Two young men poured gasoline upon their bodies and immolated themselves in protest. Hindi books were burned, and Hindi signs in railway stations were defaced or ripped down. All colleges and high schools in the state were closed, and student demonstrations gave way to mob violence. An uneasy peace was restored only with regiments of armed police and soldiers.[35]

The DMK, self-appointed voice for the Tamil cause, demanded that all major regional languages be the "official languages of the respective states with English as the link language between the States and the Centre." Despite pro-Hindi agitation in the North, the government amended the Official Languages Act, giving statutory form to Nehru's assurances. Although the three-language formula is today official policy, it is honored in breach. Tamil Nadu has specifically

[34]On language policy and politics, see Robert D. King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Paul R. Brass, *The Politics of India Since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 135–68.

[35]See Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "The Riots in Tamilnad: Problems and Prospects of India's Language Crisis," *Asian Survey,* 5 (August 1965), pp. 399–407.

eliminated Hindi from the school curriculum, and the Hindi heart-land of North India remains almost wholly monolingual. Although English remains, for the most part, the language of the central government, many had feared that it would become increasingly tenuous as a "link" language. These fears, however, have not been realized due to the popular spread of both Hindi and English.

REGIONALISM IN INDIAN POLITICS

From the time of India's independence in 1947, cultural politics—whether in the demands for linguistic states, in the controversy over Hindi as the national language, or in the nativism of the "sons of the soil"—has deepened regional identities. Episodic movements have been both the vehicle of politicization and its inevitable result. The government has typically met cultural demands with vacillation and indecision—sometimes by calculated neglect—only to be followed, in the face of prolonged agitation, by a combined response of force and accommodation.

Regionalism is rooted in India's cultural and linguistic diversity. Projected in geographic terms, it is, at the state level, both an ethnic and economic phenomenon. It is an expression of heightened political consciousness, expanding participation, and increasing competition for scarce resources. For the state, competition is for central financial allocation and Plan investment; for the individual, it involves access to education and jobs. Economic grievances—expressed in charges of unfairness, discrimination, or Center neglect—may be fused with cultural anxiety over language status and ethnic balance. It is this fusion that gives regionalism its potency. Language and culture, like religion, are at the core of an individual's identity and, when politicized, take a potentially virulent form.

As long as most states were under the Congress umbrella, conflict between states and Center, among states, and within states could be accommodated within the framework of the party. Increasingly, regionalism came to manifest itself through opposition to the Congress Party—in regional parties like the AIADMK and DMK in Tamil Nadu, the Akali Dal in the Punjab, the Telegu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in Assam. By the late 1980s the disintegration of the Congress and the mobilization of new caste and religious constituencies around polarizing issues resulted in a major regionalization of the Indian party system.

The demand for greater state autonomy—namely, increased financial resources, decentralization of planning, and more independence in

administrative areas for which states are constitutionally responsible—reflects, at least in part, an aspiration to bring government "closer to the people." The arguments are familiar in the American context, for federalism by its nature is "an invitation to struggle." That struggle in India, however, is aggravated by gross regional disparities, both in levels of development and in rates of growth, so that the gap between advanced and backward regions continues to widen.

Disparities mean that the struggle between the states and the Center necessarily involves a struggle among states. All states do not share the same interests. More prosperous states, such as the Punjab, may resist the Center's redistribution of income among states, claiming that they are being unfairly exploited or that they do not receive a fair share back for what they contribute to the national economy. Other states, like Assam, Bengal, and Kerala, claim to be victims of Center neglect or discrimination. The backward states, especially those of the Hindi heartland, look to the Center to redress disparities.

The cross-cutting interests and alliances among the states are likely to be ad hoc and temporary. Nevertheless, because regionalism, as it expresses itself culturally and in the demand for greater state autonomy, is almost wholly a phenomenon of the non-Hindi speaking periphery, it continues to arouse fears of national disintegration.

The federal relationship involves a permanent tug-of-war, and "rising regionalist tendencies" were a predictable response to increasing centralization in both government and the Congress Party under Indira Gandhi. Regionalism will probably impose increasing stress on the federal system as state movements seek to restore greater balance, but it does not pose a threat to the integrity of the Union. While we may be witnessing a regionalization of politics in India, there are countervailing forces of national integration. The development of a national system of communications and the growth and extension of a national market economy have increasingly bound India together. Greater interdependence sharpens consciousness of regional disparities, however, and intensifies the struggle among states to protect and advance their interests. Greater national integration, ironically, may deepen the stress on the federal system rather than alleviate it.

To say that India's national integrity is fundamentally secure does not minimize the serious problems posed by disturbances in the Northeast, the Punjab, and Kashmir. These are strategically sensitive border areas, and prolonged agitation involves basic interests of national security. The Government of India will do whatever it takes to bring these areas under control. In both Assam and the Punjab, the government initially pursued a policy of purposeful neglect ("constructive inaction") in the hope that the movements would burn themselves out. Instead, they

grew in intensity. In the Northeast, Assam erupted in violence as "sons of the soil" asserted their claims against "foreign" encroachment. In the Punjab, the movement for greater state autonomy gave way to a terrorist movement for an independent Sikh nation of Khalistan. And in Kashmir, insurgents raised the banner of liberation and secession, bringing the state under siege and India and Pakistan to the brink of war.

The Northeast

In the tribal regions of the Northeast, the government has faced periodic armed insurrection from the time of independence. The creation of Nagaland in 1963 and the reorganization of the Northeast in 1972 with the formation of Mizoram, were welcomed by most tribals. On the whole, insurgency has been contained, but guerrilla activity by various underground organizations has not been brought wholly under control. Tribal regions of the Northeast remain under a form of quasi-martial law, reflecting both the continuing danger of unrest and the strategically vulnerable nature of the region. The Chinese no longer provide arms and training to tribal insurgents, but the adjoining region of northern Myanmar lies effectively outside the control of Rangoon and is both a source of arms into the Northeast and a haven for guerrillas.

The oldest of the tribal insurgencies is led by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. Although it lost much popular support with the formation of the Naga state in 1963, it remains an active guerrilla force and, like secessionist groups in neighboring Manipur, engages in periodic terrorist attacks against civil and military authorities. The Mizo insurgency, a response to years of economic neglect, began in 1966, and in the late 1970s and early 1980s clashes between the Indian Army and insurgents of the Mizo National Army grew in intensity. In 1986, Laldenga, the Mizo leader, signed an accord with the Government of India, ending the rebellion in exchange for amnesty for the Mizo insurgents, protection of tribal identity and traditions, and statehood for Mizoram. In 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi reached a similar agreement with leaders of the tribal insurgency in Tripura, ending the 10-year struggle for an independent homeland. The terms of the Mizo and Tripura accords have not been entirely fulfilled by New Delhi, and tribal discontent could again spark secessionist movements, with the potential—as some groups have sought—for a united insurgency by tribal peoples for the creation of an independent federation of the Northeast.

The situation in the seven states and Union Territories of the Northeast is aggravated by the incursion of nontribals onto tribal lands. Tribals—economically, culturally, and politically threatened—have responded in violence. The problem, which goes back well into the

British period, has been exacerbated over the past decade as a result of immigration from Bangladesh and, to a lesser degree, from Nepal. In Tripura the influx of Bengali refugees has shifted the ethnic balance and reduced tribals to a minority. Efforts to protect tribal lands and culture have not been successful, as the slaughter of 350 Bengalis in Tripura bears tragic witness. In Manipur and Meghalaya, student–led agitations against "foreigners"—Bengalis and Nepalese—have taken their lead from the movement in Assam.

The volatile situation in Assam is complicated by the unrest engendered by the occupation of tribal lands by both Assamese and Bengalis. Lalung tribals were responsible for the massacre of more than 1,000 Bengali Muslims at Nellie during the 1983 election violence.[36] Tribal grievances are directed as often against the Assamese, however, as clashes between Bodo tribals and Assamese villagers clearly reveal. From the 1960s various Assam plains tribal groups have called for the formation of a separate state within India for the protection of tribal languages, cultures, and economies. Most important has been the All-Bodo Student Union agitation for "Bodoland," a tribal state that would divide Assam in half to create a homeland for the Bodo tribals.

It is not tribal demands, however, but the "foreigner" issue that has been the center of the political turmoil in Assam for the past three decades. Immigration—primarily involving Bengalis from Bangladesh, most of whom are Muslim—has aroused Assamese fears that they will be reduced to a minority in their own state, if this has not, in fact, already taken place. The issue is political power. The conflict, rooted in the old love-hate relationship between Assamese and Bengalis, has been fueled in this century by Assamese apprehension that their language and culture are threatened. Bengalis long dominated Assam state administration, but the extension of their control over the economy after independence stimulated demands—primarily by Assamese youth—for the protection of jobs for "the sons of the soil." Economic concerns have been compounded by grievances that the Center has neglected and exploited the state.

There is no way in this brief discussion to recapitulate the history of the Assam conflict.[37] Suffice to say that it was the discovery

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[36]*India Today* (New Delhi) 28 February 1983, pp. 12–21; 15 March 1983, pp. 8–23.

[37]See Sanjib Barvah, "Immigration, Ethnic Conflict, and Political Turmoil—Assam, 1979–1985," *Asian Survey,*" 26 (November 1986): pp. 1,184–1,206; Weiner, *Sons of the Soil,* pp. 75–143; Weiner, "The Political Demography of Assam's Anti-Immigrant Movement," *Population Development Review,* 9 (June 1983), pp. 279–92; Shekhar Gupta, *Assam: A Valley Divided* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1984); and A. K. Das, *Assam's Agony* (New Delhi: Lancers, 1982).

of "foreigners"—illegal aliens from Bangladesh—on the voter rolls in 1979 that acted as the catalyst for a movement that engulfed Assam and confronted the Center with a seemingly intractable problem. Led by the All-Assam Students' Union and joined by other political organizations, the agitation mounted in intensity and came to embrace virtually the whole of the Assamese-speaking population in its support.

The conflict is essentially ethnic, but it took an increasingly communal character as both Hindu and Muslim organizations exploited mutual anxieties. In the course of the agitation, the Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tabligh Jamaat became increasingly active among Muslims, and the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), warning that Assam was being overrun by Muslim infiltrators, dramatically expanded its activities in the state.

Center delay and Assamese intransigence made a "solution" more difficult, and in the course of the six-year-long agitation, more than 5,000 people were killed in the ethnic conflict. In 1986 the Rajiv Gandhi government reached a settlement with leaders of the anti-immigrant movement. Under the terms of the accord, all immigrants who arrived after 1965 were to be disenfranchised. Those coming between 1966 and 1971 would become full citizens of India in 1995. Those who arrived after 1971 were to be deported—a decision to expel hundreds of thousands of Bengali aliens that raised a range of practical problems and exacerbated the potential for renewed violence. The government did not act upon the decision, however. On other issues, the central government promised to intensify the economic development of the region and to provide "legislative and administrative safeguards to protect the cultural, social, and linguistic identity and heritage" of the Assamese people. Following the terms of the agreement, new state assembly elections were held, and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the reincarnation of the student movement as a regional political party, took power in December 1985.

Assam's agony was by no means over. In 1979, the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) formed as a militant wing of the antiforeign movement. But, with the 1985 accord, as other groups turned to mainstream politics, the ULFA, in a blend of Assamese nationalism and Maoist ideology, embarked on a terrorist campaign for secession. Financed through extortion and with alleged links to elements within the AGP government, the ULFA secured effective control in many areas of Assam. In November 1990, the central government, at the direction of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, dismissed the Asom Gana Parishad government for failure to maintain law and order in the state and imposed President's Rule. In the June 1991 state assembly

elections, the Congress returned to power in Assam, defeating the factionally divided and discredited AGP. Over the course of 1991, the Indian army launched major operations against the ULFA. In January 1992, ULFA leaders, following secret negotiations, signed an accord in New Delhi to end the rebellion, even as ULFA hardliners from their base in Bangladesh vowed to continue the struggle. The ULFA, however, suffered a major blow in December 2003 when it was driven out of its base in Bhutan, and it has continued to hold a dialogue with the Government of India.

Although a united AGP led alliance defeated the Congress in the 1996 assembly elections to return to power in the state and won five seats in the Lok Sabha to become a member of the United Front government at the Center, the party drew a blank in the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The AGP did, however, show some sign of resurgence in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections that helped to boost the party's sagging morale but remains threatened by a resurgent Congress (I) and the rise of the BJP.

The AGP had come to power on a wave of Assamese nationalism in 1985. However, once in power it did little to expel or disenfranchise illegal residence. The AGP's failure to keep its electoral promises, its ineffectiveness in power, and problems of factionalism and corruption have gradually eroded the party's appeal. The party's biggest problem, however, has been its inability to cope with the multilingual and multiethnic character of the state.

The Punjab[38]

No ethnic conflict in India has been more traumatic politically and emotionally than that of the Punjab. Following its fall from power in the Punjab in 1980, the Akali Dal—the Sikh political party—submitted a memorandum of demands and grievances to the Prime Minister, and

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[38]See Paul Wallace, "Religious and Ethnic Politics: Political Mobilization in the Punjab," in Francine R. Frankel and M. S. A. Rao, eds., *Dominance and State Power in Modern India,* Vol. II (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 416–81; Paul Wallace, "Sikh Minority Attitudes in India's Federal System," in Joseph T. O'Connell, et al, eds., *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: South Asian Studies, University of Toronto, 1988), pp. 256–73; Paul Wallace and Surendra Chopra, eds., *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1988); Paul Brass, "The Punjab Crisis and the Unity of India," in Atul Kohli, ed., *India's Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 169–213; Robin Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India?* 2nd ed. (Trumbull, CT: Holmes & Meir, 1994); M. J. Akbar, *India: The Siege Within* (New York: Penguin, 1985), pp. 103–209; and Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, 1839–1988,* Vol. 2, Rev. ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 319–417. Developments in the Punjab have been especially well covered by *India Today.*

in 1981 launched the agitation that was to bring increasing violence to India's most prosperous state. The agitation was, in part, a continuation of the earlier movement for a Sikh-majority state of Punjabi Suba and for the protection of Sikh culture, religion, and the Punjabi language.

In 1966 the Center yielded to Sikh demands for a separate state, but the creation of the new Punjab and Haryana left the question of Chandigarh, the capital, unresolved. The decision made in 1970 to award the city to the Punjab, with two Punjab tehsils (subdivisions) going to Haryana in exchange, was never implemented, and this was one of the major issues of the renewed agitation. Another issue involved the allocation of river water for irrigation among the Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan. The Akalis demanded a greater share to meet the vastly greater needs of the Punjab, India's granary. Various religious demands, such as recognition of Amritsar (site of the Golden Temple) as a "holy city," relate to Akali concerns for Sikh identity. The Akali demands embodied in the 1973 Anandpur Sahib Resolution included virtually complete autonomy for the state, leaving the Center only defense, external affairs, communications, currency, and railways. These demands—short of the call for an independent "Khalistan" sought by the outlawed Dal Khalsa—were more a talking point on Center-state relations than a serious aspiration for the moderate Sikh leaders who initiated the movement. These leaders, however, were increasingly pressed by extremists led by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a zealot who stirred Sikh revivalism and fueled Hindu anxieties.

Given the success of the Sikh community, its representation in the public services and in the military, and the wealth of the Punjab (with a per capita income nearly twice that of India's overall average), little sympathy existed among Hindus for Sikh claims of discrimination. Moreover, much to the outrage of Sikh extremists, most Hindus do not regard Sikhism as a separate religion, but as part of the Hindu fold. This attitude deepened the widespread fear among Sikhs of merging back into Hinduism and of losing their separate identity.

The problem in the Punjab, as in Assam, is political power, and it is partly a question of ethnic balance. The Sikhs constitute 55–60 percent of the population in the Punjab, reflecting a relative decline due to their own success as a community. Entrepreneurial spirit has led to an emigration of Sikhs, while agricultural prosperity in the Punjab drew Hindu laborers into the state.

The Akalis had struggled for Punjabi Suba, but after their goal was attained in 1966, they found themselves excluded from power except for brief interludes of coalition government. The Akalis themselves

were factionally divided and engaged in continuous internecine struggle; but the Sikhs, divided by sect and by caste, were not wholly behind the Akali Dal anyway. Non-Jat Sikhs (the Jats are the major agricultural caste of the region) joined hands with Hindus in support of the Congress Party, and, given the ethnic balance in the state, the effect was to exclude the majority of Sikhs, represented by the Akali Dal, from power. A succession of Sikh Congress chief ministers ruled the state, but without the confidence of the larger number of their own community. During the period when the Akalis were in power, 1977–80, it is commonly accepted that the Congress Party sought to undermine Akali strength by clandestinely supporting the rise of the Sikh fundamentalist, Sant Bhindranwale.[39]

The possibility of an early compromise between the government and the Akalis was preempted by Congress efforts to split the Akalis, driving a wedge between the moderates and the extremists. But the continued agitation, while exposing divisions among the Sikhs, strengthened Sikh revivalism and heightened political consciousness, especially among unemployed, educated youth. Center delay, insensitivity, and ineptitude strengthened the hands of Bhindranwale and the Sikh extremists.

In the wake of increasing violence over the course of 1983, Hindu-Sikh antipathies deepened as Hindu chauvinists—the RSS, numerous Hindu "defense" organizations, and even some "secular" political parties—responded in kind to the increasing stridency of the Sikh extremists led by Bhindranwale. In October 1983, armed Sikh militants stopped a bus and shot its six male Hindu passengers. The same day another band of Sikh terrorists killed two officials on a train. None too soon, the central government, invoking emergency powers under the Constitution, dismissed Punjab's Congress (I) ministry and imposed President's Rule. Police and paramilitary forces with sweeping powers sought to restore order as the new Governor and his advisers settled in for a long and difficult period of negotiation. Government indecision and Akali intransigence, however, had transformed the Punjab into a cauldron of discontent. From his sanctuary within the Golden Temple, the citadel of the Sikh religion, Bhindranwale directed the campaign of terrorism in the Punjab.

In March 1984 the government banned the radical All-India Sikh Students Federation and slapped a sedition charge on Akali President

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[39]Ayesha Kagal, for example, in *The Times of India,* September 22, 1982, in writing of Bhindranwale's growing power, stated that "the irony, of course, is that the Sant was originally a product, nurtured and marketed by the Centre to cut into the Akali Dal's spheres of influence."

Harchand Singh Longowal, driving moderates closer to the extremists. Then, in response to a series of murders by Sikh assassins—believed to be under orders from Bhindranwale—the government declared the whole of the Punjab "deeply disturbed." Under an amendment to the National Security Act, the police in the Punjab were permitted to enter and search homes without warrant, to arrest and detain suspects for up to six months without giving a reason, and to imprison persons without trial for as long as two years.

Bhindranwale had transformed the Akal Takht, his headquarters within the Golden Temple, into an armory and a sanctuary for terrorists. He conducted his campaign with seeming impunity. In April and May the killings increased, bringing the total murdered in the Punjab from January 1 to June 3, 1984, to 298. In the five days before the Army entered the Golden Temple, 48 people were killed. By June, military action against the Golden Temple seemed inevitable, if not already too late, but "Operation Bluestar," as the action was codenamed, proved far more costly than its planners had anticipated. The extremists were in greater numbers and far better armed than intelligence reports suggested, and they met the Army's initial call for surrender with machine-gun fire. Rather than a surgical commando raid, the operation turned into a bloody three-day siege. By official count, 576 people were killed, including 83 soldiers. Unofficial estimates put the number as high as 1,000. Among the dead, found together in a basement of the Akal Takht, were Bhindranwale, the leader of the Sikh Students Federation, and a dismissed major-general of the Indian Army who reportedly had trained Sikh terrorists. Coordinated with the attack on the Golden Temple were raids against 44 places of worship in the Punjab where terrorists were believed to be based.[40] Throughout the state, police arrested Akali leaders, whose militancy had intensified in rivalry with Bhindranwale and the Khalistan extremists.

Four of the six generals in charge of Operation Bluestar were Sikhs, but their involvement did little to assuage the deep sense of humiliation and anger among nearly all Sikhs. The Army's entry

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[40]See Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985); and the Hindu-Sikh collaboration by two of India's most able journalists, Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh, *Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Bluestar & After* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1984). For the official version of the operation and the events leading up to it, see Government of India, *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation* (New Delhi: July 10, 1984). An indictment of official policy and action is presented by Sachchidanand Sinha, et al., *Army Action in Punjab: Prelude and Aftermath* (New Delhi: Samata Era Publications, 1984).

into the Golden Temple was seen as a sacrilege, and rumors spread rapidly that the most sacred shrine, the Harmandir Sahib, had been destroyed. In fact, though used by the terrorists for gun emplacements, it had been spared at considerable loss of life to the Indian Army. The Akal Takht, however, had suffered serious damage. Rumors triggered mutinies among Sikh troops—nearly all raw recruits—in eight separate rebellions. In Bihar some 1,000 Sikh soldiers went on a rampage, killing their Hindu commander, then charging off in commandeered vehicles for New Delhi with the cry, "Death to Mrs. Gandhi." All told, more than 2,500 Sikh deserters were detained; another 55 were killed in shootouts with loyal army units. The mutineers numbered a small fraction of the estimated 120,000 Sikhs in the armed forces, but the indiscipline—the most serious since independence—introduced an element of distrust within the military that was far-reaching.

Opposition party leaders generally stood behind the government's action in entering the Golden Temple as "inevitable," but they registered sharp criticism of Indira Gandhi's handling of the events leading up to Operation Bluestar—a seeming policy of drift, a weakening of the Akali moderates, and a cultivation of Hindu support by playing on communal animosities. Sikhs were almost unanimous in condemning the action, and two Congress (I) members of Parliament resigned from the party in protest. The Punjab was effectively under military rule, and the resentment and alienation of Sikhs were deepened by the continued Army occupation of the Golden Temple. In September, after more than three months, the government returned control of the temple to the five head priests, but there was little basis for reconciliation between Sikhs and the government. Khalistan, once dismissed as a fanciful aspiration of a handful of overseas Sikhs, was now winning adherents in the Punjab. Bhindranwale, who in death came to be revered by more people than had followed him in life, had bequeathed a spirit of bitterness and rage. The Akali leaders were in jail, discredited in public eyes either because they had acquiesced in the desecration of the Golden Temple as Bhindranwale turned it into a base for terrorism, or because they had "surrendered" in the siege. The government faced political vacuum in the Punjab, with no credible representative of the Sikhs with whom it might negotiate.

On October 31, 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh members of her security guard. As word of the assassination spread, mobs surged through the streets of New Delhi in search of Sikhs upon whom they might vent their rage. In three days of arson, looting, and murder, the capital witnessed its greatest

violence since partition. Sikhs were attacked, their hair and beards cut, and in some instances they were butchered or immolated before the eyes of their families. In the hysteria, the police simply stood by as rioters destroyed homes, shops, trucks, and taxis. Rajiv Gandhi, succeeding his mother as Prime Minister, issued a joint appeal with opposition party leaders "to restore sanity and harmony." "To subject Sikhs as a whole to violence and indignity for what a few misguided persons have done, however heinous the crime, is most irrational and unbecoming of our heritage and tolerance. This madness must stop." It did stop, but only with the belated entry of the army into New Delhi and eight other cities. While the body of Indira Gandhi lay in state, violence claimed more than 2,700 lives, most in the capital area. The Punjab was mercifully quiet. Notably, the violence was not spontaneous, as it first appeared, but orchestrated. The mobs were made up largely of "lumpen elements"—mainly untouchables and Muslims from slums on the outskirts of Delhi—and some were reported to have been led by Congress (I) functionaries.[41] What was spontaneous was the protection given by Hindus to their Sikh friends and neighbors, although this was not enough to save the Sikhs from the deep trauma that widened the communal divide.

Rajiv Gandhi announced that his first priority as Prime Minister was the Punjab, and among his first acts was the appointment of a high-level Cabinet committee to review the options for a political solution to the crisis. But it was nearly three months before Rajiv made his first move, with the release of eight jailed Akali leaders, including Akali President Longowal. A month later, in concession to Sikh demands, Rajiv at long last ordered an independent judicial inquiry into the anti-Sikh riots that followed his mother's death. Against a backdrop of factional division and discord within the Akali Dal, Longowal entered into secret negotiations with the government toward a resolution of the Punjab crisis. Their efforts were given greater urgency by the midair explosion of an Air India 747 with 329 passengers aboard—the apparent result of a terrorist bomb.

In August 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Akali leader signed a "memorandum of settlement." With a sense of relief shared by the vast majority of his fellow Sikhs, Longowal said, "The long period of confrontation is over and we are fully satisfied with

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[41]See *Who Are the Guilty? Report of a Joint Inquiry into the Causes and Impact of the Riots in Delhi from 31 October to 10 November* (New Delhi: People's Union for Democratic Rights and People's Union for Civil Liberties, 1984).

the deal." The government had conceded to the major Akali demands. Under the terms of the accord, Chandigarh was to become the capital of the Punjab. A commission would be constituted to determine the specific Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab that would go to Haryana by way of compensation. The dispute on the allocation of river waters would be referred to a tribunal, and the decision would be binding on both Punjab and Haryana. Other provisions provided assurances against discrimination to Sikhs in the military, for regulation of Sikh temples "in consultation with the Akali Dal," and for the promotion of the Punjabi language.

Although some moderate Sikh leaders initially objected to the accord as a "betrayal" of Sikh interests because it fell short of the full demands, they acquiesced, and the Akali Dal formally approved the agreement. Militant Sikhs denounced the accord, and in Haryana and Rajasthan, Congress and opposition leaders protested what they viewed as government capitulation to the Sikhs.

To return the Punjab to representative government, Rajiv Gandhi announced that state assembly and parliamentary elections would be held in late September 1985. Longowal and opposition party leaders, arguing that more time was necessary to calm the atmosphere, urged that polling be postponed. In Gandhi's view, however, to put off elections was to yield to terrorist intimidation. Isolated and increasingly desperate, Sikh terrorists struck, first with the murder of a Congress Member of Parliament who allegedly played a role in the anti-Sikh rioting following Indira Gandhi's death, then by the assassination of Longowal as he addressed a meeting in a Sikh temple. Longowal's death, less than a month after he had signed the accord with the Prime Minister, heightened fears of greater violence to subvert the Punjab settlement and sabotage the elections. Despite the threat of violence and the militant call for a boycott, Punjabis repudiated extremism in an electoral turnout of 67 percent. For the first time on its own, the Akali Dal, led by Sikh moderates committed to the accord, won an absolute majority in the assembly. It was, Rajiv Gandhi declared, a victory for democracy and India—but hope for peace in the Punjab was short-lived.

The Akali government, headed by Surjit Singh Barnala, was virtually immobilized by factionalism, and the party split. Extremists, with Khalistan as their goal, again seized the initiative, taking control of the state committee that managed Sikh temples and "excommunicating" Chief Minister Barnala. With violence increasing, the Center mounted new military and paramilitary operations that further alienated the people from the government. In May 1987, declaring the

state government unable to control terrorist activities, the Center imposed President's Rule.

The Barnala government, however, had been undermined by the Center itself and by the failure of Rajiv Gandhi to implement the terms of the 1985 accord. The reason was basically political. Gandhi feared alienating Hindus, especially in Haryana, where elections scheduled for June threatened Congress power. The Center backed away from its commitment to transfer Chandigarh when the chief ministers of the Punjab and Haryana were unable to agree on land compensation. The Center failed as well to move on adjudication of the water dispute between Punjab and Haryana, and it took no action to identify and prosecute those responsible for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

Force supplanted efforts to find a political solution in the Punjab. Terrorism and police excesses fed upon each other in escalating violence.[42] Sikh militants reoccupied the Golden Temple, and in May 1988, in a replay of Operation Bluestar, paramilitary forces surrounded the temple. In the subsequent 10-day siege that left 50 dead, the forces cleared the temple of extremists. Events in the Punjab sharpened international tensions as well, as India denounced Pakistan for alleged support—training and supply of arms—for Sikh terrorists.

New hope for the Punjab came with the formation of the National Front/Janata Dal government at the Center in December 1989. Gandhi and the Congress (I) were out of power, opening the possibility of negotiations into which Sikh militants might enter without loss of face. Expectations rose as Prime Minister V. P. Singh went to Amritsar to offer his prayers at the Golden Temple, but the minority government was hostage to Hindu sentiment and its dependency on the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. The subsequent Chandra Shekhar government, dependent on Gandhi's support, fared no better. A few Sikh militants were willing to enter into political dialogue, but for many terrorist gangs, political goals had been displaced by extortion, robbery, and murder as a way of life.

Every year the death toll increased, with 4,768 people, including 2,177 militants, killed in 1991. From the beginning of the agitation in 1981 through 1991, more than 16,000 people died in Punjab violence. From 1987, with President's Rule extended every six months, a succession of Governors directed state administration and counterterrorist

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[42]For an assessment of human rights violations, see Asia Watch, *Punjab in Crisis* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991).

operations. State assembly and Lok Sabha elections gave the chance to return the Punjab to the political process in 1991. The people, sickened by both terrorism and police repression, appeared ready. One day before balloting, however, the central Election Commission canceled the elections, citing the violence that had taken the lives of 29 candidates. The action was taken in all likelihood at the behest of the Congress (I), which had boycotted the elections and that, had elections been held, would have been closed out politically. Elections were rescheduled, only to be canceled again, and then set for February 19, 1992.

To ensure security during the elections, more than 300,000 troops and police were deployed. All but one of the Akali factions boycotted the elections, and Sikh militants threatened to kill the first person to vote at any polling station. The voter turnout was 21.6 percent (down from 67.6 percent in 1985). In rural Punjab, where Sikhs were concentrated, only 15.1 percent voted, and in hundreds of villages not a single person turned out at the polls. In urban areas, those who did vote were largely Hindu. The results gave the Congress (I) 12 of the 13 parliamentary seats, strengthening Narasimha Rao's position in the Lok Sabha. In the state legislative assembly, Congress won 87 of the 117 seats. After 56 months of direct rule from New Delhi, elections brought a new government to power and helped to restore the political process in the Punjab.

In the April–May 1996 Lok Sabha elections, an Akali faction led by Prakash Singh Badal won eight seats and in the February 1997 assembly elections the Akali Dal (Badal) was able to win 75 seats in alliance with the BJP, thereby restoring Akali rule to the Punjab. Stridently anti-Congress, the Akali Dal (Badal) became an ally of the BJP and supported the creation of a BJP government in New Delhi following the 1998 election. The party supports a broad-based confederate structure in contrast to militant Sikh demands for the creation of a separate Sikh nation.[43]

During the 1999 Lok Sabha elections and the 2002 state assembly elections, the Congress (I) succeeded in restoring its position in Punjab by winning 8 Lok Sabha seats and 38.4 percent of the vote and by winning a majority in the 2002 state assembly elections. However, due to the positive image of Vajpayee, Akali unity, and the poor performance

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[43]Paul Wallace, "India's 1991 Elections: Regional Factors in Haryana and Punjab," in Harold A. Gould and Sumit Ganguly, eds., *India Votes: The Quest for Consensus, 1989 and 1991* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 403–428.

of the Congress controlled state government, the BJP–Akali Dal alliance swept polls the 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

Jammu and Kashmir[44]

Jammu and Kashmir is India's only Muslim majority state. It is located in the northwest Himalayan ranges of the Indian subcontinent and was ruled by Hindu Dogra Maharajas from 1846 to 1947. Because of the circumstances surrounding its accession to India in 1947, Kashmir remains a subject of dispute between India and Pakistan, and the state enjoys a special status under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which distinguishes it from all other states. Any perceived threat that diminishes the state's autonomy has tended to heighten resentment and anti–Indian feeling among the state's strongly nationalist Muslim population.

The former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir is extremely heterogeneous and the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into three distinct regions. A fourth region was seized by Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani war of 1948 and is known as "Azad Kashmir" (Free Kashmir). According to the 2001 census, Indian controlled Kashmir had a population of 10 million. This population was 67 percent Muslim, 30 percent Hindu, 2 percent Sikh, and 1 percent Buddhist; spoke eight different languages; and was divided on the basis of caste, sect, and tribe. The Kashmir valley, with the capital Srinagar, is the most populous and homogenous of the state's three regions. It is overwhelmingly Muslim and until recently had a small Hindu minority of largely Brahmin Pundit families with whom historically the Muslims had enjoyed good relations. The 5.4 million people who live in the valley speak mostly Kashmiri, are 98 percent Muslim, and are mostly Sunnis. Until recently, the politics of the valley were dominated by a single political party, the National Conference (NC).

Although the region of Jammu to the south is predominantly Hindu, its population of 4.4 million is much more religiously, linguistically, ethnically, and politically diverse. In 2001, 60 percent the population of Jammu was Hindu, 30 percent was Muslim, and 10 percent was other; its dominant language was Punjabi; and 18 percent of its population belonged to the Scheduled Castes. The Dogras remain the

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[44]For an overview of the Kashmir dispute and the movement for secession, see Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ajit Bhattacharjea, *Kashmir: The Wounded Valley* (New Delhi: UBSPD, 1994); and Raju G. C. Thomas, ed., *Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

dominant ethnic group in Jammu, and incipient Dogra "nationalism" has led to increasing resentment against Kashmir's Muslim majority rule and demands for a separate Hindu state of Jammu.

Located in the upper reaches of the Himalayas in the northeastern part of the state, the large but sparsely populated area of Ladakh is isolated from the rest of the state. Its small population of only 233,000, however, is sharply polarized between the Shiite Muslim majority district of Kargil and the Tibetan Buddhist dominated district of Leh. Because of its location, altitude, and distinctive identity, Ladakh has pressed for a separate political status as a Union Territory.

Due to the status and extraordinary diversity of the state, the politics of Jammu and Kashmir are extremely complex. Following the end of Hindu Dogra rule in 1947, the politics of Jammu and Kashmir became dominated by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the leader of National Conference (NC), who was known as the "the Lion of Kashmir." The National Conference was founded by Sheikh Abdullah in 1939 as a popular movement against Dogra rule. Unlike the leaders of the Muslim League, Abdullah sought to mobilize the diverse population of Jammu and Kashmir on the basis of a shared geographical, historical, and cultural identity referred to as the Kashmiriyat. Abdullah used this common Kashmiri identity to spark a political awakening within the state in an effort to undermine Hindu Dogra rule. The role of the NC in the state's freedom struggle enabled Sheikh Abdullah and the NC to dominate the state's politics for decades.

Sheikh Abdullah served as the first Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir from 1947 until he was removed and imprisoned by the Indian government in 1953. Although initially a strong supporter of union with India, by the early 1950s Sheikh Abdullah had begun to question the state's accession and flirted with the idea of creating an independent Kashmir. Abdullah's challenge to Indian control of Kashmir led to a massive response by the Nehru government. In the summer of 1953 New Delhi encouraged a group of pro-Indian Kashmiri politicians to revolt against Abdullah's leadership and seize control of the NC. The Governor of the state dismissed Sheik Abdullah as Chief Minister, his supporters were purged from the party and the government, and Abdullah was placed under arrest and imprisoned under the Public Security Act. Following Abdullah's removal, Kashmir was ruled by a succession of New Delhi approved, pro-Indian Kashmiri leaders, and the Government of India embarked upon a concerted effort to erode the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir in an attempt to integrate the state more fully into the Indian union. From 1954 to the mid-1970s the government extended 28 constitutional orders and expanded the application of

some 262 Indian laws to the state as part of its effort to weaken the state's special status.[45]

Despite spending the next two decades in and out of prison, Sheikh Abdullah continued to dominate the state's politics until his death in 1982. Having lost control of the NC, Abdullah encouraged his supporters in 1955 to form the Plebiscite Front (PF), a mass based political movement that demanded self-determination for Jammu and Kashmir. The PF laid the foundation for Kashmiri separatism and remained an active force in Kashmiri politics until the early 1970s.

In the aftermath of the Bangladesh civil war and the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971, Sheikh Abdullah dissolved the PF, revived the NC, and reached a political settlement with Indira Gandhi that enabled him to return to power. In exchange for reaffirming the accession of Kashmir to the Indian Union and dropping his demand for self-determination, Abdullah was restored as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in 1975 and ruled the state until his death in 1982.

Following his death, Sheikh Abdullah was succeeded by his son Farooq. Within a few years following the change in leadership, however, Kashmir experienced a series of dramatic political events that were to rekindle Kashmiri resentment, transform the politics of the state, and set the stage for the rise of militancy and separatism. In June 1984 in an attempt to extend Congress (I) control to the state, Indira Gandhi engineered a split in the NC and instructed Jagmohan, her newly appointed Governor, to dismiss the Farooq government. The New Delhi inspired putsch was seen by the Muslim community in Kashmir as a repeat of the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953 and a renewed assault on the state's autonomy. Local resentment escalated even further in 1986 when Farooq Abdullah entered into a highly unpopular alliance with the Congress (I) and was restored to the chief ministership pending new assembly elections. The March 1987 Kashmir Assembly elections proved to be a major tuning point in Kashmir's political history. Although the Congress-National Conference alliance won an overwhelming victory, there were numerous reports of massive rigging, booth-capturing, and fraudulent vote counting. Frustrated by the rigging of the elections and the lack of legitimate avenues for political expression, a new generation of young Kashmiri politicians rose up in open revolt under the banner of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

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[45]Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 88. See also Iffat Malik, *Kashmir: Ethnic Conflict International Dispute* (Karachi, India: Oxford University Press, 2002).

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front had been founded in the mid-1960s as a secular, secessionist offshoot of the Plebiscite Front. The JKLF was composed largely of young Kashmiris, many of whom had received training in Pakistan and were determined to liberate Kashmir and unite it with the Pakistani controlled province of "Azad Kashmir" to form an independent Kashmir state. In the wake of the rigged assembly elections of 1987, the JKLF initiated a wave of strikes, bombings, and assassinations designed to end Indian control of Kashmir. The revolt was met by an enthusiastic popular response that the inept, corrupt, and ineffective National Conference-Congress (I) coalition government under Farooq Abdullah's leadership was unable to control.

The separatist revolt in Kashmir exploded on to the national political scene in December 1989 when the JKLF abducted the daughter of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the newly appointed Kashmiri Muslim Home Minister of India, and threatened to kill her unless five jailed JKLF militants were released from prison. When the newly formed National Front coalition government in New Delhi acquiesced to the demand and the exchange was made, jubilant crowds throughout the valley raised the banner of the Liberation Front and called for India to "Quit Kashmir." In the ensuing turmoil, the Center dismissed the Farooq government and imposed President's Rule, only to face widespread resistance and a mounting death toll.

The insurgency and the collapse political order in Kashmir led to an extended period of military rule from 1990 to 1996. During the early phase of the insurgency, the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination was dominated by the proindependence JKLF. JKLF militants launched a series of terrorist bombings in public places, attacked police stations and government offices, and engaged in assassinations and summary executions. India responded with what was decried as an indiscriminate use of force, mass reprisal, and the alleged use of torture to extract information, deepening and extending the Kashmir population's alienation.[46] *India Today,* India's leading news magazine, portrayed the situation starkly:

> Kashmir is at war with India. It is a declared war with open moral, financial, and logistical support from Pakistan. . . . [T]he secessionists have virtually achieved the administrative and psychological severance of the [Kashmir] valley from India. . . . In Kashmir nobody, either out of fear or out of the

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[46]On the early escalation of the conflict, see Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir,* pp. 92–130. Both sides in the Kashmir conflict have been responsible for human rights abuses. See Asia Watch, *Kashmir under Siege* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991).

total alienation that pervades the region, now talks for India or even a settlement with the Centre.[47]

Although the secular, proindependence JKLF and its allies continued to enjoy widespread popular support, the movement began to fragment as dreams of *azaadi* (freedom) began to fade. By 1992–93 the JKLF was challenged by the rise of the fundamentalist Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), a Kashmiri based, pro–Pakistani Islamic guerrilla group, and numerous outside *jihadi* groups based in Pakistan. The HUM was closely linked to the Jamaat-i-Islami, a Pakistan-based Islamic fundamentalist party, that unlike the JKLF, supported the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan. The group became the best-financed and best-armed militant movement in the valley.

In February 1993, the JKLF, the HUM, and various militant groups opposed to Indian rule in Kashmir came together to form the All-Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference (APHC), an association of some 30 proindependence and pro-Pakistani parties.[48] The APHC was an attempt by Kashmiri based insurgent groups to present a united front with a common goal of ending Indian rule.

By the mid-1990s, however, the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir had entered a completely new phase as the Government of India attempted to restore the political process in the state and the insurgency became increasingly internationalized. Although India's protracted anti-insurgency campaign from 1990 to 1996 had successfully contained Kashmiri militants and restored a superficial normalcy to the valley, continued military action appeared to have reached its limits. The government of Narasimha Rao concluded that the time had come seek a political solution to the conflict and embarked upon an effort to restore the political process in the state. Despite the continued insurgency, India decided to hold Lok Sabha elections in Kashmir in May 1996. Although voter turnout was low, the relative success of the Lok Sabha elections encouraged the Government of India to hold full-scale state assembly elections in September 1996 for the first time since 1987. Despite a boycott by the APHC and allegations of voter coercion, the elections were considered a success and the state returned to local control. The National Conference won a massive two-thirds

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[47]*India Today,* "Kashmir: Perilous Turn," April 30, 1990, p. 10.

[48]Ashutosh Varshney, "Three Compromised Nationalisms: Why Kashmir Has Been a Problem," in Thomas, ed., *Perspectives on Kashmir,* pp. 220–22; and Sumit Ganguly, "Avoiding War in Kashmir," *Foreign Affairs,* 69 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 64–65.

majority in the assembly elections, and Farooq Abdullah was elected to head the first civilian government since 1990.

Since the elections of 1996, India has conducted successful parliamentary elections in Jammu and Kashmir in 1998, 1999, and 2004 and a second major assembly election in 2002. The 2002 state assembly elections proved to be especially significant and led to a dramatic transformation of the state's politics. The assembly elections of 2002 led to the defeat of the long dominant National Conference by the newly formed People's Democratic Party (PDP), a breakaway faction of the Congress (I). The victory of the PDP ended one-party rule in Kashmir; increased political competition; and brought competitive, coalition politics to the strife-torn state.

Unlike the Punjab, the restoration of electoral competition in Kashmir continues to have only a limited impact because of the complexity of the state's politics. While the past decade has enhanced the credibility of the electoral process in the state, armed militancy, extensive violence, and electoral boycotts by protagonists continue to limit voter turnout, and the electoral process has failed to resolve the underlying conflict. Even mainstream political leaders realize that the Kashmir dispute can only be resolved through direct negotiations among the three protagonists: the Government of India, the people of Kashmir, and the Government of Pakistan.

During its early phase, the major sources of Kashmiri separatism were internal and owed their origins to years of "maladministration and political manipulation" by authorities in both New Delhi and Srinagar. The insurgency was led by the indigenous Kashmiri based JKLF and the HUM, with a degree of support from elements based in Pakistan.[49] "Incontrovertible evidence of direct Pakistani involvement in the training and arming of the insurgents is hard to establish," noted Sumit Ganguly,[50] but it is clear that the insurgents find sanctuary in Pakistani-held Azad Kashmir and have ready access to the Pakistani arms bazaar.

By the mid-1990s, however, the indigenously based insurgency in Kashmir began to yield to a new jihadi phase led by pan-Islamic "guest militants" spawned by the Afghanistan war. The jihadis attempt to liberate Kashmir led to increased violence and terrorism, heightened tensions between a nuclear-armed India and Pakistan, and resulted in the

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[49]Jagat S. Mehta, "Resolving Kashmir in the International Context of the 1990s," in Thomas, *Perspectives on Kashmir,* pp. 38–409.

[50]Ganguly, "Avoiding War in Kashmir," p. 65.

expansion of the conflict beyond the borders of Kashmir. The major jihadi groups operating in the area are Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad, (JeM), Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, and Harkat-ul-Jehat-i-Islami. Of these, the Pakistan based Let and Jem are most prominent in terrorist operations against India. The LeT gained notoriety in the late 1990s because of its high profile suicide attacks in Jammu and Kashmir and in other parts of India. It launched attacks on the Srinagar airport, the Red Fort in Delhi, and was held responsible for the devastating bombing of the Indian Parliament in December 2001 and the attack on an Indian military camp in Kashmir in May 2002. The LeT was placed on the list of terrorists groups by the United States in December 2001 and was banned by the Pakistan government. It has since reappeared as the Jamaat-ud-Dawa. The JeM was founded in January 2000 by Maulana Azar Masood, a former member of the HUM, who had been captured and jailed in Srinagar in 1994. HUM secured his release by hijacking an Indian airliner in 1999. Upon his release, Masood founded the JeM, which became a major terrorist group in the region.

Transnational Islamic militancy has escalated tensions in the region and has increased the internationalization of the conflict. Although India has the military power to hold Kashmir, any solution is likely to come at a high cost. India-Pakistan relations have fallen victim to increasingly inflated rhetoric and mutual hostility that has brought the two countries to the brink of nuclear war several times. The Indian government's options are limited. Kashmir is a potent symbol in India. No government can yield to demands for a plebiscite and politically survive. The argument that Kashmir being a part of India denies the "two nation" theory and is a "guarantor" of Indian secularism hardly stands when Kashmir is held by a force of occupation. Indeed, such conditions deepen feelings of insecurity among India's 138 million Muslims, but to let Kashmir go might only compound the tragedy, with the potential for reprisals against Indian Muslims and an invigorated attack on secularism by the forces of Hindu nationalism.[51]

The Continuing Challenge

The regionalization and federalization of politics in India are an expression of the growth of mass politics—of heightened political consciousness, expanding participation, and increasing competition for scarce

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[51]Ashutosh Varshney, "India, Pakistan, and Kashmir: Antinomies of Nationalism," *Asian Survey,* 31 (November 1991), pp. 1,002–1,003.

resources. The coming years will likely witness new unrest in movements for the protection of language and culture; for greater state autonomy; for the formation of new states or autonomous regions; and for reservations in education and employment for "sons of the soil."

Despite the creation of unilingual states in the 1950s; the emergence of Maharashtra, Gujarat, the Punjab, and Harayana in the 1960s; the reorganization of the Northeast tribal belt in the 1990s; and the more recent formation of three new states in the North Indian Hindi region, their continues to exist at least 31 additional demands for new states based on economic or sub-regional identities, especially in the North.[52] As a result, some observers favor the appointment of a new States Reorganization Commission to consider a further reorganization of the map of India in an effort to accommodate India's diversities.

Over the past 60 years, Indian federalism has encountered increased stresses and strains as political, cultural, and economic forces have gradually transformed India's highly centralized polity into to a more complex, decentralized federal system. This systemic transformation and disintegration of the U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia have increased fears among many Indian intellectuals and politicians about the future unity of the country. This apprehension has been reflected in the increased number of seminars and conferences devoted to discussions of the future of Indian federalism and the calls for reform of the Center-state relations. Proposals for reform include the amendment or repeal of Article 356 of the Constitution to prevent partisan misuse of President's Rule, the appointment of state governors only after consulting the Chief Minister of the state, greater impartiality and security of tenure for governors, restoration of the role of the Finance Commission, reduction in the power of the Planning Commission in resource allocation, testing legislative majorities only on the floor of state assemblies, strengthening interstate councils, creating a truly federal upper house, and territorial reorganization to create smaller states. These reforms are essential, argue critics, to prevent cooperative federalism from becoming disintegrating federalism, as India's most dangerous decades of caste, religious, and regional polarization seemed to have actually arrived.[53]

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[52]Ajay Kumar Singh, "Federalism and State Formation: An Appraisal of Indian Practice," in Dua and Singh, p. 90.

[53]See Balveer Arora and Douglas V. Verney, eds., *Multiple Identities in a Single State: Indian Federalism in Comparative Perspective* (Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1995); and Rasheeduddin Khan, ed., *Rethinking Indian Federalism* (Shimla, India: Inter-University Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences, 1997).

Despite the Constitution's strong centralizing bias, the Indian federal system has undergone a major rebalancing that has gradually transformed the country's quasi–federal system into a more distinctly multilevel, cooperative federalism. The increasing decentralization of Indian federalism has been brought about by several factors. First, the over centralization of Indian federalism of the 1970s and 1980s produced an ethnic backlash that led to a reassertion of social, cultural, and regional pluralism and state autonomy movements that led to a rebalancing of the country's federal system. Second, the end of Congress dominance, the rise of regional– and caste-based parties, and the emergence of a new era of coalition politics have led to a transformation of India's one-party dominant party system. Third, the economic reform process that began in 1991 has led to a liberalization of the economy, a weakening of centralized planning, and greater freedom of action for state governments in economic development. Fourth, institutional change has been accelerated by increased judicial activism that has weakened the power of the Center to declare President's Rule. Fifth, the reassertion of authority by formally dormant institutions such as the President, the Election Commission, and the judiciary has placed new limits on the power of Parliament and the central government to intervene in the affairs of states. Sixth, the move toward greater decentralization, reflected in the passage of the Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendments, has created an opportunity to design a new third tier of government at the local level that could enhance the emergence of a more decentralized, multilevel federalism.

RECOMMENDED READING

*Ahmed, Ishtiaq, *State, Nation, and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia*. New York: Cassell Academic,1999. Examines major ethnic and separatist movements.

Arora, Balveer, and Douglas V. Verney, eds., *Multiple Identities in a Single State: Indian Federalism in Comparative Perspective*. Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1995. A collection of essays written by scholars and Indian officials that review the experience and problems of Indian federalism.

Baruah, Sanjib, *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

———, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Bose, Sumantra, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict Paths to Peace*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003. A clearly focused and concise analysis of the Kashmir problem including a set of proposed solutions.

*Brass, Paul R., *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. New Delhi: Sage, 1991. An extension of his earlier *Language, Religion, and Politics in North India* (1974); with particular attention to the Punjab, it is a powerful and provocative study.

*———, *Politics of India Since Independence,* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. An excellent study of the Indian state, society, and economy, especially good in treatment of the politics of language and ethnic conflict.

*Chadda, Maya. *Ethnicity, Security and Separatism in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. A critique of cultural and territorial nationalism in India.

Dua, B. D., and M. P. Singh, ed., *Indian Federalism in the New Millennium*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2003. An excellent collection of essays that review emerging trends in Indian federalism.

*Ganguly, Sumit, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. An analysis of the Kashmir conflict in both its domestic and international dimensions.

*Harrison, Selig S., *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960. Posing the problem of India's viability as a nation, this often-cited book examines the stresses imposed by the "fissiparous tendencies" of linguistic regionalism, caste, and political extremism.

*Jeffrey, Robin, *What's Happening to India? Punjab, Ethnic Conflict, and the Test for Federalism,* 2nd ed.Trumbull, CT: Holmes & Meier, 1994.

Khan, Rasheeduddin, ed., *Rethinking Indian Federalism*. Shimla: Inter-University Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences , 1997. A review of the social and cultural foundations of Indian federalism, the role of politics in the centralization of Indian federalism, and proposals for constitutional reform.

Malik, Iffat, *Kashmir: Ethnic Conflict International Dispute*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002. A balanced analysis of the internal politics of Jammu and Kashmir and the international implications of the Kashmir dispute.

*Menon, V. P., *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1956. An account of the merging of the princely states with the former provinces of British India into a single nation of India, written by one who played an instrumental part in the events, Sardar Patel's lieutenant, the ICS secretary to the newly created Ministry of States.

Mitra, Subrata, and R. Alison Lewis, *Subnational Movements in South Asia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996.

Rao, M. Govinda, and Nirvikar Singh, *The Political Economy of Federalism in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005. An analysis of the impact of coalition politics and market economics on the evolution of Indian federalism

Wallace, Paul, ed., *Region and Nation in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985. A collection of essays in honor of the late Richard L. Park, an American political scientist who influenced a generation of young India specialists.

Weiner, Myron, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978. Examines the clash between the migrants' claims to equal access and the claims of local groups to protection by the state.

Wirsing, Robert G., *Kashmir In the Shadow of War: Regional Rivalries in a Nuclear Age*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003. An excellent analysis of the Kashmir dispute including a highly innovative set of proposed solutions.

*Available in paperback edition.

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Interest Politics in India

SIXTY YEARS OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND policy reform have had a profound impact on the development and transformation of interest politics in India. This transformation has come about through periodic waves of group mobilization, proliferation, and development that have resulted in an explosion of group advocacy. Collective action in India has taken a variety of forms including identity and interest-based politics, social movements, protest groups, and violence. Governmental and political elites, in turn, have had an increasingly difficult time controlling and managing this growing proliferation of groups and demands, as interest politics in India have been gradually transformed from a system of state-dominated pluralism, in which an all-pervasive and powerful state constrains and manipulates interest group activity, to a more complex and competitive form of interest group pluralism.[1]

GROUP DEVELOPMENT
IN COLONIAL INDIA

The development of interest politics in India emerged through a series of waves that began in the early 19th century, as groups in the country's extremely heterogeneous society attempted to cope with

[1]Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 247, 255–58.

the disturbances brought about by colonial rule and an increasingly rapid pace of change. Modern associational life first appeared on the Indian subcontinent following the consolidation of British political, administrative, and judicial control. Although India had a long history and tradition of associations based on religion, caste, and sect, colonial rule challenged the validity of these indigenous forms of social existence at the very time when new models of organization were being introduced by British missionaries and traders.[2] These new models were based on formal membership and written rules and were granted official recognition by the state. Indians quickly took to these new forms of organization and began creating associations of all kinds. While the emergence of these new associations did not liquidate the old ties to religion, caste, or region, they did go beyond them. Even old forms of association adopted new techniques.[3]

While religious zeal and caste solidarity played some role in the propensity to form new associations, the primary initiative came from groups of educated men and (although substantially fewer) women who shared mutual secular interests. Those who joined these associations were united by common aspirations, skills, education, professional roles, and resentments against the British Raj.[4] They formed associations to protect their interests, to challenge missionary assaults on Hinduism, and to create mutual solidarity. As a result, by the middle of the 19th century a wide array of social, educational, political, cultural, and religious reform associations had developed.[5] At first, these associations rarely crossed religious, caste, language, or provincial lines.

Initially, most reform movements developed primarily among Hindus. These movements first came into being in the Presidency cities of Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai), and Madras (Chennai); gradually spread to smaller centers; and then coalesced into all-India associations. This process first took place among socioreligious reform

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[2]Gyanendra Pandy, "Which of Us are Hindus?" in Gyanendra Pandy, ed., *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today* (New Delhi: Viking Penguin in India, 1993), pp. 238–72.

[3]Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 194–95; and Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[4]Seal, 194–95.

[5]Ibid., 197.

groups. It was in organizations such as the Brahmo Samaj of the 1850s
and the Theosophical Society founded in 1875, noted Seal, that educated
Indians first fell into the habit of thinking and organizing on a national
scale.[6] Shortly after, political groups adopted the same pattern, which
in turn led to the creation of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

The Congress was initially designed to represent the secular
interests of the new educated middle class but was gradually trans-
formed into a politically oriented, broadly based, nationalist move-
ment. Congress leaders sought to create a movement that would
encompass all sectors of Indian society under a nationalist umbrella.
The movement, therefore, sought to mobilize various social forces
by creating party-controlled associations. These associations included
peasant associations, trade unions, student organizations, a women's
wing, and groups dedicated to constructive work. As a result,
although the early reform movements that preceded the formation
of the Congress were autonomous bodies, all groups formed by the
Congress lacked autonomy and became subordinate to the needs of
Congress political mobilization. The exceptions were the Indian busi-
ness community and numerous caste and religious associations.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF
STATE-DOMINATED PLURALISM

Once independence was achieved, a new wave of interest group crea-
tion and mobilization took place under the leadership of competing
political parties.[7] The politically dominant status of the Congress and
its control over the government, however, placed the Congress in a
commanding position in the race. The Congress proved highly success-
ful in mobilizing almost all sectors of Indian society behind its political
leadership and development consensus. Congress founded and con-
trolled its own trade unions, student associations, peasant groups, and
a large number of nongovernmental, development-oriented organiza-
tions funded by public resources. Even the business community,
which remained autonomous, found itself overwhelmed by the crea-
tion of a hegemonic public sector and a planned, regulated, and con-
trolled economy, and thus it was forced to reach an accommodation
with the Congress. Under Congress leadership India entered its golden

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[6]Ibid., 249–52.

[7]Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India* (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1962).

decade of growth and development, based on accommodation and an interest group system of state-dominated pluralism.

The System Challenged

The Congress system and state-dominated pluralism functioned very effectively from 1947 to 1967. The system, however, began to unravel in the early 1960s as India was rocked by a series of new crises. In the short space of five years, from 1962 to 1967, the Congress faced the divisive impact of two leadership successions, two wars, two droughts, recession, rampant inflation, defection, and political and social upheaval. The result was an erosion of Congress' support and a historic split in the party. In a desperate effort to restore Congress dominance, Indira Gandhi, aided by the defeat and dismemberment of Pakistan in the India-Pakistan war of 1971, launched a populist assault on the Indian development consensus, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary. This assault lasted from 1969 to 1973 but was brought to a halt by a major economic crisis and a challenge to the legitimacy of Indira Gandhi's leadership by the Allahabad High Court.

The political, economic, and social crises of the 1960s and early 1970s resulted in a massive wave of popular unrest, revolt, and the rise of new social movements that challenged the existing status quo.[8] These challenges included the Communist-led Naxalite revolt in West Bengal, a student uprising in Gujarat against the alleged corrupt Congress government, and a similar movement in the state of Bihar. These forces of unrest began to coalesce at the national level with the formation of a movement led by the venerable Gandhian leader Jayaprakash Narayan, affectionately known as J. P. The J. P. Movement called for a "total revolution," the reconstruction of Indian society, and the resignation of Indira Gandhi. Perceiving the J. P. Movement as a threat to her power, Indira Gandhi declared a national emergency and attempted to gain control of the disruptive social forces challenging her rule by creating a system of authoritarian corporatism.

INDIA'S CORPORATIST EXPERIMENT

During the emergency that lasted almost two years, Indira Gandhi attempted to transform India's system of state-dominated pluralism into a form of authoritarian corporatism. She delegitimatized,

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[8]Rudolph and Rudolph, *In Pursuit,* pp. 127–207.

repressed, or made illegal the views and demands of all organized interests that fell outside the ambit of state control and encouraged the formation of National Forums for all key sectors of society. In the industrial sector she created a National Apex Body to manage labor-management relations and imposed rigid labor discipline on India's volatile and fragmented trade unions. These actions received the enthusiastic support of India's business community, although it would later regret the support.[9]

The agitational politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s had marked a sharp break with the past. It reflected a growing disillusionment with conventional institutions, political parties, the Indian development model, and established associations. This sense of disillusionment was reinforced by almost two years of emergency rule and brought major changes in India's associational life. The postemergency period led to a new wave of autonomous associational development based on new issues, new organizations, new forms of participation, and a broader range of interest group action.

THE RISE OF COMPETITIVE PLURALISM

Although the period of the emergency had brought a temporary halt to social movements and group action, the defeat of the Congress Party in the 1977 Indian elections and the restoration of the political order by the victorious Janata Party revived and transformed associational life in India. Although many old associations disintegrated and some took on a new character, a whole array of new associations emerged. Several factors played a role in the proliferation of groups and the rise of interest advocacy in the postemergency period. First, the new Janata government proclaimed the doctrine of "small is beautiful" and encouraged the Gandhian principles of "partnership of social action," voluntarism, and decentralization.[10] Unlike the older Gandhian emphasis on social welfare and charity, the new voluntarism emphasized organizational development based on professionalism, skill, and knowledge. Second, the fresh wave of associations succeeded in attracting a new generation of young people who had become disillusioned with leftist ideology, conventional politics, and dependence

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[9]Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "To the Brink and Back: Representation and the State in India," *Asian Survey* 28 (April 1978), pp. 379–400.

[10]Marcus Franda, *Small Is Politics: Organizational Alternatives in India's Rural Development* (New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Limited, 1979).

on government. These young social activists sought to establish a new relationship with the rural and urban poor based on new models of participatory development.[11] Third, the Nehru model of urban-based industrialization was called into question, and this resulted in a reexamination of Indian development priorities and policies. This new thinking challenged the development orthodoxy of the past and sought to focus on the needs of the poor, the environment, and social change. Fourth, the excesses of the emergency undermined the Indian faith in the positive role of the state and led to a search for alternatives. The state, which prior to the emergency had been seen as a progressive, positive force, was now seen as an instrument of arbitrary action, the gross abuse of power, and a potential threat to a free press and civil liberties. Finally, a growing popular suspicion of politics, government, and political parties resulted in a sharp break in the close relationship between government, parties, and associations. New associations insisted on functional autonomy and independence from government and political parties.

As a result of these combined factors, the late 1970s and 1980s were marked by the emergence of a fresh wave of associational development that drew upon new sources of leadership and recruitment, raised new types of issues, and demanded a greater voice in development and the political process. Postemergency India saw the creation of a new array of social movements and associations, as well as a renewal and reform of older associations. Emerging among the new forms of associations were environmental groups, civil liberties groups, human rights organizations, anticaste movements, religious groups, and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Older associations such as farmers' organizations, trade unions, women's groups, and business associations were reorganized, renewed, and transformed.

The mushroom growth of mass movements in the postemergency period, however, ran its course by the late 1980s and early 1990s. Support for new forms of social action began to wane due to their limited impact, and the consolidation of interest-based associations became threatened by the rise of Mandal (caste), Mandir (religion), and markets. While the rise of caste and religious movements shifted public attention to identity politics, the economic reforms of 1991 touched off a major debate over the future of state led development, liberalization, privatization, and globalization. This debate over development

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[11]Smitu Kothari, "Social Movements and the Redefinition of Democracy," in Philip Oldenburg, ed., *India Briefing, 1993* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 131–62.

strategy was reinforced by a renewed focus on the importance of good governance, transparency, and accountability to economic growth and democracy and on the role of civil society in achieving these objectives. These concerns led to a new phase of group development in India that demanded better governance, more effective delivery of public services, increased governmental accountability and transparency, and greater state protection for the poor.[12]

The Clash of Identities and Interests

Caste and religious identity politics shattered the myth of shared values based on the secular agenda of interest-based associations. These associations saw their secular agenda hijacked or usurped by these overriding identities. The interest-based unity of women's groups, trade unions, student associations, and the urban middle class was overwhelmed by violent outbursts of communal frenzy. Gender solidarity designed to protest violence against women was unable to withstand the explosion of communal hostility of Hindu women against Muslim women. Worker solidarity broke down as Hindu labor attacked Muslim labor, and even the middle class joined in and profited in the rioting. "Even . . . where people engaged in helping riot victims," noted one observer, "there remained a sense that the Muslims had brought this situation on themselves."[13] Even low-caste Dalits led riots against Muslims.

The Impact of Markets, Privatization, and Globalization

The threat to interest-based politics that resulted from the identity politics of caste and religion, however, was partly offset by the enormous expansion of private space brought about by the erosion of the developmental state; the fiscal crisis faced by the Government of India; and

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[12]Carolyn M. Elliott, *Civil Society and Democracy: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Raka Ray and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power, and Politics* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2005).

[13]See Flavia Agnes, "Redefining the Agenda of the Women's Movement within a Secular Framework," and Stephen Sherlock, "Conflict and Competition: The Labour Movement and Organised Communalism," in John McGuire, Peter Reeves, and Howard Brasted, eds., *Politics of Violence: From Ayodhya to Behrampada* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 95–109, 231–44. On the tension within identity politics between "group rights" and individual rights, see Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "India: Dilemmas of Diversity," *Journal of Democracy,* 4 (Oct. 1993), pp. 54–68; reprinted in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 71–85.

the impact of liberalization, privatization, globalization, and markets. Whereas the first 60 years of independence had resulted in repeated expansion of the state sector at the expense of the private action, the liberalization of the 1980s and 1990s began to expand the level of private space and the scope of private action. Although the expansion of private space has had its most dramatic effect on industry and trade, the expansion of private sector initiatives has also been extended to hospitals, schools, colleges, business consultancy services, and information technology. As the sphere of private action continues to grow, it will inevitably be followed by the emergence of new groups and interests demanding a voice in the formulation of public policy. In response, the Indian interest group system of state-dominated pluralism will gradually evolve into a more broadly based system of competitive pluralism as groups compete with each other in an effort to influence public policy.

In addition to the impact of the changing role of the state on interest group development, a variety of other factors have also created the foundations for the beginning of competitive pluralism in India. One of the most important changes has been the rapid expansion of the Indian middle class. In a society with a high level of poverty and illiteracy, the educated middle class had always played a dominant role in associational development. From a small homogeneous group of educated men in the early 19th century, the Indian middle class has grown increasingly larger, diverse, and complex. Because of conflicting definitions, the size the Indian middle class today is estimated to number between 60 to 250 million, or 6 to 26 percent of the country's 1.1 billion population. While still relatively small in terms of its proportion of the population, the Indian middle class is quite large in absolute terms. This middle class is new, self-possessed, upwardly mobile, and wants to see continued improvement in its own circumstances while retaining what it already possesses.[14] Although the social consciousness of the middle class is still limited and studies of group membership show that only about 13 percent of the Indian population belongs to associations,[15] in absolute terms, a 13 percent participation rate means a potential group cadre of some 130 million. These group activists, moreover, tend to be drawn from the influential upper and middle levels of the middle class, which have traditionally provided

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[14]M. Bhatia, *India's Middle Class: Role in Nation Building* (Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1994). Also see Chapter 1 of this text, pp. 22–27.

[15]Pradeep K. Chhibber, *Democracy without Associations: The Transformation of the Party System and Social Cleavages in India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 58.

the leadership for all groups in Indian society that speak on behalf of workers, peasants, and the rural and urban poor. Thus, for some time to come, group development will closely follow expansion of the Indian middle class as it has already in the past.

A second factor that has played a critical role in group development has been the actions of the state itself. From the very beginning the status and success of associations in India has depended quite heavily on government recognition. As early as 1860, groups in India were granted legal status and recognition by the British under the Societies Act. Since independence, groups have been recognized by the Indian state as part of development planning. Ever since the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1978–83), moreover, the voluntary sector has been assigned the role of organizing the poor,[16] and government has allocated increased funding to support this goal. These Indian government efforts have been supplemented by increased foreign funding for NGOs and issue groups in India.

A third factor affecting group development in India has been the rise and decline of political parties. The rise of nationalism and the Indian National Congress nearly brought an end to group autonomy in India as the movement sought to mobilize and control group development within the Congress framework. This process of party control was reinforced by the postindependence rise of the developmental state and the desire of all political parties to organize and control social forces as sources of mass mobilization and political support. Thus, except for caste and religious associations and the business community, all sectoral interests in India came under the control of political parties. This pattern was not challenged until the postemergency period that saw the decline of the Congress and the failure of India's fragmented opposition to create a viable alternative. The late 1970s to the late 1980s witnessed the development of nonparty trade unions, farmers' movements, women's organizations, NGOs, and a variety of other associations. This process of functional separation, however, has been challenged by identity-based parties such as the Shiv Sena, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

A fourth factor that has influenced group development in India has been the impact of foreign influences, models, and resources. Initially it was the British that had the greatest impact on group

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[16]Rohini Narendra Patel, "The Pressure Group Role of Voluntary Associations: A Case Study of the Ahmedabad Women's Action Group and the Self Employed Women's Association, A Thesis," Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The Pennsylvania State University, May 1995, p. 53.

formation and development in India. This was followed in the imme-diate postindependence period by foreign donors and international aid agencies. More recently foreign influence has come in the form of global movements such as feminism, human rights, environmental groups, NGOs, alternative development advocates, and the global health care lobby. In fact, many of India's newer groups depend very heavily on foreign funding. This in turn has resulted in calls for greater government control and regulation. The danger is that in the name of regulating foreign influences, governments seek to extend state control and regulation to the entire universe of nongo-vernmental groups and associations.

A final factor that has contributed to group development has been societal responses to specific issues and government policies. One of the first issues that led to group creation and mobilization was the struggle in the early 19th century over British attempts to outlaw the practice of sati, the tradition of a widow who immolates herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. Postindependence issues that have sparked group mobilization include business' demands for protective tariffs, farmers' demands for higher prices, women's demands for anti-rape and anti-violence legislation, and many more.[17] The 1991 economic reforms have had an especially significant impact on group development and attitudes. The Indian business community has become divided over the scope and pace of the reforms, and many members of the business community continue to see liberalization and globalization as a threat to their very survival. Indian farmers have also become polarized between surplus producers who embrace economic reforms and subsistence farmers who see lib-eralization, globalization, foreign multinationals, modern technology, and foreign investment as a new form of colonialism and a threat to their self-reliance and village India's traditional way of life. Faced by retrenchment and marginalization, India's politically dominated trade union movement has stood united against the reforms even when their party supports the reform process. While almost all political par-ties, except for the extreme left, publicly endorse the reform agenda, large sections of the political, bureaucratic, and intellectual elite are adamantly opposed to the economic reforms and the movement away from state led development. Largely because they are less

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[17]Flavia Agnes, "Protecting Women Against Violence?: Review of a Decade of Legislation, 1980–1989," in Partha Chatterjee, ed., *State and Politics in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 521–65.

impacted by most of the reforms, Dalits and women are somewhat less concerned and tend to have a mixed reaction.

FORMS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION IN INDIA

The sharp increase in group mobilization and collective action in India during the past three decades has taken a variety of forms. These forms include the rapid rise of majority and minority identity politics based on religion, caste, tribe, and ethnicity; the proliferation of interest politics based on secular interests; the growth of the alternative politics of social movements; the multiplication of protest groups; and the increased use of violence. This diversity of collective action is a reflection of the varied responses of social forces in India to the accelerated process of economic, social, and political change.

The growth of identity politics has resulted in part from attempts to restructure traditional, localized primordial ties based on religion, caste, tribe, and ethnicity into larger, more broadly based group identities designed to articulate new sets of interests and demands. The development of Hindu nationalism, for example, involves an effort to construct a new, broadly based Hindu identity from a fragmented religious community that has traditionally embraced a multitude of sects, castes, rituals, and forms of worship. This newly articulated Hindu identity is determined to challenge the secular character of the state. The same process of identity transformation is also taking place among the country's myriad of castes and tribes as changes in constitutional, legal, and public policies have enabled caste and tribal leaders to modify and redefine India's 405 untouchable castes into Scheduled Castes or Dalits, its 255 tribal groups into Scheduled Tribes, and its 3,743 lower castes into Other Backward Classes.[18] These new forms of collective identity are based on a transformed and enhanced status consciousness that has enabled these groups to organize and demand greater political power, in an effort to secure direct access to the distributional benefits of the state for their members.

The proliferation of secularly based interest groups, in contrast, has resulted from disturbances brought about by the diversification of economic and social activity, increased mobilization, the growth of

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[18]Joe Elder, "Enduring Stereotypes about Asia: India's Caste System," in James H. K. Norton, ed., *Global Studies: India and South Asia* (Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 1997), p. 123.

organizations, and the need to deal with a highly interventionist state. Interest-based associations are determined to shape government policy that affects their interests, and they have become increasingly organized and vocal. The growth of social movements, on the other hand, represents a response to a growing sense of disillusionment with the existing governmental order, political parties, and the Indian model of development. Social movements have a broad-based membership and claim to speak on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. They demand social change, alternative development models, protection of the environment, gender equality, and an end to exploitation. Finally, protest and violence have come to play a dual role. On the one hand they have become a major tactic employed by all groups in an effort to press their claims on an unresponsive state. On the other hand, they have become the primary mechanism available for the spontaneous articulation of the demands by the unorganized sectors of Indian society.

The Politics of Identity

The rapid rise of identity politics in India since the 1980s among religious, caste, tribal, and ethnic communities has resulted in a substantial increase in social conflict in a political system that has become less capable of managing that conflict. The demands of identity groups have called into question many of the policies and principles that have guided the Indian state for the past 60 years.

Hindu Nationalism

Perhaps the most far-reaching political development in post–independence India has been the rise of Hindu nationalism. The rise of Hindu nationalism has transformed the political debate in the country and has challenged the principle of secularism embodied in the Indian Constitution. The emergence of Hindu consciousness and identity is rooted in the late 19th century. Its origins can be traced to the Hindu revivalism of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement founded in 1875, and the "extremism" of the Congress leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The growth of Hindu nationalism, in contrast,[19] is a product of the early 20th century. Politically, the concept of Hindu nationalism (or communalism as it was then called) was first articulated by the Hindu Mahasabha, a movement that was founded in 1914 at Hardwar by

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[19]Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to the 1990s* (Delhi: Viking Penguin in India, 1996), pp. 11–79; see also Peter Van Der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in reaction to the creation of the Muslim League in 1906. In its early years the organization was obscured by the Congress Party with which most of its members were associated. The Lucknow Pact of 1916 and the ascendancy of the Moderates within the Congress alienated many of the Hindu extremists, however, and under the leadership of V. D. Savarkar, an admirer of Tilak and, like him, a Chitpavan Brahmin from Maharashtra, the Mahasabha parted with the Congress in a call to "Hinduize all politics and militarize Hinduism." Reform fused with revivalism in opposition to untouchability and caste inequality. To overcome the fragmentation of sect, caste, and language, the Mahasabha launched a movement for the consolidation of Hindu rashtra, or the Hindu nation. The movement sought to reclaim those who had left the Hindu fold, and it denounced the creation of Pakistan as the "vivisection" of Mother India.[20] Since 1960 the Mahasabha has been in decline and is today no longer a potent force.

The Hindu Mahasabha proved to be less enduring than the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or Association of National Volunteers. Over the past 60 years, the RSS has emerged as an increasingly powerful force in India and has become the head of what is now known as the Sangh Parivar, or family of Hindu nationalist organizations, with a spread across all sectors of Hindu society. These organizations include the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, founded in 1948 and now the largest student organization in India; the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), founded in 1955 and today the largest trade union in the country; the Jana Sangh (1951) and its successor, the BJP, representing the political arm of the RSS; the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), founded in 1964,[21] and its thuggish offshoot the Bajrang Dal (1984), which represent the more explicitly religious wing; and the newly formed Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, founded in 1991 to protect Indian economic self-reliance from the threat of foreign capital.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh[22] was founded as a paramilitary organization in 1925 by Dr. Keshav Hedgewar. On his death in

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[20]Donald E. Smith, *India As a Secular State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 455–64.

[21]Manjari Katju, *Vishva Hindu Parishad and Indian Politics* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2003).

[22]See Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987); and K. Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep, 1991).

1940 he was succeeded by M. S. Golwalkar, under whom the RSS grew rapidly. The RSS claims to be a movement directed toward achieving the cultural and spiritual regeneration of the Hindu nation through a disciplined vanguard that represents the ideal model of Hindu society. In January 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic who had been associated with both the Mahasabha and the RSS. In the face of an explosive public reaction, the Hindu Mahasabha, under the leadership of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee, who had succeeded Savarkar as president in 1943, suspended political activity. The RSS was banned by the government. The ban was lifted more than one year later only after the RSS agreed to renounce political activity and to publish a constitution. It was again banned during the 1975–77 emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi, and a major portion of those arrested during the emergency were RSS members. It was banned for a third time in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992. The ban lasted for two years.

Since the end of the emergency, the RSS has expanded the size of its membership, enlarged its organizational base, and has spawned a number of new affiliates. The membership of the RSS has grown dramatically from about 1 million in the late 1970s to some 7–8 million activists today.[23] An estimated 4 million of these activists attend daily *shakhas* for about one hour each day at either dawn or dusk, where volunteers in khaki shorts engage in an intensive program of ideological discussion, physical exercise, and military discipline. Each *shakha* has 50–100 active members with a neighborhood base. The number of *shakhas* has increased from 11,500 in 1978 to 49,734 in March 2005.[24]

RSS support is predominantly urban and lower middle class. From its traditional geographic core in North India, the movement has spread into the Northeast and into South India. It has also begun to make inroads into the countryside and has won support among Dalits (untouchables) and tribals. The RSS places increasing emphasis on social work and runs 22,000 schools, has some 45,000 units working in urban slums, and is active in 11,000 tribal villages. Its power is also expanded through a web of more than 50 affiliated groups. RSS trusts publish eight daily newspapers and 40 weeklies,

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[23]*Economist* (London), August 6, 2005, pp. 31–32.

[24]Christopher Jaffrelot, ed., *The Sangh Parivar: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford, University Press, 2005), p. 302.

including the English-language *Organiser*. In addition, the various affiliated organizations publish their own periodicals.

In the "family" of RSS affiliates, the VHP, under the leadership of Ashok Singhal, assumed particular prominence. The VHP was established in 1964 to give the RSS a direct link to the Hindu ecclesiastical community. The organization had three objectives: "(1) to consolidate and strengthen Hindu society; (2) to protect and spread Hindu values, ethical and spiritual, and to make them relevant in contemporary Hindu society; and (3) to establish and strengthen the links among Hindus living in different countries."[25] VHP leaders are almost all RSS members, but the majority of its members in some 3,500 branch units are not RSS cadres. Sanctioned by the RSS, the VHP has shaped its own family of organizations directed at social welfare work among untouchables, tribals, and the rural poor—those most vulnerable to religious conversion. Through its affiliates, the VHP operates student hostels, orphanages, vocational schools, medical missions, and temples. VHP has gained prominence primarily through its campaigns to strengthen Hindu identity and solidarity, symbolized most dramatically by its leadership in the Ayodhya temple movement, discussed below.

Distinct from both the RSS and the VHP, the militant Bajrang Dal has been closely associated with the VHP in the movement to "liberate" Hindu holy shrines at Ayodhya and other sites where mosques now stand. The Dal is one of many senas, the armed gangs that have been described as the face of Hindu fascism. Their symbol and weapon is the trishul, the god Shiva's trident. In the Punjab, the Hindu Shiv Sena formed to counter Sikh terrorism; the Hindu Manch was a response to attacks on Hindus in the Punjab and Kashmir; and Shiv Shakti Dal organized in the wake of the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi. The most powerful is Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, which since 1984 has transformed its earlier Marathi nativism into a stridently anti-Muslim party of Hindu chauvinism.[26] Led by Bal Thackeray, its founder, the Shiv Sena has no direct ties to the RSS, but since 1989 it has entered into an alliance with the BJP, the political party most closely associated with the RSS.

The political voice of the RSS was the Jana Sangh until its merger into the Janata Party in 1977, but the relationship of the RSS to the new party was a source of bitter internal dispute. Even the Jana

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[25]Andersen and Damle, p. 133.

[26]Surendra Jondhale, "Resurgence of Militant Hindu Nationalism," *Mainstream,* 8 August 1987, pp. 9–14.

Sangh faction was divided on the proper role of the RSS. With the collapse of the Janata government and the breakup of the party in 1980, the old Jana Sangh reemerged as the BJP. The RSS constituted its cadre core, but as the BJP sought to expand its social base, the relationship grew increasingly uneasy. Tensions between the RSS and the leadership of the BJP's more moderate wing came into the open in 1998-2004 when the new BJP-led government under Prime Minister Vajpayee—himself an RSS member—sought to pursue pragmatic politics in place of the Hindu nationalist agenda to which the party was formally committed. The tension increased even further following the surprise defeat of the BJP led NDA coalition in the 2004 parliamentary elections. Leaders blamed the defeat on the failure of the BJP to pursue its Hindu nationalist agenda.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran, Pakistan, and Bangladesh has heightened Hindu consciousness, and fear of a resurgent Islam in India was deepened by the issue of religious conversion. In 1981, more than 1,000 untouchables in the village of Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu converted en masse to Islam. Picked up by the press, reports of "mass conversions" stirred the fear that Hinduism was in danger. The RSS alleged that a "foreign hand" was behind the conversions and that the goal—political power—could be achieved by expanding the numerical strength of the Muslim community. Money from the Persian Gulf countries, in its view, had become a modern day Khyber Pass through which Muslims sought to gain domination over India. The RSS and the Arya Samaj responded with a call for a ban on conversions to Islam and Christianity, and the VHP set about to reconvert the Dalits at Meenakshipuram and, more broadly, to bring Indian Muslims back into the Hindu fold.

Hindu revivalists portrayed Hinduism as under siege, and Hindus, a vast majority in India's population, responded as a threatened minority—a majority with a minority complex.[27] The rhetoric of Hindu nationalism took on increasing militance, and at every level of Indian society, from the senas of the back streets to the parlors of Delhi intellectuals, secularism came under heightened assault. Minorities, in their view, had been appeased and pampered long enough, and it was time for Hindus to restore *Ram-rajya*, the ideal rule of the mythic age of Lord Rama. The ideology of Hindu nationalism found expression in various forms from crude anti-Muslim and anti-Sikh slogans and wall graffiti to considered critiques of the secular state. Its

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[27]See *India Today*'s cover story, "Hindus: Militant Revivalism," 31 May 1986, pp. 30–39.

conceptual catalyst is *Hindutva*, "Hindu–ness," a term that has become synonymous with Hindu nationalism.[28] It embodies the notion that all Indians—including Muslims—are part of a Hindu nation and that Rama and the gods and heroes of Hindu mythology are part of their patrimony. Those unwilling to accept their "Hindu–ness" are thus not just apostates but traitors.

Lord Rama gave renewed fervor to Hindu revivalism through the modern medium of television. In January 1987, Doordarshan, India's state-owned TV network, began an 18-month series of the epic *Ramayana* that drew 100 million devoted viewers. This was followed by the even more successful *Mahabharat*, the greatest of Hindu epics, in 91 weekly episodes.[29]

Mythology entered the arena of conflict in dramatic form in the 1980s in the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute.[30] In 1528, the first Mughal emperor, Babur, constructed a mosque at Ayodhya, in Uttar Pradesh, on the site where Hindus claim a temple stood that marked the birthplace of Rama. Against a backdrop of nearly a century of conflict over the shrine, the government in 1949 proclaimed the premises a disputed area and locked the gates. In 1984, the VHP took Ayodhya as its cause and called for the "liberation" of the Ramjanmabhoomi temple. In 1986 a district judge ordered the gates opened to Hindu worshippers. Barred from entry, Muslims formed the Babri Masjid Action Committee and observed nationwide "mourning." As tensions sharpened between Hindus and Muslims, more than 300,000 Muslims gathered in Delhi in March 1987 to demand the return of the mosque, the Babri Masjid. It was the largest rally of Muslims held since independence, and was followed a month later by a massive Hindu rally organized by the VHP.

In 1989, the VHP, with other revivalist groups, launched the movement to demolish the Babri Masjid and "recapture injured Hindu pride" through the construction of a new Ramjanmabhoomi temple on its site. As Hindu devotees from all over India, each bearing

[28]The term was first used as the title of a book written in 1922 by V. D. Savarkar. See Sumanta Banerjee, "'Hindutva'—Ideology and Social Psychology," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 19 January 1991, pp. 97–101.

[29]See Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics After Television: Religious Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[30]See Sarvepalli Gopal ed., *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi Issue* (New Delhi: Viking, 1991); Asghar Ali Engineer, ed., *Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi Controversy* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1990); and A. G. Noorani, "The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi Question," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 24 (4–11 November 1989), pp. 2, 461–66; McGuire, Reeves, and Brasted.

a brick for the new temple's construction, made their way to Ayodhya, India witnessed perhaps its most serious Hindu–Muslim communal rioting since partition in 1947. In one village, Bhagalpur in Bihar, estimates of the dead ranged from 200 to 1,000.

In the wake of violence and as the 1989 elections approached, the VHP—probably at the behest of the BJP—called off its march on Ayodhya. The BJP, linked to the VHP through the RSS, now sought to make Ayodhya its own cause. To galvanize Hindu sentiment behind the BJP, party president L. K. Advani launched his *rath yatra* ("chariot pilgrimage"), a 10,000-kilometer journey (approximately 6,214 miles) in a van fashioned to look like a mythological chariot across the heartland of North India to Ayodhya, where on October 30, 1990, construction of the new temple was to begin. As that date neared, in growing communal tension, tens of thousands of Hindu militants led by Advani converged on Ayodhya. Prime Minister V. P. Singh, invoking the principles of secularism, warned that the High Court's interim order to secure the status quo at the disputed site would be enforced and that the mosque at Ayodhya would be protected "at all costs." On October 23, as they were about to enter Uttar Pradesh in the drive to Ayodhya, Advani and other BJP leaders were arrested. The arrests and clashes at Ayodhya between paramilitary forces and Hindus intent on destroying the mosque sparked a wave of Hindu–Muslim violence that left more than 300 people dead. Hindu militants withdrew from Ayodhya with the promise to return.

The incident had immediate political impact. Following Advani's arrest, the BJP withdrew its parliamentary support from V. P. Singh's National Front government, and on a vote of no confidence, Singh submitted his resignation as Prime Minister.

Following the 1991 elections, the Ayodhya issue again exploded when the VHP and BJP vowed that on December 6, 1992 they would begin construction of the temple to Lord Ram at the sacred site. The Indian government thus had sufficient warning, but it deployed only 15,000 paramilitary troops to the area rather than the more reliable Indian Army forces. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao took the Hindu leaders at their word that they would not defy the Supreme Court order protecting the mosque and would offer only "symbolic" temple construction. The leaders, however, could not control the fervor of the devotees they had aroused, and at the hour Hindu holy men deemed propitious, some 200,000 Hindu militants converged on Ayodhya, stormed through the police barricades, and demolished the Muslim shrine. The police and paramilitary guarding the mosque offered no resistance.

The Prime Minister denounced the action as "a betrayal of the nation" and attacked the BJP for exacerbating Hindu-Muslim tensions in a bid to "grab power, whipping up communal frenzy to undermine the secular fabric of the nation." In neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh, Muslim mobs attacked and burned Hindu temples, and in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, the 56-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference expressed outrage at the Indian government's failure to protect the mosque from Hindu extremists. As reports of the destruction of the mosque spread, Indian Muslims responded with attacks on Hindus and Hindu temples, and rioting erupted across India. In the following six days of violence, despite curfews, more than 1,200 persons were killed in rioting and police firings—the vast majority of whom were Muslims. In Mumbai, the riots were the worst since India became independent in 1947.

The BJP Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the state where Ayodhya is located, submitted his resignation, and the President dismissed the legislative assembly and imposed President's Rule, thus bringing India's largest state under the direct control of the central government. Advani, Ashok Singhal, head of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and the BJP President Murli Manohar Joshi were among the hundreds arrested and charged with inciting the militants, and Advani felt forced to resign as leader of the opposition in Parliament. Many leaders of the Sangh Parivar, however, remained defiant. Ashok Singhal, for example, declared that any government efforts to impede construction of the Ram temple would result in "a confrontation of unimaginable magnitude."

The government banned for two years three Hindu communal organizations—the powerful RSS, the VHP, and the Bajrang Dal—as well as two Muslim fundamentalist groups—the Jamaat-i-Islam and the Islamic Sevak Sangh. At Ayodhya, troops cleared the site of Hindu devotees, leaving behind a temporary shrine to Rama. The VHS and BJP, however, remain committed to building a temple on the site.

Communal tensions flared up again in 2002 when a train carrying Hindu activists returning from Ayodhya was allegedly attacked and set on fire by a Muslim mob in the town of Godhra in Gujarat on February 27, 2002. Some 58 passengers were burned to death. As news of the Godhra massacre spread, major communal riots broke out throughout the state. The riots were not spontaneous but a systematic carnage that targeted Muslims and extended over three days. The Gujarat communal clashes were the worst since partition as the state's law and order apparatus all but collapsed. While Gujarat officials

claimed over 700 people had been killed, unofficial estimates put the figure at close to 2,000. The Gujarat riots became the first televised riots in India, which may have contributed to the carnage.[31]

Ayodhya is only one of a number of places where mosques stand on what Hindus believe to be the sites of earlier temples, and the VHP has vowed to liberate them all. Among its first acts, in 1991, the new Congress (I) government under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao secured passage of the Places of Worship Act. The act declares that all religious places shall be maintained according to their status as of August 15, 1947—except the Ayodhya shrine, now before the courts. For Hindu nationalists, the act was the embodiment of the secular "appeasement" they are determined to resist.

Muslim Fundamentalism

The Muslims of India, although a minority of only 13.4 percent, number almost 138 million—making India the fourth most populous Muslim nation in the world, after Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. India's Muslims, however, are themselves heterogeneous. They are not only culturally varied (distinguished, for example, by language and custom among the Urdu-speaking Muslims of North India and Andhra Pradesh, the Malayalee-speaking Mappillas of Kerala, and the Tamil-speaking Labbais of Tamil Nadu), they are also divided on religion and politics. They range from Islamic fundamentalists to secular Communists.

In the years immediately following partition, India's remaining Muslim population assumed a position of low visibility. The Muslim League, which had successfully challenged the secular Congress Party in securing the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan, virtually disappeared in India, surviving with any strength only in Kerala. Like other minorities in India, Muslims have looked to government as their protector and have in the past given their electoral support to the Congress Party. Indeed, with a decisive vote in many closely contested constituencies, Muslims have been a crucial element in the Congress' base of support. As the erosion of that support since 1989 has revealed, however, it can no longer be taken for granted. Muslims today are more politically conscious and more assertive. Although the vast majority of Muslims remain poor and disadvantaged in rural areas, there is a rising urban Muslim middle class, mainly small-business owners and entrepreneurs. New prosperity for many Muslim families has also come through remittances from the Persian Gulf. The

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[31]"Society Under Siege," *Seminar* No 513 (May 2002).

money sent home by Indian Muslims working in the Gulf has provided capital for the rising entrepreneurs, but it has also gone into the purchase of land, new houses, and the construction and improvement of mosques and Muslim schools.

Not surprisingly, the Muslims' visible success has aroused jealousy among Hindus who have done less well or who now feel threatened by Muslims who expect their rightful share of the economic pie—a pie that is not growing fast enough to satisfy the expanding claimants pushing up from below. The communal riots of recent years have been fed by economic competition and resentment. Despite their new confidence, increased communal tension has deepened the Muslim sense of vulnerability and fueled Islamic revivalism.[32]

Indian Muslims today feel threatened, and fundamentalists have exploited these fears, as dramatically seen in the reaction of the Muslim community to the Supreme Court's judgment in the case of Shah Bano in 1985. The case involved a 73-year-old woman, Shah Bano, divorced after 43 years of marriage by her husband in the traditional Muslim manner. The judgment granted her a monthly maintenance from her husband, where Muslim personal law would have required none. Muslim clerics, with the cry of "Islam in danger," denounced the decision as interference in Shariat law and as a step toward a uniform civil code that would deny Muslims the right to follow the injunctions of the faith. In describing Muslim reaction, *India Today* wrote, "Not since the pork and beef fat-smeared cartridges caused the great upheaval of 1857 has a single nonpolitical act caused so much trauma, fear and indignation among a community."[33]

In an attempt to stem the loss of Muslim support from the Congress (I) Party, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (initially favorable to the court's judgment) announced support for the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill that would remove Muslim divorce from provisions of current law and, in effect, scuttle the Supreme Court decision.[34] Though welcomed by traditional Muslims, the bill came under immediate attack from more progressive Muslims, women, secularists, and Hindu chauvinists. The bill became law in May 1986, "even though,"

[32]See Iqbal A. Ansari, ed., *The Muslim Situation in India* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1989).

[33]*India Today,* 31 January 1986, p. 50. The cover story, "The Muslims: A Community in Turmoil," pp. 50–60, examines the *Shah Bano* case and the reaction to the court judgment. Also see *India Today,* 15 March 1986, pp. 18–21; and Asghar Ali Engineer, ed., *The Shah Bano Controversy* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1987).

[34]See *India Today,* 31 March 1986, pp. 14–17; and V. R. Krishna Iyer, *The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act* (Delhi: Eastern Book Co., 1987).

as Ainslie Embree writes, "perhaps no other piece of legislation since 1947 had aroused such widespread and impressive opposition."[35]

Muslim communalism has been represented, most notably, by the Jamaat–i-Islami. Along with the Jamiat-ul–Ulema, it is the representative of Muslim orthodoxy, and its demands embrace a wide range of measures for the protection of the Muslim community, such as the preservation of Muslim personal law; compulsory instruction in Islam for Muslim children; the censorship of publications, particularly school textbooks, in order to eradicate materials repugnant to Islamic belief; and the prohibition of alcoholic beverages.[36] The Jamaat–i-Islami was banned during the 1975–77 emergency, and again, like the RSS, it has enjoyed a resurgence of activity since 1977.

As among Hindus, the conversion issue activated Muslim communal groups in the early 1980s, and along with the Jamaat–i-Islami, various proselytizing organizations were associated with untouchable conversions. In the mid-1980s, the Shah Bano case became the cause célèbre, mobilizing Muslim groups against what they feared as a threat to Islam and Muslim identity in India. And then in the late 1980s, in response to the Ayodhya dispute and the rise of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Babri Masjid Action Committee, with its powerful clerical leaders, shaped an Indian Muslim consensus unparalleled since the Khilafat movement of the 1920s.[37] As India entered the 21sth century, Hindus and Muslims were polarized in communal confrontation, and the secular state itself was under siege.

Other Religious Communities

Among other religious minorities, Christians, although by no means united politically or religiously, are in certain areas sufficiently numerous to exercise a powerful political force. In Kerala, where they number about a quarter of the population, they have been the main support of the Congress Party, and the pulpit has frequently served as a rostrum for political exhortation. The Christian community came under an unprecedented assault in the late 1990s, as churches across India

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[35]Ainslie T. Embree, *Utopias in Conflict: Religion and Nationalism in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 110.

[36]Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "The Effectiveness of Muslim Representation in India," in Donald E. Smith, ed., *South Asian Politics and Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 105–6.

[37]See Mushirul Hasan, "Competing Symbols and Shared Codes: Inter-Community Relations in Modern India," in Gopal, *Anatomy of a Confrontation,* p. 101.

were attacked, and an Australian missionary and his two sons were murdered in Orissa. These attacks by Hindu extremists were evidently linked to the rise of Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born widow of Rajiv Gandhi, to political prominence as leader of the Congress Party.

Caste Politics

The mantle of Indian civilization covers divisions and conflicts of region, language, caste, tribe, and religion. "Fissiparous tendencies" of regionalism and communalism have posed a serious threat to the creation of an Indian political community and a viable democratic system. In the process of economic change and social mobilization, India's increasingly participant communities[38] have grown more politically self-conscious, and this self-consciousness has deepened existing cleavages.

Though decried as a reversion to "tribalism," the increasingly prominent role played by caste-based community associations and parties in political life reflects an extension of the particularistic and ascriptive ties of primordial sentiment to wider horizons of identity. The development of primordial sentiment into a cultural nationalism may be an effective vehicle for the transference of loyalty to the larger political community; a channel of linkage between the masses and the elite, between traditional behavior and modern democratic processes.

The caste association, representing the adaptive response of caste to modern social, economic, and political changes, reveals the potential "modernity of tradition." Combining the traditional and the modern, the caste association is a voluntary association with a formal membership of perhaps only a few thousand drawn from the ascriptive reservoir of the community as a whole. As various caste communities have sought social uplift and economic advancement, they have organized to secure more effective political access.[39] The caste association, Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph have written, "provides the channels of communication and bases of leadership and organization which enable those still submerged in the traditional society and culture to transcend the technical political illiteracy which would otherwise

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[38]In India, community usually refers to a racial, caste, linguistic, or religious group rather than to a locality, as in the United States.

[39]Among the largest and most successful caste associations is that of the Nadar community. See Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., *The Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political Culture of a Community in Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

handicap their ability to participate in democratic politics."[40] The meaning of caste itself has changed in the encounter between tradition and modernity. "By creating conditions in which a caste's significance and power is beginning to depend on its numbers rather than its ritual and social status, and by encouraging egalitarian aspirations among its members, the caste association is exerting a liberating influence."[41] In writing of Kerala, Marxist leader E. M. S. Namboodiripad argues that the caste association was "the first form in which the peasant masses rose in struggle against feudalism."[42]As he rightly suggests, however, such associations consolidate community separatism and must be transcended if the peasantry is to be organized as a class.

With secular aspirations after a "casteless" society, most Indian political leaders have viewed the demands of community associations as illegitimate. Although each of the major parties has spawned a variety of affiliated mass organizations—labor, agrarian, youth—to mobilize political support, they have for the most part sought to avoid the appearance of intimate association with any particular community. Close identification between the party and one caste, for example, might seriously affect the party's ability to aggregate wide support, for in few constituencies, much less an entire district or state, does one caste so predominate as to command a majority. In practice, however, the parties have been ready to secure support wherever and however available, and in each election have courted various communities. Politicians and political scientists alike speak of the "Ezhava vote" or the "Jat bloc," just as people in the United States often talk of the black, Irish, or Italian vote.

The process by which an atomized and divided community gains consciousness and unity, entering the political system as a major factor, is a familiar one in the broader process of political behavior. The unity of such blocs is situational and temporal, however, varying from constituency to constituency and from time to time. Community associations are themselves the agent of increasing internal differentiation. As the association secures its goals, the social and economic gaps within the community widen, at the same time dispersing political support. The association thus becomes the agent of its own destruction, for in the process of differentiation, individuals are subjected

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[40]Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations," *Pacific Affairs,* 33 (March 1960), pp. 5–6.

[41]Ibid., p. 9. See also Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

[42]E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1967), p. 115.

to the cross–cutting ties of a multiplicity of interests and associations.[43] Yet today, even in a more open stratification system, caste remains a potent factor in Indian political life. It functions often as a surrogate for class in a society in which class identity is weak.[44] Caste conflict cuts deeply in India's fragmented society.

Dalit Politics

The Constitution of India abolishes untouchability and also specifies that no citizen shall on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth be subjected to any disability or restriction with regard to places of public use or accommodations. There are more than 160 million "ex-untouchables," or Scheduled Castes, as they are officially termed.[45] Although the Constitution abolishes untouchability, and the Untouchability (Offenses) Act tightened and extended the provision, the Scheduled Castes continue to suffer from discrimination. Many find protection in the anonymity of the city, but 90 percent of the untouchables live in villages, and here many disabilities remain enforced by custom. The position of Scheduled Caste members in society is characterized by two mutually reinforcing factors: the stigma of pollution and material deprivation.[46]

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[43]For a discussion of the process of differentiation within caste and the emergence of class segments that form the basis for new interests and associations, See Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "Caste: Fission and Fusion," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 3, special number (July 1968), pp. 1,065–70; reprinted in Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., *Essays in the Political Sociology of South India* (New Delhi: Usha, 1979), pp. 125–34.

[44]Harold A. Gould, in *The Hindu Caste System,* Vol. 3: *Politics and Caste* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1990) explores the dynamics of caste and class in Faizabad District, Uttar Pradesh.

[45] The term "Scheduled Caste" was adopted in 1935, when the lowest ranking Hindu castes were listed in a "schedule" appended to the Government of India Act for purposes of special safeguards and benefits. For government purposes, untouchables who have converted to Christianity or, more recently, Buddhism, are not included within the Scheduled Castes. Lelah Dushkin, "Scheduled Caste Politics," in J. Michael Mahar, ed., *The Untouchables in Contemporary India* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972), p. 166. The term "Harijan," introduced by Mahatma Gandhi, is used mainly by those within the Congress Party and is regarded by many untouchables as patronizing. Today politicized untouchables prefer "Dalit" to any other name. The term, meaning "oppressed," suggests their low status is no fault of their own. Eleanor Zelliot, "Dalit: New Perspectives on India's Untouchables," in Philip Oldenburg, ed., *India Briefing, 1991* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 97–98.

[46]Andre Beteille, "Pollution and Poverty," in Mahar, ed., *The Untouchables,* p. 414.

The government has sought to respond to this situation through a system of protective discrimination.[47] On the assumption that a one-to-one correlation exists between the ritual status of a caste and the material condition of its members, specific castes were designated to receive special favor in education, government employment, and political representation. These benefits were granted to the Scheduled Castes, the aboriginal Scheduled Tribes, and an open-ended category, "Other Backward Classes."[48] Eager to avail themselves of government favor, virtually every caste in India sought "Other Backward" classification, and in 1963 the central government and many states began to impose economic conditions in addition to caste criteria as prerequisites for benefits.

In central government services, 22.5 percent of all positions are reserved for Scheduled Castes, although at the higher levels untouchables have been unable to reach the maximum allowed reservation. In the elite Indian Administrative Service, for example, Scheduled Castes fill 9.7 percent of the positions. What does not appear in the raw figures, however, is, as Eleanor Zelliott reminds us, that with even comparatively few positions at the highest levels, reservations have "created a huge mass of educated, often socially conscious men and a few women, with the capacity to operate within the system for the good of others."[49]

The system has been controversial.[50] Many caste Hindus, particularly Brahmins, who have been denied government employment or entrance into universities, feel that they have been victims of reverse discrimination. The reservation of benefits for the Scheduled Castes has also given rise to the charge that it has built in a vested interest in backwardness and has served to perpetuate some of the very evils against which the government has fought. To receive benefits one must virtually wear a badge of untouchability. All untouchables have not benefited equally, however. There has emerged what Lelah Dushkin identifies as a "new class:" those who have benefited from scholarships, reserved seats in higher education, and, above all, government

[47]Marc Galanter provides a comprehensive analysis of this Indian version of "affirmative action" in *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Also see Galanter, *Law and Society in Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[48]See Marc Galanter, "Who Are the Other Backward Classes?" *Economic and Political Weekly,* 28 October 1978, pp. 1812–28.

[49]Zelliott, "Dalit: New Perspectives on India's Untouchables," p. 111.

[50]See I. P. Desai, et al, *Caste, Caste-Conflict and Reservation* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1985); and Haroobhai Mehta and Hasmukh Patel, eds., *Dynamics of Reservation Policy* (New Delhi: Patriot, 1985).

jobs. "With the operation of the system over the years, the gap between those more fortunate ones and the rest of the Untouchables seems to have widened."[51] Another major criticism has been that the system is primarily a tool of those who control it, a means by which the government can dominate and control "a minority which might otherwise have proved troublesome."[52] Protective discrimination, particularly the arrangements for government jobs, is thus seen as "an efficient and inexpensive mechanism for social control."[53]

Of all the areas of government benefits to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, one of the most important has been the reservation of seats in Parliament and the state assemblies in proportion to their population.[54] At present, of the 543 elected seats to the Lok Sabha, 119 are reserved— 78 for Scheduled Castes and 41 for Scheduled Tribes. A similar proportion of seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes among the some 4,000 state assembly seats. As set forth in Article 330 of the Constitution, reservations were to end in 1960, but by constitutional amendment they have been subsequently extended in 10-year intervals.

The reserved seats guarantee representation. Although members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes may run for general seats, they do so infrequently, and victories are rare. In constituencies designated as "reserved," all voters make their selection among candidates from the Scheduled Castes. Because the untouchables are a minority in all but a very few constituencies, it is normally caste Hindus who decide the elections in reserved constituencies. Scheduled Caste candidates consequently have tended to assume a low political profile. Scheduled Caste members of Parliament and members of the state legislative assemblies tend to concentrate their efforts on matters relating to protective discrimination. Few have taken a strong position against the continuing disabilities that most of their fellows suffer.

Violence against untouchables, endemic over much of India, tends to be ad hoc, highly localized, and overwhelmingly rural. It is thus difficult to control and often passes publicly unnoticed. In recent years, there has been a marked increase in reported attacks upon

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[51]Dushkin, "Scheduled Caste Politics," p. 212. See also Dushkin, "Backward Class Benefits and Social Class in India, 1920–1970," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 7 April 1979, pp. 661– 67; and Barbara R. Joshi, *Democracy in Search of Equality: Untouchable Politics and Indian Social Change* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing, 1982).

[52]Dushkin, "Scheduled Caste Politics," p. 165.

[53]Ibid., p. 217.

[54]Marc Galanter, "Compensatory Discrimination in Political Representation," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 14 (Annual Number 1979), pp. 437–53.

untouchables. This may be due, in part, to more vigorous press coverage and to a greater willingness among untouchables to file complaints. But most observers believe that the reported increase is not a statistical artifact and that caste violence has, in fact, increased. In any case the 10,000 to 15,000 incidents officially reported are but a fraction of the acts of violence committed against untouchables each year.[55]

The sources of caste violence are fundamentally economic, and the attacks on untouchables are at once vengeance against those who have sought to assert their rights and better their condition and a warning to others not to stray from their traditionally assigned roles. The increase in violence is a measure of economic and social change—of the rise of untouchables through education, greater political consciousness and participation, and increasing economic and political power.

Dr. Ambedkar, leader of the Scheduled Castes until his death in 1956, had sought to weld the untouchables into a separate organization for political action.[56] He led the conversion of more than 3 million untouchables to Buddhism, but the Republican Party, which he founded in 1942 as the Scheduled Caste Federation, had minimal success. A more militant student-based group called the Dalit Panthers emerged in Maharashtra in the 1960s and developed some influence by forging links between urban and rural groups. Traditionally, however, most members of the Scheduled Castes have tended to look to the party of Gandhi and Nehru for protection and support.

Over time, the very creation of a constitutionally protected class composed of diverse, localized groups and the benefits of the policy of reservations in education, representation, and government jobs created a new generation of educated leaders and a greater sense of cohesion and identity among members of the Scheduled Castes. Increasingly, the forward elements among the Scheduled Castes began to coalesce to form their own organizations to protect their interests. In the late 1970s, Kanshi Ram, a former government employee and follower of Ambedkar, created the All-India Backward and Minority Community Employees Federation (BAMCEF) and began to organize the Scheduled Castes and other oppressed groups on a broad geographic basis. The BAMCEF sought to organize the educated members of the Scheduled Castes who held reserved posts in the civil service in order to assist

[55]For accounts of such incidents, see M. J. Akbar, *Riot after Riot: Reports on Caste and Communal Violence in India,* Rev. ed. (New Delhi: Penguin, 1991).

[56]See Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991); Barbara R. Joshi, *Untouchable! Voices of the Dalit Liberation* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994).

the less fortunate members of the community. Using the BAMCEF as a base, in 1981 Kanchi Ram founded the Dalit Soshit Sangharosh Samiti, or DS-4 as it became popularly called, as a nonpolitical agitational association composed mostly of students, unemployed youths, and professionals. Finally on April 14, 1984, he founded the Bahujan Samaj Party, which has become a major force in North Indian politics representing Scheduled Caste interests.[57]

Other Backward Classes (OBCs)

Above the untouchables in the Hindu caste hierarchy are those castes officially designated "Other Backward Classes" and defined by their low level of social and educational advancement. Predominantly rural, they account for 52 percent of India's population and in many states command significant political power. In response to that power, a number of states have extended reservations in university admissions and government employment to the "backward" castes. In Karnataka, for example, 50 percent of all state government jobs are reserved for OBCs. In central government employment, however, their numbers are comparatively few—12.6 percent of all classes of service. At the highest level, they constitute only 4.7 percent of Class I Officers, against 89.3 percent for the upper castes and 5.7 percent for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.[58]

In 1980, the Backward Classes Commission, chaired by former Bihar chief minister B. P. Mandal, issued its report, recommending the reservation of 27 percent of all central government jobs for the backward castes in addition to the 22.5 percent already reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes.[59] It classified 3,743 castes and subcastes as OBC beneficiaries. The report gathered dust for a decade, but in August 1990, Prime Minister V. P. Singh announced that his government would implement the Mandal recommendations. The decision brought widespread criticism from the press and strong opposition from higher castes, especially students. In New Delhi and other urban areas in North India, violent protests, acts of self-immolation, and police firings raised the

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[57]Farhat Parveen, "The Rise of Bahujan Samaj Party," *Regional Studies,* 13 (Autumn 1995), pp. 58–80.

[58] Government of India, *Report of the Backward Classes Commission,* vol. 1 (New Delhi 1980), pp. 63–92.

[59]In addition to the report itself, cited above, see S. R. Maheshwari, *The Mandal Commission and Mandalisation* (New Delhi: Concept, 1991); Asghar Ali Engineer, ed., *Mandal Commission Controversy* (New Delhi: Ajanta, 1991); and Anirudh Prasad, *Reservation Policy and Practice in India* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep, 1991).

specter of "caste war." In his decision, V. P. Singh appealed directly to one of his major constituencies, the backward peasant castes who make up more than half of India's 1.1 billion people. The National Front's election platform had supported reservations as a commitment to equity and social justice, but the timing and haste with which Singh made the decision suggested the Prime Minister sought to undercut his rivals in the Janata Dal for support among the backward castes and undermine BJP attempts to build Hindu solidarity. The BJP and the Communists, upon whom Singh's minority government depended, expressed displeasure at not having been consulted and insisted that education and income, not caste, be made the criteria for job reservation. The BJP saw the caste reservation issue as an attempt to divide the Hindu community to which it appealed, and it was this above all that spurred BJP leader Advani to undertake his rath yatra to Ayodhya—the action that precipitated the series of events that brought down the National Front government. In his fall, V. P. Singh assumed the position of a martyr for secularism and social justice, and these were the themes of his campaign in the 1991 elections.

V. P. Singh's decision has led to the "Mandalization" of Indian politics as a large, highly diverse group of thousands of castes has begun to acquire a new singular identity. The OBCs came to have a major impact on politics in the 1990s as they formed their own parties and won control of state governments in North India. The very size and diversity of the OBCs, however, make it very difficult for them to sustain their solidarity. In U.P. and Bihar, for example, the domination of OBC politics by the Yadavs has generated resentment among the Kurmis and other OBCs who resent the bias shown by Yadav leaders in favor of their caste fellows. The very notion of the OBCs as a coherent community becomes threatened by the diversity and competition among the thousands of castes that make up the OBC community.

For all its political appeal to the backward castes, however, the Mandal reservations offered little substantive hope for improvement. Each year there are typically some 220,000 vacancies at all levels in central government employment. With a 27 percent reservation, this involves only 60,000 jobs for which hundreds of thousands of backward-caste applicants will compete. Critics argued that the reservations policy "threatens to pit Indian against Indian in a ferocious caste war for what are essentially a few crumbs."[60] Not only does it

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[60]*India Today,* 15 September 1990, p. 36. The cover story, "Mandal Commission: Dividing to Rule," pp. 34–39, reflected the general response of the Indian press. For a debate on the issue by leading observers, see *India Today*'s "Cross Fire" feature, "Reservations: Emerging Battle," 31 May 1991, pp. 33–41.

sharpen conflict between upper and backward castes, but rivalries among the backward castes may deepen, as the rewards of reservation go disproportionately to the more advanced of the designated OBCs.

In the streets, the reservations proposal was met with protest and violence. In the courts, an avalanche of petitions challenged the legality of the Mandal recommendations, and in October 1990, the Supreme Court granted the petitioners a stay against implementation, pending review of the constitutional issues.[61] With the court order still in effect, in October 1991, the new Congress (I) government of Narasimha Rao announced its intention to implement the Mandal reservation, with an additional 10 percent of all central government jobs reserved for the poor among the "forward" upper castes, as well as Muslims and Christians. With so great a portion of the population as beneficiary, no political party raised its opposition. In contrast to the turmoil a year before, protest demonstrations were weak and sporadic. Without political support, the anti–Mandal agitation lost steam. The validity of the Mandal reservations has since been upheld by the Supreme Court.

INTEREST GROUP POLITICS

Although India has experienced a proliferation of interest groups since the 1980s, group solidarity has been seriously challenged by the politics of Mandal, Mandir, and markets. While these forces have reduced the impact of major demand groups such as students, farmers, and industrial labor, liberalization, markets, and privatization have made government much more receptive to the demands of organized business, women, NGOs, environment groups, and a variety of newly formed groups representing private sector interests.

Peasants and Farmers[62]

Despite 60 years of planning and industrial development, India remains a predominantly agrarian society. Sixty-seven percent of its population still depends on agriculture and 72 percent of its people live in rural areas. The Indian peasantry, however, is far from homogeneous and is divided on the basis of religion, caste, and class.

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[61]*India Today,* 31 October 1990, p. 17.

[62]See Tom Brass, ed., *New Farmers' Movements in India* (Newbury Park, U.K.: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1995); Ashutosh Varshney, *Democracy, Development, and the Countryside: Urban-Rural Struggles in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 100–26.

Rural classes may be divided into owner-cultivators, sharecroppers, tenants, and landless laborers, each with a different set of interests. The most vocal, organized, and powerful of these groups are the large- and medium-sized owner-cultivators known as middle peasants, who usually own between 2.5 and 15 acres of land and who constitute 35 percent of rural households. The largest, least mobilized, and mostly unorganized sectors are the landless and near landless peasants that make up the bulk of rural households. The interests, organization, and tactics of these diverse groups have altered significantly since independence in response to the rapid growth of population and its impact on land ownership, a growing sense of political conscious, and changes in agricultural policies. Collective action in rural India has taken three distinct forms. These forms include the creation of party-led *kisan*, or peasant associations, in the 1950s and 1960s, the rise of farmers' movements in the 1970s and 1980s, and periodic outbreaks of peasant rebellion.

The earliest attempts to mobilize the Indian peasantry began in the 1920s as Indian nationalists sought to build a base of support in rural India. The oldest and largest national organization claiming to represent the Indian peasantry was the All-India Kisan Sabha, a federation of state peasant movements founded in 1936. Although it began as a Congress front organization, the Kisan Sabha quickly came under the control of the Communists. Following independence, therefore, the Congress and other major national parties each created their own peasant associations in an effort to enhance their political support base. Although most kisan associations demanded land to the tiller, an end to landlordism, tenancy reform, reductions in rents, and land redistribution, they were dominated by political parties and used primarily as instruments of political mobilization rather than as mechanisms for the articulation of agrarian interests.

Given the weak organizational voice of the peasantry in the 1950s and the 1960s, government decision makers enjoyed considerable autonomy in formulating agrarian policy. While the major thrust of Indian planning concentrated on industrialization, Congress' land policy focused primarily on structural reforms that included the abolition of zamindari, ceilings on land holdings, and cooperative farming. Despite the stiff resistance of India's small but powerful landlord class, the Congress was successful in enacting and implementing its long-standing pledge to abolish the zamindari system and eliminate the old feudal landed class. The Congress was also successful in securing the enactment of land-ceiling legislation in the states. Land-ceiling legislation, however, was largely subverted as Congress-controlled state governments were unwilling to alienate their base of support

among the middle peasants. Nehru's attempt to introduce cooperative farming was even less successful and was blocked by strong opposition both within the Congress and the country at large. In short, although each major party had its own kisan organization, the impact of these organizations on agricultural policy was almost nil. The representation of agrarian interests took place primarily on an informal basis within the Congress Party.

The death of Nehru, a massive food crisis, and pressure from the foreign donor community forced a major change in Indian agricultural policy in the mid-1960s. In 1964–65 the government adopted a new agricultural strategy designed to apply modern technology to India's traditional peasant agriculture. This new production-oriented approach, based on the technology of the green revolution, resulted in a major increase in agricultural production, transformed the Indian countryside, and led to the rise of farmers' movements in the 1970s and 1980s, which came to have a major impact on Indian politics and agricultural policy.

Unlike the peasant-based kisan movements of the past, the farmers' movements of the 1970s and 1980s were a product of the green revolution and were organized by cultivating landowners producing commercial crops in irrigated areas located largely in the North and West. These new movements were localized, state-based, nonpolitical, and focused on demands for higher prices for agricultural crops. They developed their own distinctive populist ideology, appealed to the mass peasantry, and attacked the urban bias of Indian development. They also developed their own independent, articulate, and charismatic leadership and employed a variety of innovative agitational methods to achieve their ends. Although they represented the interests of owners of large- and medium-sized holdings, the movements successfully claimed to speak on behalf of the entire rural sector and argued that higher agricultural prices would benefit all farmers. The impact of farmers' movements reached its peak in the 1980s and then began to decline. The farmers' movement was weakened by leadership efforts to transform farmers' groups into political parties, their effort to enter the political arena, and the polarization of the movement following the introduction of the economic reforms of 1991. The leadership of the farmers' movement became sharply divided in the 1990s over the impact and desirability of liberalization, globalization, foreign investment, and the use of new technologies such as genetically modified seeds and biotechnology.

The wave of new farmers' movements began in the early 1970s in the Punjab and Tamil Nadu. The earliest farmers' movement was

founded in the Punjab in May 1972 when 11 local peasant groups met in Chandigarh and decided to form the Punjab Kheti Bari Zamindari Union. In 1974 the group decided to drop the word Zamindari from its name, and in 1980 the group changed its name again to the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Indian Farmers' Association). The movement quickly spread to other states and came to include the Bharatiya Kisan Union, Uttar Pradesh (BKU-UP); the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, Gujarat (BKS-G); the Shetkari Sanghatana, Maharashtra (SSM); the Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha (KRRS); and the Tamilaga Vyavasava-vigal Sangham in Tamil Nadu. These movements represented rural surplus producers who, unlike subsistence peasants, produced agricultural products for the market. They demanded higher prices, not land reform, and were nonpolitical and independent of political parties. They employed a variety of direct action tactics including demonstrations; blocking food transport; denying officials access to villages; refusing to pay taxes, electricity fees, or repayment of agricultural loans; and withholding crops from the market.

For all the power of the farmers' movement in the 1980s, the movement suffered from a variety of weaknesses that led to its decline by the 1990s. In the first place, the movement was localized and lacked a strong overarching national organization similar to that of the Indian business community. Despite efforts to coordinate at the national level, farmers' groups remained closely bound to the interests of particular districts, states, and crops. Second, while their leaders proclaimed rural solidarity, the movement primarily represented the interests of the more affluent farmers who produced a marketable surplus. Third, agrarian leaders were never able to bridge the gap in conflicting interests between upper castes and backward castes or between landowning peasants and landless labor. Fourth, like other interest-based organizations, the farmers' movement became overwhelmed by the communalization of Indian politics that undermined group solidarity based on secular interests in the name of caste and religion. Fifth, the decision to shift from a strategy of nonpolitical interest group action to electoral politics, in an effort to secure direct access to the distributive benefits of the state, further undermined group solidarity as local political loyalties transcended interest-based identity. Farmers' parties performed very poorly at the polls at a time when rural representation actually increased.

Finally, the strength and solidarity of the farmers' movement totally collapsed following the introduction of economic reforms in 1991. The reforms sparked a major ideological conflict within the farmers' movement over questions of liberalization, globalization, foreign

investment, and the introduction of new biotechnology methods into Indian agriculture. These ideological divisions were reinforced by personality and leadership differences that polarized the movement into two warring camps. One group was led by Sharad Joshi, the antistatist, mass leader of the Shethari Sanghatan, who represented market oriented surplus producers and saw liberalization, globalization and biotechnology as a boon to Indian farmers that would enhance their productivity and prosperity. Joshi was supported by the Gujarat Khedut Samaj, a faction of the Punjab BKU, and a group of Harayana farmers. The second group was led by Professor Narayanswami Naidu, leader of the KRRS, who saw liberalization, globalization, foreign investment, and biotechnology as part of a neocolonial plot designed to enslave the Indian farmer, to threaten the cultural identity of the country's traditional substance cultivators living in balance with nature and the environment, and to destroy the harmony of India's Gandhian style village based society. Narayanswami led mass public protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO); the presence of multinational corporations such as Cargill, McDonalds, and Monsanto; and attempts to introduce genetically modified seeds and other forms of biotechnology into India. He was supported in his effort by M. S. Tikait of the BKU-UP, a section of Punjabi farmers, and most of the Lohiate, socialist oriented movements representing subsistence farmers.[63]

Paralleling the emergence of peasant organizations and farmers' movements, India has also been confronted by a series of peasant revolts. Although the Indian peasantry has been less volatile than the Chinese peasantry, Gough argues that peasant revolts have been quite common in India over the past two centuries, and she has counted at least 77 peasant revolts of various magnitude. Since independence, India has experienced three major peasant uprisings. The earliest took place in Telengana in the former state of Hyderabad, now part of the state of Andhra, in the mid-1940s. The second took place in the Naxalbari region of West Bengal in the 1960s. The third peasant revolt occurred in the Srikakulam district of Andhra in the late 1960s.

The Telengana uprising in the former state of Hyderabad was one of the most dramatic and ill-fated peasant revolts in India. It began with sporadic outbreaks in 1946. By 1948, despite a campaign of suppression, the movement, which was led by the Communist Party,

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[63]See Gail Omvedt, "Farmers, Movements and The Debate on Poverty and Economic Reforms" and Ronald Herring, "Miracle Seeds, Suicide Seeds, and the Poor: GMOs, NGOs, Farmers and the State," in Ray and Katzenstein, pp. 179–232.

claimed to have "liberated" some 2,500 villages by turning out land-lords and their agents and establishing communes. Support came primarily from poor peasants and landless laborers. During the period of the movement's greatest strength, rents were suspended, debts were canceled, and land was redistributed among the landless in the area under Communist control. In September 1948 Indian troops took over the state and moved against the Communists in Telengana. The leadership of the movement was jailed, and the Communist Party was outlawed in the state. The movement was officially called off by a Communist Party of India (CPI) directive in 1951, beginning a new phase in Communist strategy.[64]

More widespread were the "Naxalite" rebellions, beginning in the late 1960s and continuing episodically to the present. In 1967 agricultural tenants of Naxalbari in the hill district of Darjeeling in West Bengal began to occupy forcibly the lands they tilled. As the handful of peasants in Naxalbari sought to secure their position against the landlords, Radio Beijing proclaimed the area a "red district" and lauded the heroic effort to create a "liberated base" from which to wage a protracted revolutionary struggle. The Indian government reacted with alarm to what it viewed as Chinese infiltration in the sensitive border region, and the rebellion was put down in short order. Naxalbari was to become the rallying cry for armed revolution, and from this uprising Indian Maoists took on the name "Naxalites."[65]

More substantial than Naxalbari was the 1968 peasant struggle in the Andhra hills of the Srikakulam district. Concentrated in the 800-square-mile Girijan tribal agency tract, Communist-led Girijan guerrilla bands—armed with spears, bows and arrows, axes, and captured guns—began to engage in clashes with landlords and police. The peasant struggle attracted college youth and a seasoned party cadre, but although Srikakulam was hailed by Beijing as a victory for Maoist

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[64]The 25th anniversary of the Telengana revolt stimulated a reexamination of the nature and significance of the struggle. See Mohan Ram, "The Telengana Peasant Armed Struggle, 1946–51," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 9 June 1973, pp. 1,025–32; and P. Sundarayya, *Telengana People's Struggle and Its Lessons* (Calcutta: Communist Party of India [Marxist], 1972).

[65]See Rabindra Ray, *The Naxalites and Their Ideology* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); Sumanta Banerjee, *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising* (London: Zed Books, 1984); Biplap Dasgupta, *The Naxalite Movement* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1974); Asish Kumar Roy, *The Spring Thunder and After* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1975); Sankar Ghosh, *The Disinherited State: A Study of West Bengal, 1967–1970* (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1971), pp. 97–114; and Marcus F. Franda, *Radical Politics in West Bengal* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1971), pp. 149–81.

tactics in India, the movement was suppressed by the end of the following year.[66]

Agitation by poor peasants and landless laborers has been sporadic and uncoordinated. Through the 1970s spasmodic outbreaks of violence occurred, and in 1980 an upsurge of Naxalite activity in various parts of rural India was brought quickly under control. The late 1980s witnessed a resurgence of Naxalite activity, most visibly in Bihar, northern Andhra Pradesh, and portions of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, where support comes principally from tribals and landless untouchables. Naxalites today are scattered among as many as 40 rival groups, and operate through armed insurgency units and front organizations. In Bihar, they have contested elections. Naxalite insurgents there also attack police stations and engage in battles with the "private armies" hired by landowners and rich peasants, but even small peasant landholders have been massacred in Naxalite raids on villages. In Andhra, Naxalite factions, most notably the People's War Group (PWG), engage in extortion, kidnapping, and assassination.

Despite periodic peace efforts, the Naxalites continue to flourish as an antisystemic, revolutionary movement in rural India that has grown in size and organizational strength since the late 1990s and has spread beyond its old core areas in Andhra, Jharkhand, Chhittisgarh, West Bengal, and Bihar. In 2004 Naxalite groups were estimated to be active in 156 of India's 602 districts and 13 of the country's 28 states.[67] Although the movement has been fragmented and factionalized over issues of leadership, tactics, and ideology since its emergence in 1967, there has been a concerted effort since the late 1990s to reverse the process.[68] The process of consolidation began on August 11, 1998, when the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) Party Unity, a Naxalite group created in 1982, merged with the People's War Group to form the CPI (ML) People's War (PW). The merger process was taken a step further when, in January 2003, the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), a hard line underground wing of the Naxalite movement formed in October 1969, merged with several smaller groups from various parts of India to form the Maoist

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[66]See Mohan Ram, *Maoism in India* (Delhi: Vikas, 1971), pp. 106–36; and Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Communism in Indian Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 329–46.

[67]"South Asia Terrorism Portal," *South Asia Intelligence Review* Vol 3, No. 25, (January 3, 2005).

[68]Bela Bhatia, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. XL No. 25 (April 9–15, 2005), pp. 1536–1543.

Communist Centre, India (MCC–I). The merger process took an even more dramatic step forward when, on October 14, 2004, the CPI (ML) People's War Group merged with the Maoist Communist Centre, India (MCC–I) to form the CPI-Maoists. The Indian Home Ministry estimates the hard-core strength the new party to be about 9,300 loyalists who are equipped with some 6,500 weapons plus a large number of country-made arms.[69]

In addition to the merger process, there has also been a concerted effort in recent years by the Naxalite movement to carve out a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) that would link Nepal and areas of eastern India in the North through the central part of the country to the movement's core area of support in the South. The attempt to create a CRZ has been accompanied by a successful attempt to build a regional alliance. On July 1, 2001, various Naxalite and Maoist groups in the region came together to from a Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations in South Asia (CCOMPOSA). Since its creation, these underground Maoist groups from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have held extended annual meetings at secret locations in the region. Given the growing success of the Maoist movement in Nepal, the consolidation of diverse Naxalite and Maoist groups and their continued expansion into new areas of India, the formation of CCOMPOSA and efforts to create a Compact Revolutionary Zone in South Asia, revolutionary communism represents not only a form of alternative politics but also the most significant secular ideological threat to the governments of the region.

Student Politics[70]

Students have been at the forefront of protest movements and agitations from the time of independence. If the urban poor are politically inarticulate, students are loudly vocal. While organized, however, they often lack direction and coherence. "Student indiscipline" is endemic, and at any time a major portion of India's colleges and universities are closed because of campus disorder. "Indiscipline" embraces a wide range of disruptive activities, from demonstrations and strikes relating

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[69]Government of India, Home Ministry, *Annual Report* 2004–2005, pp. 1–3, 41, 112–113, 129.

[70]Kuldeep Mathur, "University under Siege," *Seminar* 456 (August 1997), pp. 36–38; Asok Mukhopadhyay "Liberalization and Higher Education in India" and G. Haragopal and G. Sudarshanam, "Liberalization Policy: Implications for Higher Education," *Indian Journal of Public Administration* XLII (July–September 1996), pp. 497–512.

to university-specific demands to involvement in political movements of the larger community.

Students looking for a cause—as, for example, in protest over the firing of a menial employee—have paralyzed universities. Campus disorder has become increasingly violent, with gheraos and physical attacks on administrators and faculty, the murder of a Vice Chancellor, and terrorism of fellow students. Warring student factions are armed with automatic weapons on some campuses in North India, and hostels have been turned into virtual arsenals. By no means is everyone involved actually a student. Aligarh Muslim University, the scene of frequent turmoil, recently discovered that it had considerably more "students" living in the hostels than were formally enrolled in the university. Every campus has a sizable number of hangers-on, a lumpen element readily activated for protest.

The campus, however, has rarely been able to contain student politics or unrest. Activated by a mixture of idealism and frustration, students have sought a wider arena. Students were the major force in bringing down state governments in Orissa in 1964 and in Gujarat in 1974. They played a central role in the anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu in the mid-1960s, in the Telengana movement, and in the Naxalite violence in West Bengal and Andhra. The All-Assam Students' Union spearheaded the movement against "foreigners" in Assam. In 1985 students in Gujarat and in Madhya Pradesh engaged in agitations against state policy on reservations (quotas) for members of the Scheduled Castes and backward classes. In 1990, the Janata government's decision to implement the Mandal reservations for backward castes brought upper-caste students into the streets in protest. In Delhi, students went on a rampage smashing public buses, and across North India, in expression of anomic protest and their own sense of hopelessness, 163 students attempted suicide by self-immolation; 61 died.

Since independence, India has experienced an explosive growth in higher education. The number of collages and universities has increased from 728 in 1950-51 to 13,522 in 2004 and the number of students has mushroomed from less than a half million to 8.8 million in 2004, which represents about 8 percent of the 17 to 23 age group. Although most students are not politically involved, student activists provide a reservoir from which political parties and protest movements can draw leadership and support. Campuses have long been centers of political opposition, and student government elections are usually fought out along party lines.

The RSS student movement, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, is now the largest student organization in India and

claimed a membership of 1.1 million in 2003.[71] The Congress Party, the BJP, the Communist Party (Marxist), and almost all other political parties have their own campus affiliates

Higher education in India, however, is in the throes of an acute crisis that has transformed the traditional role of university and student politics. This crisis has been brought about by several factors. First, due to a change in government policy in 1986, the traditionally state-funded university system is facing a severe resource crunch. The New Education Policy called for a restructuring of higher education and declared that universities would be required to raise more of their own resources by mobilizing donations from the private sector and raising student fees. As a result, government outlays per university student have declined considerably from Rs. 7,676 in 1993 to Rs. 5873 in 2001–02.[72] The policy also called for greater privatization of the university system, and the number of self-financing colleges of engineering and management now outnumber public institutions. University faculties have charged the government with abandoning public universities and have resisted these changes. Second, universities have experienced a massive shift in student preferences away from traditional disciplines such as liberal arts, political theory, and social sciences to applied areas and career training in business, accounting, engineering, and computer science. As a result, the traditional disciplines are in decline and no longer serve as a recruitment base for political parties, especially on the left. Third, there has been a major decline in the appeal of Marxist and socialist ideologies in the wake of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the former U.S.S.R. and with increasing globalization. Fourth, the universities have become sharply divided by the politics of Mandal and Mandir, as teachers and students have become increasingly divided on the basis of caste, religion, class, and gender. Faculty members who are largely drawn from the upper castes have resisted "Mandalization." The issue of reservations in higher education has now been compounded by UPA government efforts to extend them to elite universities and medical schools. Fifth, massive enrollment pressures and growing apathy have resulted in a sharp decline in the quality of higher education. The tutorial system has broken down; lectures are poorly attended; teachers do not show up for class; and universities are faced by increasing

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[71]Jaffrelot, p. 6.

[72]Sujata Patel, "Higher Education at the Crossroads," *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. XXXXIX, No. 21 (May 22-28, 2004), p. 2151.

corruption, nepotism, and criminal activity on campus. Finally, India has experienced an internationalization of higher education that has allowed foreign institutions to establish branches in India and Indian universities to establish similar centers abroad.

The combined effect of these changes has led to a decline in idealism and a reduction in the role and impact of student demand groups on the political system. Student movements in India have increasingly become seen as synonymous with violence, and student politics have become criminalized, opportunistic, corrupt, and factionalized. As a result, most students have come to see student politics as a waste of time and have become increasingly apolitical. The student community in India, however, continues to represent a potentially explosive force in the country's politics.

Labor and Trade Unions[73]

Liberalization, the process of economic restructuring, and the slow pace of industrial development have had a devastating effect on India's small, largely unorganized, economically weak, urban working class, which remains highly dependent on the state for its protection. In 2003-04, of a total workforce of 402 million, only about 27.2 million, or about 7 percent, were employed in the organized sector (i.e., nonagricultural establishments that employ 10 or more workers). This small and declining sector of the labor force has been the sole focal point of all trade union organizational activity. Historically Indian trade union leaders have shown very little interest in organizing the massive pool of 375 million workers or about 93 percent of the workforce in the unorganized sector. The only real attempts to organize the unorganized sector have come from the NGO community.[74]

Despite its size, the Indian trade union movement has had a long history. Although the earliest trade unions predate the First World War, union activity accelerated considerably from 1918 onward. Most unions were organized by nationalist, socialist, and Communist politicians and middleclass intellectuals, and the movement developed a distinct set of characteristics that continue to this day. The Indian

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[73]"Workers and Unions," *Seminar* 452 (April 1997); E. A. Ramaswamy, "Organized Labor and Economic Reform" in Philip Oldenburg, ed., *India Briefing: Staying the Course 1995–1996* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 97–128; E. A. Ramaswamy, *A Question of Balance: Labour, Management and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Latha Jishnu "Labour Pains," *Business World,* (16–31 March 1997), pp. 113–23.

[74]Ruddar Datt, ed., *Organising the Unorganised Workers* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1997), pp. 1–28, and Tata Sevices Limited, *Statistical Outline of India 2004-2005* (Tata Services Limited 2005), p. 4.

trade union movement is highly fragmented, has a very low member-ship density, continues to be controlled by outsiders, and is highly politicized. Despite the enormous growth in the size of the popula-tion, the relative size of the industrial working class in India has remained static. At the same time, however, the number of trade unions has proliferated from 3,522 in 1950 to 62,223 in 1998, and the number of central federations has increased from 4 in 1950 to 12 in 1991 and continues to grow. Ironically this fragmentation has been encouraged by Indian law, which permits any seven persons to form a trade union and raise any dispute.

According to outdated and highly questionable government data released in January 1997, the total membership of India's central trade unions as of December 31, 1989 was 12,334,142. The top five of India's 12 central trade unions accounted for 10 million, or 81 per-cent, of the total membership. Each of these top five trade unions was affiliated with one of India's major political parties. The largest trade union in India was the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) with 3.1 mil-lion members, which was affiliated with the BJP. The Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), which is closely allied with the Congress (I), had been the largest trade union in India but slipped to the number two position in 1989 with 2.7 million members. It was INTUC's challenge to the loss of its dominant status that delayed release of the 1989 membership data until January 1997. The remain-ing three large central trade unions were the CPM-dominated Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) with 1.8 million members, the social-ist Janata-controlled Hind Mazdoor Sabha with 1.5 million members, and the CPI-controlled All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) with 938,486 members.[75] The AITUC was founded in 1920 and is India's oldest central trade union. Due to party control of trade unions in India, however, unions were used more as instruments of mass mobilization than as representatives of working-class interests.

The development of the Indian trade union movement in the postindependence period, argues Bhattacherjee, can be divided into four phases that correspond with structural changes in the economy. The first phase was from 1950 to the mid-1960s, which saw the rapid expansion of public sector employment and massive state inter-vention in labor-management relations. Given the political role of Indian trade unions, the small size of the urban working class, and the government's commitment to development and centralized

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[75]See *Vishwakarma Sanket* 5 (1) (January 1997), and *Seminar* 452, p. 43.

planning, the Government of India came to play a dominant role in formulating labor policy and in labor-management relations. The primary objective of government policy was to prevent the disruption of industrial growth and production. The government, therefore, enacted a complex series of labor laws designed to protect workers and ensure that all disputes would be settled by the binding arbitration of government labor tribunals. Unions thus became adjudication-oriented, and collective bargaining was virtually nonexistent. The state limited the freedom of action of trade unions; union demands were directed to government and not management, and state patronage enabled INTUC, the Congress Party's labor arm, to become the dominant force in the trade union movement. Because of government's dominant role in industrial relations, the government also came to bear the full brunt of labor dissatisfaction.

The mid-1960s to 1979 marked a second phase of trade union development characterized by the rise of labor militancy and a major shift in labor relations. Economic stagnation, political upheaval, the failure of trade unions to meet worker needs, and increased trade union rivalry resulted in an outbreak of spontaneous worker protest, a major government crackdown on trade unions, and the rise of militant trade unionism. Industrial disputes in the form of strikes and lockouts increased from 1,071 in 1951 to 1,357 in 1961 and then to 2,752 in 1971. The explosion of labor militancy was especially prominent in the industrial state of West Bengal where workers employed the gherao, a new tactic that involved the physical encirclement of managerial staff until their demands were met.

The rise of labor militancy was met by the increased use of repression by the government of Indira Gandhi. This was dramatically demonstrated by her response to the strike of the 2 million workers belonging to the All-India Railwaymen's Federation in 1974 that threatened to cripple the nation's economy. The Prime Minister refused to negotiate union demands for a doubling of wages; the army was moved into many key rail installations; some 6,000 labor leaders were immediately arrested; and in the course of the strike—the most serious India has confronted—more than 30,000 workers and union activists were jailed. After 20 days, the strike was abandoned, and from their cells the union leaders called upon workers to return to their jobs.

The draconian means by which the railway strike was broken anticipated the nature of governmental action against labor under the 1975–77 emergency. Strikes were banned and wages frozen in the imposition of an industrial peace. With the end of the emergency

in 1977, strikes again brought unrest to the Indian urban economy. In 1981 the government enhanced its power through the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), which empowers it to ban strikes in such crucial sectors of the economy as defense, rail, coal, power, steel, fertilizer, and irrigation.

The end of the emergency in 1979 led to a third phase of union development which was marked by the renewal of labor unrest and the rise of a new form of independent, militant trade unionism. This change was symbolized by the rapid ascent of the Bombay labor leader Dr. Datta Samant. Samant, a former Congress (I) politician, came to the labor scene in Bombay in the mid-1970s and infused the trade union movement with new militancy. Through his aggressive tactics and by his early record of success in winning wage increases, Samant gained control of hundreds of unions, with membership in the early 1980s totaling at least 600,000, nearly all in the Bombay industrial region. The strikes led by Samant were often both violent and prolonged. The Bombay textile strike—the longest major strike in India's history—dragged on for nearly two years. Involving 250,000 workers at its peak, the strike all but paralyzed the textile industry. The Bombay textile strike, however, failed. Workers gradually began to return to the factories, and the complete collapse of the strike in 1983 reduced Samant's influence over the trade union movement. The Bombay strike and changes in government textile policy in the late 1980s marked the beginning of a crisis in the Indian textile industry that led to the progressive closures of mills, retrenchment and, in the words of Berman, "the unmaking of an industrial working class."[76] The failure of other major strikes at Bajaj Automobile, Hindustan Lever, and Telco in the 1980s also severely weakened the trade union movement in the country.

If the 1970s and 1980s were marked by the rise of labor militancy, the introduction of economic reforms in 1991 ushered in a fourth phase that has proven to be hostile to the development of trade unionism in India. The reform package called for greater labor market flexibility, and organized labor found it increasingly impossible to initiate concerted labor action in the new politically and economically hostile environment. Several factors contributed to this new environment. First, although the liberalization policies of the 1990s were distinguished by an acceleration of economic growth in India, they were also responsible for massive retrenchment of labor as industry

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[76]Jan Breman, *The Making and Unmaking of an Industrial Working Class: Sliding Down the Labour Hierachy in Ahmedabad, India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

reorganized and focused on upgrading technology, increasing competitiveness, and enhancing productivity in an effort to cope with the increasing globalization of the economy. Second, following the collapse of the Bombay textile strike and the introduction of the economic reform package, industry launched a major counteroffensive against trade unions and rigid labor laws by shifting to casual labor, contract employees, lockouts, and issuing its own charter of demands. The number of lockouts by management increased from 274 in 1971 to 532 in 1991 and then to 703 in 1992.[77] Third, the crushing of the railroad strike in 1974; changes in economic policy in the 1980s; and the liberalization, privatization, and globalization policies of the 1990s have placed even the powerful public sector unions on the defensive. Public sector employees have been confronted by an employment freeze, the beginning of privatization of public sector enterprises, the introduction of voluntary retirement schemes, and pressure for reform of existing labor laws. As a consequence of these combined factors, management gained greater control of the workplace; the protective atmosphere for labor has ended; and the Indian working class faces a process of retrenchment, the informalization of labor, and increasing marginalization.

The Indian trade union movement has thus found it very difficult adjusting to the structural changes taking place in the Indian economy under the impact of liberalization, deregulation, and globalization. Unions have had to deal with a decline in industrial employment; a sharp increase in nonpermanent employment; a shrinking constituency; the proliferation of independent, unaffiliated unions; and increased regional variation. As a result, the bargaining strength of trade unions has declined, management has become more assertive, unions have lost much of their political clout, and labor protests have subsided. The number of strikes, for example, has declined sharply from 2,478 in 1971 to 1,278 in 1991 and then to 255 in 2003. The movement's preference for vertical mobilization based on caste and creed and its refusal to mobilize the unorganized sector of the economy have proven to be historic blunders that have led to the collapse of class solidarity, a communalization of the labor, a weakening of collective action, and continued working-class dependence on the state.[78] Organizationally, the trade union movement has become hopelessly fragmented, its tactics have become increasingly

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[77]World Bank, *India: Sustaining Rapid Economic Growth* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1997), p. 7.

[78]See Berman.

obsolete, its leadership is ageing, and it has fewer friends and supporters. Organized labor is increasingly viewed as a privileged section of Indian society. The labor movement also faces a series of new challenges including criminalization, communalization, and globalization that are further undermining secular class-based interests. Although labor in India can still act as a veto group due to its strategic position and political role, the labor militancy and the demand politics of the working class of the 1970s and 1980s is on the wane. Labor in India is now on the defensive, and it does not know how to respond. In the meantime, India's traditional trade unions are being upstaged by the efforts of the NGO community to organize the poor, the oppressed, and the vast army of unorganized workers in India.

Nongovernmental Organizations[79]

As elsewhere in the Third World, one of the most significant recent developments in India has been the rise of the NGO sector. The antecedents of the NGO movement in India can be found in the Gandhian social service sector, the J.P. Movement, the anti-emergency struggle, and the Janata upsurge of 1977–79. The growth of the NGO movement was brought about by the transformation of the newly mobilized and politicized social forces of the 1970s into the voluntarism of the 1980s and 1990s. Unhappy with the existing framework of development and disillusioned with conventional institutions and parties, NGOs provided a vehicle for a new generation of youth to play a constructive role. The growth of the NGO movement was also facilitated by the availability of increased government funding and foreign financial support for voluntary action.

NGOs have come to articulate new sets of issues, alternative models of development, and the needs of the rural and urban poor. By the early 1990s the number of NGOs in India was estimated to be about 100,000, of which some 25,000 to 30,000 were active. About 14,000 NGOs were foreign-funded.[80] While a majority of the new NGOs became involved in welfare, relief, charity, health, education, appropriate technology, and local planning, a new wave of issue-based organizations began to emerge in the mid-1970s. In the 1970s they fought for women's rights, human rights, civil liberties, ecology,

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[79]See D. L. Sheth and Harsh Sethi, "The NGO Sector in India: Historical Context and Current Discourse," in Kuldeep Mathur, ed., *Development Policy and Administration* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 280–301.

[80]Noorjahan Bava, ed., *Non-Governmental Organisations in Development: Theory and Practice* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 1997), pp. 128–29.

bonded labor, child labor, and legal rights for the poor. In the 1980s they further championed the cause of ecology by opposing major dam projects, power plants, roads, railroads, and aquaculture.

The economic reforms of the 1990s have further strengthened the NGO movement by expanding the political space available to civil society and increasing the receptivity of the environment to change. The reforms have focused on not only liberalization and globalization but also on the importance of good governance and greater governmental efficiency, oversight, and accountability. Led by a rapidly expanding urban middle class, citizen groups have developed a variety of new forms of social activism and innovative tactics demanding greater governmental accountability and the expansion of democratic rights. NGOs have shifted from struggle and advocacy to lobbying and demands for enhanced political participation in decision making. Using public interest litigation, policy analysis, and the media, NGOs have fought local corruption, poor service delivery by government agencies, and bureaucratic inertia. Their most potent tool has been the use of writ petitions in the courts demanding that legal rights enshrined in the Constitution be enforced. Their demands for the rights to food and work forced the government to expand employment–guarantee schemes for the poor and introduce midday meal programs in schools, and their demands for a right to information led to the enactment of a the Freedom of Information Act in 2002. NGO demands for the rights to education and health as fundamental rights have met with less success. The ability of NGOs to translate demands into specific policies has been most successful only when the courts have intervened on their behalf and directed the State to act.[81]

In short, elements of civil society in India have expanded into the domain of policy making and implementation in an effort to expand political participation, which has traditionally been limited to elections. Though far from becoming India's fifth estate, the NGO movement has become an important force in many areas of Indian life. Since independence, the NGO community has evolved from support of the state in the 1950s and 1960s, to opposition to the state in the 1970s and 1980s, to an uneasy partnership with the state in the 1990s. At the same time, the NGO movement in India has also begun to face a rising tide of criticism for lack of coordination, proliferation, politicization, nepotism, and lack of accountability.

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[81]See "New Priorities," *Seminar* 541 (September 2004); S. N. Pawar, J. B. Ambekar and,
D. Shrikant, eds., *NGOs and Development: The Indian Scenario* (Jaipur, India: Rawat
Publications 2004); Elliott; and Ray and Katzenstein.

The Women's Movement[82]

Among the most dramatic changes in associational development in India has been the decline of the traditional elite-led and party-controlled women's groups. New-style women's organizations began to appear in India in the mid-1970s in response to global influences and local issues. The old-style women's groups were led by select, elite families of the nationalist period. They passed resolutions, sent delegations to international conferences, and attempted to mobilize women voters. The new-style women's organizations, however, are nonpolitical, middle-class, militant, and led by young educated women who had become involved in the radical politics of the pre-emergency period. These newly mobilized women shifted their interest from politics to specific issues affecting women, especially dowry, rape, and violence against women. These new women's groups conducted a series of highly visible issue campaigns and were very successful in the 1980s in passing an array of new laws designed to protect women. These new laws included laws that focused on rape, dowry, domestic violence, prostitution, indecent representation of women in advertising, sati, and sex-determination tests of an unborn fetus. The very legislative success of India's women's organizations, however, tended to weaken the movement. Having achieved many of their legislative objectives, women's groups failed to sustain action to ensure implementation. Yet, while government appeared to respond to demands and enacted new laws and policies, government agencies took no effective action to implement most laws and little changed. Like the NGO movement, women's groups have responded to government inaction by attempting to form more broadly based coalitions of organizations capable of more sustained action to lobby government, monitor implementation, and influence decision making.

Among the most successful development organizations is the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), founded by Ela Bhatt in Ahmedabad in 1972, enabling thousands of poor women to support themselves and their families.[83] Various organizations, many sustained by international financial support, seek to involve rural women in

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[82]See Rehana Ghadially, ed., *Women in Indian Society: A Reader* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1988); Vimochana, "Dialogue, Politics of Organizing: Women's Groups and Other Social Movements," *Lokayan Bulletin,* 11(1) (1994), pp. 49–62; and Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution,* pp. 76–99.

[83]Ela R. Bhatt, *We Are Poor but So Many: The Story of Self-Employed Women in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

social and economic uplift.[84] Women's groups, however, suffer from declining zeal, a lack of unity, problems of group cohesion, leadership conflicts, and financial constraints.

The Environmental Movement

Women have also been at the forefront of "grassroots" environmental movements, such as the Chipko ("tree-hugging") movement to protest deforestation in a Himalayan hill district.[85] Their strategy, which captured national attention, was one of Gandhian resistance: They would hug the trees and lie down in the roads to stop tree-cutting operations.

Environmental groups in India have increased in number over the past two decades, but their influence is still limited.[86] Most are regional and specific in their concerns. Many formed as protests against particular projects, such as the successful movement to stop construction of the hydroelectric Silent Valley Project in Kerala or the more recent action against the ambitious Narmada Valley Project in central India. Environmental concern has been directed to water and air pollution—although in a poor nation the costs of emission controls and cleanup impose a staggering burden. Chemical hazards have also raised national alarm. In 1984, at Bhopal, a gas leak at the Union Carbide plant resulted in the death of at least 4,000 people and serious injury to some 200,000 others.[87] The most serious industrial accident anywhere in the world, the disaster spawned more than a dozen new groups, international protest, and continuing court cases involving unprecedented claims for recovery.

Civil Liberties Groups

In the 1980s, new organizations formed to defend the rights of prisoners subjected to police abuse or forced to languish in jails for years while

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[84]For a study of nongovernmental organizations for the uplift of rural women in Karnataka, see Vanita Viswanath, *NGOs and Women's Development in Rural India: A Comparative Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991). For an excellent study of SEWA see Patel, "The Pressure Group Role of Voluntary Associations."

[85]Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and Thomas Weber, *Hugging the Trees: The Story of the Chipko Movement* (Delhi: Viking, 1988).

[86]See Renu Khator, *Environment, Development and Politics in India* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991).

[87]*India Today,* "Bhopal: City of the Dead," 31 December 1984, pp. 4–25. For a broad examination of Bhopal and its policy consequences, see Sheila Jasanoff, ed., *Learning from Disaster.*

awaiting trials in courts that had forgotten their existence. Led by Supreme Court justices V. R. Krishna Iyer and P. N. Bhagwati, the movement sought to use judicial activism to expand the protection of fundamental rights through "social action litigation."[88] Attorneys established legal-aid societies for the poor, and civil liberties groups—the People's Union for Democratic Rights, People's Union for Civil Liberties, Citizens for Democracy, and others—organized to investigate and expose the abuse of human rights. Civil liberties groups have targeted the Punjab and Kashmir for special concern, reporting police and para-military excesses such as unjustified detention and torture. More broadly, they have protested various laws passed to strengthen the government's power to deal with terrorism as a threat to the liberty of all Indians. These groups have been especially active in the last decade, highlighting civil right abuses in Kashimr and atrocities in Gujarat.

Protest and Violence

Despite its democratic political order, India has been plagued by a remarkably high level of organized and unorganized political violence. While a great deal of violence in India is interpersonal, political violence has been initiated by the country's complex array of identity groups, interest-based demand groups, new social movements, and protest groups. Conflict emanating from India's religious, caste, tribal, and ethnic communities is both endemic to and a product of increased competition brought about by political, economic, and social change. Violence and direct action on the part of social movements, protest groups, and demand groups such as students, farmers, and the urban working class, in contrast, tend to result from a lack of responsiveness on the part of government decision makers. Unfortunately, the combined increase in the overall level of violence by groups in India has come at a time when the country's deteriorating political institutions have become less capable of managing that conflict.

Violence and protest in India take a variety of forms including insurgencies, rebellion, riots, civil disobedience, demonstrations, mass protest, and direct action. India, in fact, has added a whole new vocabulary to the lexicon of forms of protest, many based on Gandhian techniques of *satyagraha* ("truth force") and civil disobedience. The association of protest and mass action with Gandhi and the nationalist struggle and the fact that mass action has succeeded

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[88]Upendra Baxi, "Taking Suffering Seriously: Social Action Litigation in the Supreme Court of India," in Rajeev Dhavan et al, eds., *Judges and the Judicial Power* (London: Sweet & Maxwell/Bombay: Tripathi, 1985), pp. 288–315.

so frequently has given these tactics a certain degree of legitimacy. Forms of protest and direct action in India include the following:

■ *Hartal* is a general strike involving the cessation of all public activity.

■ *Bandh,* popularized by the left, is a strike in which confrontation is an integral part of the protest.

■ *Dharna* is a refusal to clear the area when ordered to do so. It is common to see protestors with flags, pickets, and placards in front of government offices as well as private companies. In a "sitting dharna," prominent persons—typically politicians—seat themselves before the building of the offending party. They sometimes dramatize their protest by a hunger strike. The threatened "fast unto death," used by Gandhi with such effectiveness, remains a potent weapon if the person is of sufficient prestige. In 1975 Indira Gandhi yielded to the demand for elections in Gujarat in the face of Morarji Desai's fast. Were he to have died, serious rioting would surely have posed a major threat to Mrs. Gandhi's government. As a form of political extortion, leading as it did to the Congress' electoral defeat, Desai's fast was one of the many ingredients in Mrs. Gandhi's decision months later to impose the emergency.

■ *Gherao* involves the physical encirclement of a managerial staff—usually that of a company or university—to secure "quick justice."

■ *Jail boro* involves mass violation of the law in order to inundate the jails and clog the courts.

■ *Rasta roko,* literally "block the road," involves the formation of a gridlock by protestors in order to disrupt traffic. Prosperous farmers demanding higher crop prices have blocked roads with their tractors, and striking university students have snarled traffic in Connaught Circus, the hub of New Delhi. A variation on the tactic is the *rail roko*, blocking the railways.

■ *Morcha,* a military term meaning battle formation, has been taken by the Akalis to describe their protest movement in the Punjab, and by V. P. Singh in his People's Movement, Jan Morcha.

On any given day there are hundreds of such protests (or *anandolan*) throughout India, most of which proceed peaceably, but each of which carries the potential for violence. The tempo of violence has increased yearly in India. Because the Indian government officially defines a riot as involving five or more people, the category, which

includes brawls, gives little indication of the intensity or seriousness of the dispute, and obviously the statistics do not record "official violence"—for example, police repression, police firings, and lathi charges—attacks with the long sticks used by Indian police as enforcement weapons. Hundreds of riots are recorded each year, with the widening perception that there is a breakdown of law and order.[89]

An even greater threat to Indian stability and security than protest groups is presented by the sharp increase over the last two decades in the number of insurgencies, communal riots, and caste conflicts. According to a report on violence submitted to Parliament in August 1998, India has faced an alarming decline in its security environment in recent years. Roughly half of the country's 535 districts, noted the report, faced some form of unrest as a result of communal violence, insurgency, left-wing extremism, and ethnic conflict. The situation was most acute in the state of Jammu and Kashmir where 10 of its 14 districts were effected. Other areas of concern included Assam and the northeast states of Nagaland and Manipur, which were faced by insurgency and ethnic conflict; Bihar, which was threatened by the rise of organized crime; Tamil Nadu, which was confronted by the activities of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a Sri Lankan Tamil guerrilla group; Gujarat, which witnessed the rise of Muslim fundamentalism and communal clashes; and the city of Delhi, which faced a sharp rise in antisocial elements. Although the situation in the Punjab has improved, the state remains quiet but sullen. While identity-based insurgencies, communal riots, and caste violence were on the rise, agrarian unrest, student agitations, and labor ferment were relatively static or on the decline. Maoist activity, however, has increased significantly.[90]

Among the most endemic and dangerous sources of violence in India has been the rising level of conflict between religious communities, especially Hindus and Muslims, referred to as communalism. Hindu-Muslim conflict had been the most dominant fault line in pre-independence India and had led to the partition of the subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Unfortunately, partition did

[89]Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., *India Under Pressure: Prospects for Political Stability* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 14–16; Michael T. Kaufman provides a brief glossary in "In India, There's a Protester to Suit Any Occasion," *New York Times,* 23 April 1981.

[90]See *Frontline* (Chinnai) August 14, 1998, p. 32; Bhabani Sen Gupta, *India: Problems of Governance* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996), pp. 272–330; Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Dept. of Internal Security. *States and Home, Annual Report 1995–96* (Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Dept. of Internal Security, 1996), pp. 6–8.

not end communalism in India. Beginning in the 1960s communal disturbances became part of the Indian landscape; they intensified in the 1970s and became rampant in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Initially, most communal riots were caused by the stream of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan. By the 1970s, however, opposition parties attempted to use communal riots against Indira Gandhi in an effort to weaken her position. Unsure of her continued Muslim support following the emergency, Indira Gandhi began to take advantage of growing pro-Hindu sentiments to woo their support. The result was a sharp increase in communal riots in the 1980s. The assassination of Indira Gandhi, the anti–Sikh riots of 1984, the *Shah Bono* case, the Mandal Commission, and the Babri Masjid incident combined to communalize mainstream politics and, as a result, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the worst communal carnage in postindependence India. Although the number of communal riots declined from 1992–93 to 2002, the country was once again traumatized by communal riots in the state of Gujarat in February 2002, which led to the death of some 2,000 Muslims. The communal issue remains a continuing threat to Indian stability.[91]

The major causes of communal riots in postindependence India include macrolevel factors, such as socioeconomic change, government policies, and political alliances based on caste and community; and microlevel factors, such as the proportion of Muslims in a region, a past history of disturbances, electoral politics, and a highly partisan police force.[92] Ashutosh Varshney, in his research on communal conflict, identifies the nature of civic life as the crucial factor in explaining why some cities in India remain communally peaceful while others are prone to violence. The key, he argues, is organized civic networks of association and whether social and civic ties cut across Hindus and Muslims, bringing them together rather than reinforcing their division.[93] Steven Wilkinson has carried the argument in a somewhat different direction by arguing that ethnic riots are a rational strategy employed by political elites to win elections. The response of state political elites to ethnic violence, he argues, is determined by the degree of political competition and the degree to which state elites rely on the support

[91]Asghar Ali Engineer, *Communal Riots After Independence: A Comprehensive Account* (Mumbai: Shipra Publications, 2004).

[92]Asghar Ali Engineer, *Communalism in India: A Historical and Empirical Study* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1995).

[93]See Ashotosh Varshey, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

of minority voters. Thus, although elections can ferment violence, competition and cleavage structures may also play a role in moderating such conflict.[94]

THE MANAGEMENT OF GROUP DEMANDS

The management of group demands in India's increasingly mobilized and politicized polity has become one of the most difficult challenges facing the country's political leadership and governmental institutions. The Government of India has employed three basic approaches to manage the demands of identity groups, interest groups, social movements, mass protests, rebellions, and insurgencies. The government has attempted to accommodate group demands through a process of negotiations; it has made laws to control their actions; and when necessary, it has repressed them. In the past, law and repression have been used far too often. In an era of group proliferation, competitive pluralism, and increased mobilization, the development of new mechanisms to enhance the process of negotiations and accommodation will become essential.

Accommodation of Demands

As wider sectors of Indian society have been politicized through the expansion, dispersion, and democratization of power, larger numbers of people have been drawn into the political system. In this process politics has become more meaningful to the mass electorate and potentially more responsive to its demands. As politics has become more vernacular, however, it has been decried by those suspicious of group pressure as pandering to narrow, special interests and the irrationalities of castism, communalism, and regionalism. Interest groups, as agents of political demands, are seen as disruptive of order and consensus.

In India, interest groups have been slow to develop, but although they now number in the thousands, most are disparate and weak. The political system has been unable to accommodate and channel this rapidly expanding participation and rising political consciousness. During the British period, individuals and groups commanding traditional sources of power exerted their influence primarily at the local administrative level. Those without power had little access to the administration, and from a position of powerlessness they regarded the government as an extractive force to be avoided whenever possible.

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[94]Steven I Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Most mass organizations developed from the activities of the nationalist movement, and even in the years since independence, most interest groups have been connected with political parties, more as agents of mobilization than of interest articulation. The development of autonomous interest groups is a product of the past two to three decades.

Most Indians continue have a low sense of political efficacy. In their opinion, government officials are generally distant, unresponsive, and corrupt. Government officials, on the other hand, regard interest-group activity with distrust. Rational policy formation, they argue, should be unaffected by their narrow demands. Consequently, group pressure in India has been directed toward influencing the administration and implementation of policy rather than toward influencing its formation. Its greatest success has been achieved in forestalling certain government actions and in modification, rather than initiation, of policy. It is at the state and local administrative levels that officials have been particularly responsive to such pressure, and it has been the landed interests that have been most adept in applying it; land–reform legislation may be quietly forgotten as development funds are channeled into the hands most capable of utilizing them, the landed middle peasantry. Those who have nothing are unlikely to reap the benefits of government action, for they lack the resources of immediate political capital. In the long run, however, once mobilized, they pose a major challenge.

In the name of rationality and the public interest, decision makers have often turned a deaf ear to the demands of interest groups. Because the government is unresponsive, groups resort to mass demonstrations, hartals, strikes, and civil disobedience to force government action. This, in turn, only confirms the official image that the groups are irresponsible and that such mass activity is against the national interest. The government does respond to such action, however; the political capital to which it has proved most sensitive is violence. Disaffected groups have used Gandhian techniques of civil disobedience against the Indian government. Based on a tradition of direct action, such acts are nevertheless officially viewed as an unfair and perverted use of satyagraha. Mass political activity has often been violent, but disorder seems vindicated by success. "Only when public order is endangered by a mass movement is the government willing to make a concession," Myron Weiner writes, "not because they consider the demand legitimate, but because they then recognize the strength of the group making the demand and its capacity for destructiveness. Thus, the government often alternates between unresponsiveness to the demands of large but peaceful groups and total concession to

groups that press their demands violently."[95] The capitulation of the government to the demands for states' reorganization only in the wake of widespread rioting and the reevaluation of official language policy only after prolonged agitation are classic examples of the efficacy of violence. That mass actions have succeeded so frequently has given them a certain legitimacy.

The process of liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and globalization, however, is beginning to expand the scope of private space in what had become the most controlled and regulated economy in the non-Communist world. The rapid growth of private sector business, trade, and commerce in the 1980s and 1990s, the emergence of private hospitals, universities, schools, and services of all kinds, and a shrinkage of India's formally hegemonic public sector are beginning to have a profound affect on group development in India. This expansion of private space has led to further proliferation of new secular interests and a gradual transformation of the Indian interest group system. These changes have begun to alter the Indian system of state-dominated pluralism to a more competitive form of pluralism.

The transformation of India's interest group system, however, will also require a major change in the attitude and behavior of the country's political and bureaucratic decision makers. As collective action becomes increasingly widespread, decision makers will need to become receptive to a more open process of consultation, develop a greater willingness to listen to outside advice, and become more proactive. India's major problem in the past has been the existence of too few well-organized interest groups, not too many. Since only a very small number of well-organized groups existed, they enjoyed a disproportionate voice in the system. Those groups that did not enjoy easy access felt compelled to take to the streets in order to have their case heard. Greater openness, more visible and formalized channels of access, and more frequent and continuous interaction between government and civil society would not only provide alternative channels of participation but also provide greater accountability and legitimacy to the system.

Legal Control of Demands

The Government of India possesses a formidable array of laws for the control of domestic unrest. Beyond the constitutional powers of the President to declare an emergency, discussed earlier, a number of ordinances have been promulgated by the various presidents under their

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[95] Weiner, p. 201.

emergency powers and subsequently enacted by Parliament into law. These instruments of law significantly enhance the power of the para-military forces and of the military in "aid to the civil."

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (1956, subsequently amended) empowers the central government to declare a state or dis-trict a "disturbed area." In areas where the declaration comes into force, Army and paramilitary commanders have the authority to arrest suspects, conduct searches, and use lethal force.

The National Security Act (1980) authorizes security forces to arrest and detain without warrant people suspected of undermining national security, public order, and essential economic services. Detainees can be imprisoned without trial for three months, with as many as three subsequent three-month extensions. Provisions for judi-cial review exist in order to minimize abuse, but the intent of the legis-lation is to give the armed forces a relatively free hand in dealing with agitators, rioters, and terrorists. This was made clear in June 1984, in the wake of the Army's entry into the Golden Temple, with the National Security (Second Amendment) Ordinance, which in effect permits security forces to override judicial objection to detention so long as the detainee is not held for a total period of more than one year. Many provisions of the National Security Act are identical to those of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act, which served as the principal instrument of arrest and detention during the 1975–77 emergency. In 1981 the Supreme Court upheld the National Security Act as constitutional, but warned the government that "care must be taken to restrict (its) application to as few situations as possible."

The Essential Services Maintenance Act (1981) identifies 16 "essential supplies and services," such as oil and rails, whose disruption would threaten the economy. ESMA empowers the government to prohibit strikes and lockouts in the crucial sectors and to replace strik-ing workers with Army troops. Strikers would be subject to arrest under provisions of the National Security Act.

The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (1967) empowers the government to ban any subversive organization, such as those advocat-ing secession. The Dal Khalsa and the National Council of Khalistan in the Punjab and various secessionist groups in the Northeast have been outlawed under the act.

The Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Ordinance, promul-gated in 1984 with special reference to the Punjab, provides for secret tribunals to try suspected terrorists and confers unprecedented powers of arrest and detention upon security forces. The ordinance, together with the second amendment to the National Security Act, drew the

editorial concern of India's major English-language newspapers, and the People's Union for Civil Liberties warned that the government's extraordinary powers can be used "against dissenters and for narrow political ends by the ruling party."[96]

In 1985, in the immediate wake of the terrorist bombings in New Delhi and its environs, Parliament passed the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA). The law, in addition to prescribing the death penalty for fatal terrorist actions, gives officials the power to tap telephones, censor mail, or raid any premises when authorities believe the people involved endanger the unity or sovereignty of the nation. As provided in the 1987 extension of the act, trials may be conducted by special courts in camera; and with the submission of certain kinds of evidence, the accused become presumed guilty unless they can prove themselves innocent. Incommunicado detention is permitted, and, in the Punjab, persons may be detained for up to two years without trial.[97] Although TADA was extended year after year, continued public protest finally forced its demise in 1995. The reprieve, however, did not last very long. In March 2002, in response to the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York and a terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001, the NDA passed the equally restrictive Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). The Act, however, was later repealed by the UPA government elected in 2004.

In addition to these ordinances, subsidiary legislation enables the central government to impose censorship, regulate travel, and enforce curfews in areas that are "disturbed." This stunning array of legislation and ordinance has given the military and paramilitary forces enhanced power in many affected areas of Assam, the Punjab, Kashmir, and other states. "For millions of Indians," Stephen Cohen writes, "the effective government is the local area or subarea commander."[98]

In 1988, as if the 18 special laws already passed in the previous four years to enhance the power of security forces in the Punjab and elsewhere were not enough, Parliament enacted the Fifty-ninth Amendment to the Constitution. It provided for the declaration of an emergency for a

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[96]People's Union for Civil Liberties, *Black Laws 1984* (Delhi, 1984), p. 2. Also see A. G. Noorani, "The Terrorist Ordinance," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 28 July 1984, p. 1, 188.

[97]*India Today,* 30 September 1987, p. 107.

[98]Stephen P. Cohen, "The Military and Indian Democracy," in Atul Kohli, ed., *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 128.

period of two years under conditions of "internal disturbance"[99] and empowered the central government to suspend Article 21 of the Constitution—India's "due process" clause, guaranteeing the fundamental right to life and personal liberty. Opposition party leaders have denounced each of these acts as a step toward reimposition of the 1975–77 emergency. Another national emergency is an unlikely prospect, but the government has armed itself with the legal instruments and police power to make such an extreme action unnecessary. Political stability cannot be purchased through repression, however, as the 1975–77 emergency itself bears witness.

Repression of Demands

In recent years, Indian newspaper articles and editorials have described an increasing breakdown of law and order. Press coverage of specific incidents of violence, however, tends to project a national image of widespread unrest that is not wholly true. Most of India's countryside and cities have a relatively low level of unrest and violence, but over the past two decades violence has markedly increased; although it remains localized, no region of the nation is wholly immune.

In much of the Hindi heartland—Bihar, major portions of Uttar Pradesh, and parts of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan—gang rule and *dacoity* (banditry) are on the rise. In this region of North India, hand-made guns and automatic weapons are widespread, and the level of violence—official and nonofficial—marks a drift toward anarchy.

Rival gangs of armed young toughs, typically with some education and a strong dose of Hindi film romance, operate with impunity in many districts, smaller towns, and industrial areas. Political parties use them to raise funds, to intimidate opponents, and to protect themselves against similar tactics by other groups. Often in connivance with police officials, they engage in various criminal activities and hold local areas under mafia-like control. In fact, the term mafia has come to be used in India most frequently in connection with the politically linked, gangster domination of the Dhanbad coalfields.

There has been a rise in reported dacoit activity in North India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh—not only in robbery but also in its use against assertive untouchables and political rivals. For centuries dacoity has been endemic in districts of southwestern Uttar Pradesh, but today the gangs are extending their influence throughout the state and they

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[99]In 1979, in a response to the abuses of the 1975–77 emergency, the Janata government passed the Forty-fourth Amendment, substituting the words "armed rebellion" for the more general "internal disturbance" in the emergency provisions of Article 352.

have established ties with police and politicians of all parties. Such ties among criminals, police, and politicians are not a wholly new phenomenon nor are they by any means distinctly Indian. As political scientist Rajni Kothari and others argue, however, criminals have now become politicians. Although it is surely an exaggeration to speak of the "criminalization of politics" in India, it is widely believed that many U.P. politicians, including ministers, have dacoit connections and that Bihar's mafia gangs are closely linked to state political leaders. In both states a number of legislative assembly members are reputed to have criminal records, and many have pending cases against them.[100]

The Police and Internal Security

The police in India are held in generally low esteem, and they, in turn, are demoralized, unreliable, and increasingly militant. In 1979 the report of the National Police Commission stated that "in the perception of the people, the egregious features of the police are—politically-oriented partisan performance of duties, brutality, corruption and inefficiency."[101] The 1980 police blinding of prisoners in Bhagalpur, Bihar and the jail deaths in Tamil Nadu were widely publicized cases of police brutality, but there is a widespread belief that the police are getting worse and that they can no longer maintain law and order. Indeed, they are often the perpetrators of violence. In communal riots in North India, the police are alleged to have entered the fray with unprovoked attacks upon Muslims.

In a survey of "The Image of Police in India" conducted for the Home Ministry, 77 percent of the people interviewed blamed the police for "protecting or shielding goondas or criminal elements in the country" and for such malpractices as "putting up false cases, nonregistration of complaints, use of third degree methods, highhandedness and illegal detentions at police stations." Survey respondents gave "political interference" as the principal cause of police malpractice.[102] Police officers are under constant pressure from politicians and

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[100]"The Underworld of Indian Politics," *Sunday* (Calcutta), 3–9 March 1985, pp. 14–31; *India Today,* "Bihar: Domain of the Dons," 31 January 1992, pp. 37–41; and *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 3 (March 1992), p. 22.

[101]*First Report of the National Police Commission* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1979), p. 7.

[102]The survey by the Bureau of Police Research and Development covered both urban and rural areas, and the people interviewed included political leaders, professionals, educators, traders, members of panchayats, and trade union representatives. Reported by Kuldip Nayar, "Police Find That Their Image Is Poor," *Sunday* (Calcutta), 30 May–5 June 1982, p. 7.

bureaucrats, with the threat of transfer used to secure compliance. Transfers are also used to open positions for caste and familial favoritism. Other factors contributing to low police morale are low pay, long hours, poor living conditions, and a shortage of labor and logistical support, although there is considerable variation in conditions from state to state.[103]

These conditions have generated police demands for improved pay, better working conditions, and unions to represent their grievances. The depth of discontent was first made clear in the 1973 mutiny of the Provincial Armed Constabulary in Uttar Pradesh, where nearly 100 police were shot to death by the Army. In the years since the mutiny, the military has been brought in on various occasions to control police or paramilitary unrest. In 1982, for example, the Maharashtra government's ban on the police union and arrest of its top leaders led to a strike by the 23,000 members of the Bombay constabulary. The government crackdown ignited serious rioting that was brought under control only by the deployment of Indian Army units in the city.

In controlling domestic unrest, the government has four layers of force to which it can turn:

1. the civil police (armed only with lathis, long sticks)
2. the provincial armed constabulary
3. the paramilitary forces
4. the Indian Army.

Under various names, the provincial armed constabularies are organized and paid for by the states and are the first to be called in if the civil police are unable to control disturbances. India has a police force of over one million officers.

Sixteen paramilitary units exist, with a combined force in 2003–04 of 1,089,700, housed in barracks and subject to military discipline. They fall under several ministries of the central government. The 167,400 member Central Reserve Police Force, the major riot-control force, assists state police whenever necessary. The Border Security Force (BSF) is the largest paramilitary unit with roughly 174,000 personnel. The BSF, along with the Assam Rifles (the oldest paramilitary force),

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[103]See David H. Bayley, "The Police and Political Order in India," *Asian Survey,* 23 (April 1983), pp. 484–96. Also see David H. Bayley, *The Police and Political Development in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); P. D. Sharma, *Police and Political Order in India* (New Delhi: Research, 1984); and N. S. Saksena, *Law and Order in India* (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1987).

the Indo–Tibetan Border Police, and the Ladakh Scouts, have as their primary mission the patrol of India's borders. Other paramilitary units include: the Defense Security Corps, which protects defense installations; the Central Industries Security Force, which guards public-sector industrial facilities; and the Railway Protection Force, which does just what its name suggests. The National Security Guards (NSG) is the newest paramilitary unit, formed in 1985, and is intended to be an elite, antiterrorist force. The NSG is also responsible for protecting leading political figures.[104]

Since 1967 paramilitary forces have been greatly expanded, both to enhance the coercive capacity of the government and to reduce the necessity of calling in regular Army units in "aid of the civil." Spending on paramilitary forces under the control of the Home Ministry reached Rs. 44 billion (U.S. $1.2 billion) in 1996.[105] With little regard to their primary mission, they have increasingly been called in to back up state police. The BSF, for example, has been used to quell disturbances far from border areas—such as when it was used to control communal disturbances and to put down the police riots in Bombay. However, paramilitary forces themselves have not been immune from indiscipline and unrest. They are often poorly trained and, like the civil police and provincial armed constabulary, suffer from low pay and poor working conditions.

The increasing centralization of decision making with respect to law and order and the extensive use of central government paramilitary forces have tended to "nationalize" local problems. By identifying the central government with such problems and resolutions, Mrs. Gandhi, in particular, weakened the buffers of the federal system that formerly had insulated local problems and had absorbed much of the blame for them.

The central government expanded paramilitary forces in part to insulate the Army from law-and-order functions. Given the unreliability of both the civil police and paramilitary forces, however, the Army has played an increasingly prominent role in controlling domestic unrest. The Army has long been involved in maintaining order in the Northeast, and more recently it has been deployed in combating terrorism in the Punjab and rebellion in Kashmir. The Army has been drawn increasingly into riot control, most notably to quell communal disturbances. In 1991,

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[104]See Kuldeep Mathur, "The State and the Use of Coercive Power in India," *Asian Survey,* 32 (April 1992), pp. 337–49; and *The Military Balance 1997–98* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997), pp. 155–56.

[105]*The Military Balance*, pp. 147.

the Army raised a new force, the Rashtriya (National) Rifles, specifically charged to deal with terrorism, rioting, and communal violence. In 2003–04, the new force had 40,000 members.

Once the Army enters "in aid of the civil," it assumes command over the otherwise uncoordinated police and paramilitary forces already on the scene. Although it has performed well, the Army has never been at ease with its role in controlling domestic unrest. When facing not a foreign enemy but fellow Indians, Army morale is sure to suffer, but officers also fear that frequent use of the Army in aid of the civil may diminish the respect in which it is held.

The use of the Army in controlling domestic unrest could well have wider political implications. Military officers could become convinced that civil authorities—specifically the politicians, for whom they have no great respect in any case—are unable to maintain law and order and that the Army should step in to take control of the government. At present, there is nothing to suggest that the military is prepared to intervene, or even that there is much sympathy among the officer corps for such a move, but growing domestic unrest and increasing reliance upon the military to control it could well invite greater military involvement in the governance of India.

THE PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL STABILITY

Predictions of national disintegration, the collapse of democracy, social chaos, and revolutionary violence have accompanied the processes of change in India from the time of independence. In the face of illiteracy; poverty; and the "fissiparous tendencies" of caste, religion, language, and region, there are many who have seen democracy as a system that India can ill afford. Cassandras—both Indian and foreign—have greeted each parliamentary election as inevitably its last. The 1975–77 emergency was widely mourned as the death of democracy. Some viewed it, no doubt, as proof apparent that democracy cannot work in India. The "restoration" of democracy in 1977, with the squabbling Janata government and the return of Indira Gandhi in 1980, witnessed heightened expectations, sharpened social conflict, and increasing political malaise. The assassinations of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and Rajiv Gandhi in 1991; turmoil in Assam, the Punjab, and Kashmir; and the political instability at the Center inherent in the minority governments formed since 1989 have brought new forecasts of doom for Indian democracy.

Dire predictions, if made often enough, may ultimately find ful-fillment. Yet India has survived its "dangerous decades" reasonably well, and its political institutions, perhaps somewhat the worse for wear, have demonstrated remarkable resilience. Of the many nations that have emerged from colonial rule since World War II, India is one of the few that has retained free elections and democratic institu-tions. India does face enormous problems, however. It is a nation under pressure, and its stability is by no means assured.

The prospect for stability in India lies in the balance between the maintenance of order and the satisfaction of basic demands for economic improvement and social justice. It is imperative that India maintain a steady—and, if at all possible, heightened—rate of economic growth and that it expand agricultural production to ensure continued self-suf-ficiency in food. It is imperative that there be greater equity in the dis-tribution of income and that the basic needs of India's poor be met. No government, however, can satisfy all of the people all of the time. Even in the best of times the satisfaction of the demands of any one group is likely to be opposed by another. All of this is made more difficult by the entry of new groups into the political arena, by heightened expectations, and by sharpened conflict in the competition for scarce resources.

India's political stability will be measured less by the challenges of social unrest than by the strength of its institutions. Weak political institutions are less the result than the cause of unrest. It is not the pace of change but rather the capacity of institutions to cope with change that is at issue.

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———, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000. A study of the sources of communal violence in terms of the structure of civic life.

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*Available in paperback edition.

6

The Congress System and Its Decline

SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1947, THE INDIAN PARTY system has been transformed from a stable, one-party dominant system to an increasingly fragmented, federalized, less stable, multiparty system. The reconfiguration of the party system has been the result of the dramatic decline of the once dominant Indian National Congress; the inability of the emerging Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to fill the void; and the proliferation of parties based on personality, community, region, caste, and tribe. Increasingly, political parties in India have come to reflect the social pluralism and cultural diversity of the country, and the powerful arithmetic of caste, community, language, tribe, and region lies behind party labels. The proliferation and fragmentation of parties, in turn, has led to the transformation of the party system and a new era of alliance politics and coalition governments.

The contribution of social and cultural heterogeneity to the fragmenting tendencies of the Indian parties and the party system, however, has been partly offset by institutional forces such as electoral rules and the distribution of authority across different levels of government. Like the United States, Indian elections are held under a single-member district plurality, or "first past the post," (FPTP) system of

voting, in which victory goes to the candidate who gets the most votes in a constituency. Although this system can result in a large representational gap between an electorally strong but highly fragmented opposition and a nationally organized party or coalition of parties, it is more likely to result in legislative majorities and stable government. Thus, although the large representational gap created by the "first past the post" system has led to demands for the adoption of some form of proportional representation, the existing system of plurality-voting has helped to offset the fragmenting tendencies of Indian parties by encouraging coalition formation and by forcing parties to transcend ideological, caste, community, tribal, regional, and class interests. The adoption of federalism has also had an impact on the dynamics and stability of the party system by fostering the federalization of parties and the party system.[1]

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

The origins of political parties and the party system in India can be traced back to the British colonial era and the emergence of Indian nationalism in the late 19th century. Despite its umbrella character, the Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885 and acted as the vanguard of the nationalist movement, was never completely successful in encompassing all of India's diversity within its ranks. Social and political forces based on ideology, caste, community, tribe, and region came to flourish either as organized factions within the Congress movement or as autonomous political parties outside the Congress fold. The combined legacy of intraparty and interparty competition during the colonial period helped to shape the evolution of political parties and the party system into the postindependence era.[2]

Although the Indian National Congress emerged as the overwhelmingly dominant party in India following independence, the

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[1]Pradeep Chibber and Ken Kollman, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britian, India, and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[2]Subrata K. Mitra, *The Puzzle of India's Governance: Culture, Context and Comparative Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006).

new republic also saw the development of an electorally strong but highly fragmented group of opposition parties. Most of these parties had their roots in the preindependence period, reflected the ideological and cultural diversity of the country, and mirrored the cleavages that existed within the Congress itself. Neither a single party nor an alliance of parties, however, came forth to challenge Congress hegemony.

Since independence, the Indian party system has evolved through two distinct phases from a period of one-party dominance from 1947 to 1989 to an era of fragmented, multiparty, coalition politics after 1989. During the era of one-party dominance, India was ruled by the Congress Party, a centrist, rainbow coalition of diverse political and social groups that had been mobilized during the freedom struggle under the banner of Indian nationalism. Congress supremacy during these four decades was challenged only once in 1977 when the party suffered a stunning defeat at the hands of the Janata Party, a newly formed coalition of non-Communist opposition parties that had coalesced in response to the declaration of emergency from 1975 to 1977 and Indira Gandhi's authoritarian, anti-democratic rule. Having restored India's democratic order, however, the Janata Party disintegrated into its constituent elements within two years. The Janata Party experiment and its failure to forge a coherent, national, centrist alternative to the Congress led to the restoration the Congress dominance for almost another decade from 1980 to 1989, and India's fragmented opposition returned to its previous pattern of splits, mergers, and shifting alliances.

The defeat of the Congress Party in the elections of 1989 signaled a major break with the past and a significant turning point in the development of the Indian party system. Four decades of economic and social change had begun to erode traditional patterns of social stratification in India; repeated popular elections based on mass franchise helped to activate the aspirations and assertiveness of more and more communities; and new political forces emerged to challenge Congress hegemony. In the wake of these changes the Indian party system underwent a major reconfiguration, and the underlying political consensus that had dominated Indian political rhetoric for over four decades was challenged by the emergence of a new political agenda. The rhetoric of centralized planning, socialism, secularism, social justice, and non-alignment was challenged by a new post–Cold War global agenda based on market forces, Mandal (caste), and Mandir (religion). The period following the 1989 Lok Sabha elections saw an end to Congress supremacy; a growing federalization of parties

and the party system; a new era of hung parliaments and multiparty coalition governments; the rapid rise of the BJP and Hindu nationalism; and failed efforts at forging a coherent, national, centrist alternative to the Congress.

Unlike 1977, the defeat of the Congress Party in the 1989 elections came at the hands of a loose, unstable electoral alliance of opposition parties in which no single party was able to win a majority. The National Front government formed by these parties lasted only 18 months, and new elections had to be held in the summer of 1991. In the midst of the 1991 election campaign Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Party, was struck down by an assassin. Under the new leadership of P. V. Narasimha Rao the Congress attracted a last minute wave of sympathy votes that enabled it to win enough seats to form a minority government. Despite its many problems, a combination of by-election victories and support from a number of small regional parties enabled the Rao government to serve a full term of five years.

The 1996 Lok Sabha elections saw the Congress Party suffer the worst defeat in its history; the emergence of the BJP as the largest single party in the national legislature; and another hung parliament. Although the BJP was asked to form a government, its perceived communalist ideology and pariah status made it impossible to attract coalition partners. Isolated and unable to muster a majority, the BJP government collapsed after 13 days. Following a period of intense negotiations, a 14-party, left-of-center coalition dominated by regional parties formed a United Front government. The coalition, however, collapsed within 18 months.

Although the 1998 elections produced another fragmented mandate and a hung parliament, the Bharatiya Janata Party succeeded in breaking out of its isolation and cobbled together a 14-party alliance of regional parties to form the first Hindu nationalist led government in Indian history. Due to the size and internal instability of the coalition, however, the BJP-led coalition government survived for only 13 months and India was forced to go to the polls for the third time in three years in April 1999. Unlike 1996, BJP formed a pre-election coalition of some 24 diverse regional parties called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) that fought the elections on the basis of a common minimum program. The NDA won an absolute majority of seats in parliament and became the first non-Congress coalition government in postindependence India to survive for a full five-year term. The NDA, however, went down to a surprising defeat in the 2004 elections at the hands of a broadly based coalition led by the Congress Party.

In short, Indian political parties and the party system have undergone a major transformation since 1947 and are still in a process of evolution and change. The most dramatic developments have been the end of Congress Party dominance, the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP, the proliferation of caste and regional parties, a federalization of the party system, and a new era of multiparty coalition governments. Personality, ideology, program, and base of support have come to divide and fragment parties and have frustrated attempts to forge a stable national coalition. These changes in the development on Indian political parties have in turn altered the nature of the party system. The Indian party system has evolved from one-party dominance, to multi-party United Fronts, to the possible emergence of bi-nodal coalition system centered on the Congress Party and the BJP.[3] The explosion in the number of and electoral support for regional parties in the 1990s has federalized the party system and has begun to reshape the Indian federalism. In the absence of some unifying event or shock, such as the 1975–77 emergency, Indian parties will continue to pursue a pattern of coalition, alliance, and united front politics, while simultaneously trying to expand their own base of support.

THE CHANGING TYPOLOGY OF INDIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

As seen in Table 6.1, postindependence Indian political parties claiming national recognition were grouped primarily on the basis of ideology along a right-left continuum. This classification was based primarily on the party's economic program but also included the party's position on what Indians refer to as the "communal issue" (the relationship between religion and politics). Table 6.1 shows that except for a brief period from 1977 to 1979, the left-of-center Congress Party totally dominated Indian politics from 1947 to 1989. The reconfiguration of the party system in the post-1989 period led to the decline of ideology as a major determinant of status, which was replaced by caste, religion, and region in an increasingly federalized party system.

Although the Indian National Congress emerged as the dominant party in India in 1947, a large number of opposition parties also

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[3]Ajay K. Mehra, "Historical Development of The Party Systems in India" and Balveer Arora, "Federalization of India's Party System" in Ajay K. Mehra, D. D. Khanna, and Gert W. Kueck, *Political Parties and Party Systems* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 49–82, 83–99.

T A B L E 6.1 Indian Political Tendencies, 1952–98

	Percentage Vote for Parties in Lok Sabha Elections							
	Right		Center			Left		Others	
Year	Jana Sangh, Swatantra, Bharatiya Janata Party	Janata Party	Congress Party	Janata (S), Lok Dal/ DMKP, Janata Dal Parties	Socialist Party	Communist Party	Regional and Other Parties	Independents
1952	3	-	45	-	16	3	16	16
1957	6	-	48	-	11	9	8	19
1962	15	-	46	-	13	10	8	11
1967	19	-	41	-	11	9	6	14
1971	21	-	44	-	4	10	13	9
1977	-	45	35	-	-	7	7	6
1980	-	19	43	9	-	9	14	6
1984	7	7*	48	6	-	9	15	8
1989	11	-	40	18	-	9	17	5
1991	21	-	38	15	-	9	12	5
1996	20	-	29	8	-	8	30	3
1998	25	-	26	3	-	7	37	2

Congress   = Dominant Congress Party in each election, e.g., 1971 and 1977, Congress (R); 1980 to 1991, Congress (I)
Social Left   = Kidan Mazdoor Praja Party, Praja Socialist Party, Socialist Party, Samyukta Socialist Party, Republican Party
Communist Left   = Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist)
Janata Dal (1989) = Janata Party, Lok Dal (DMKP), Jan Morcha, Congress (S)
Janata Dal (1991) = Janata Dal and Samajvadi Janata Party
Right   = Jana Sangh, Swatantra, Bharatiya Janata Party
Regional and Other = All other parties
Independents   = All who contested as such

*Includes Congress (S)

SOURCE: The table draws upon a study by Richard Sisson and William Vanderbok, "Mapping the Indian Electorate: Trends in Party Support in Seven National Elections," *Asian Survey*, 13 (October 1983), p. 1,142; Richard Sisson, "Indian in 1989: A Year of Elections in a Culture of Change," *Asian Survey*, 30 (February 1990), pp. 111–25; Walter K. Andersen, "India's 1999 Elections: The Uncertain Verdict," *Asian Survey*, 31 (October 1991), pp. 976–89; David Butler, "Predictability of Indian Election Results" in Subrata Kumar Mitra and James Chiriyankandath, eds., *Electoral Politics in India: A Changing Landscape* (New Delhi: Segment, 1992), pp. 264–66; and Arun Kumar/Press Trust of India, *The Tenth Round: Study of Indian Elections 1991* (Calcutta: Rupo 1991), pp. 131–32. Sources vary slightly on election returns.

emerged in postindependence India claiming national status. Most of these parties had their origins in the preindependence period, reflected the ideological divisions that had developed during the nationalist era, and paralleled the factional mosaic within the Congress itself, giving rise to what Rajni Kothari characterized as the "Congress system."[4] The most prominent ideologies mirrored in the Indian party system were Marxism, socialism, liberalism, Gandhianism, regionalism, and communalism.

On the left of the political spectrum, separate communist and socialist parties emerged. The Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded in the 1920s and adopted a strategy of a united front with the Congress Party. Its members joined the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), a party that existed as a separate organization within the Congress, in the hope of capturing the nationalist movement from within. Although the Communists were expelled in 1939, the CSP remained as a distinct entity within the Congress organization. Following independence, CSP withdrew from Congress, dropped the Congress name, and later joined with a group of Gandhian dissidents to form the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). In this and in various other incarnations, the socialists in the 1950s were substantially weakened when the Congress itself declared its objectives to be the creation of a socialist pattern of society. The parties of the non–communist left have been plagued by endemic factionalism and splits and have disintegrated into personality-, caste-, and regionally based parties. While the communist left, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) continued to claim national status, the movement split in 1964 and remains a small, divided regionally based block that has been unable to break out of its traditional stronghold in the states of West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura.

On the right of the political spectrum, the forces of Indian conservatism became divided on the basis of communal versus noncommunal loyalties. The first major political party to develop to the right of the Congress was the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (or, more commonly, Jana Sangh), founded in 1951 and drawing its inspiration from the Hindu communal orientation of the preindependence

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[4]The party system in India has been characterized in this way by Rajni Kothari, in "The Congress 'System' in India," *Party System and Election Studies, Occasional Papers of the Centre for Developing Societies,* No. 1 (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1967), pp. 1–18; by W. H. Morris-Jones, in "Parliament and Dominant Party: Indian Experience," *Parliamentary Affairs,* 17 (Summer 1964), pp. 296–307; and by Gopal Krishna, in "One Party Dominance—Developments and Trends," *Party System and Election Studies,* pp. 19–98.

Hindu Mahasabha, while drawing its organizational strength from the paramilitary Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Indian conservatism did not attempt to organize on a non-communal basis until 1959. Alarmed at the growing level of socialist rhetoric in the Congress, a combination of free enterprise, liberal businessmen, former princes, and owners of medium-sized land holdings came together to form the Swatantra Party, the first party in India to openly challenge centralized planning, socialism, government control of the economy, and the development consensus evolved by Nehru. The party survived until 1974, when it merged with the forerunner of the Bharatiya Lok Dal, a North Indian peasant party.

Although the Communist, Socialist, Jana Sangh, and Swatantra parties enjoyed limited electoral success until 1967, they served as key forces of pressure on their sympathizers within the Congress Party during the period of one-party dominance. Strengthened by Congress defections from 1967 onward, these opposition parties came to serve as building blocks for the creation of a series of alliances, coalitions, and united fronts that were ultimately successful in challenging Congress hegemony.

The vulnerability of the Congress Party to united fronts and to defection was not fully recognized until the late 1960s. Success for the long frustrated and splintered opposition first came at the state level in 1967 when broadly based multiparty coalition governments ended Congress control over half the states in India. Loss of Congress hegemony in the states was followed by a wave of local-level defections in 1967, the historic split in the Congress in 1969, and a second round of defections that followed the lifting of the emergency in 1977. The defections of 1977 were the result of Indira Gandhi's oppressive policies followed during the period of emergency rule from 1975 to 1977. Congress defectors formed a number of new parties: the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), the Congress (O), and the Congress for Democracy (CFD). These Congress fragments united with the Socialists and the Jana Sangh in 1977 to form the Janata Party, a national, centrist alternative to the Congress that brought a temporary end to 30 years of Congress rule.

The unity achieved in repudiation of the emergency and electoral challenge to the Congress in 1977 was soon undermined by internecine struggle. Having accomplished its primary objective of restoring democracy to India, the Janata Party disintegrated into its constituent elements. Although the party had united in theory, each of its constituent parties had retained its own organizational structure, and when differences arose over leadership, personality, economic policy, and

T A B L E 6.2   Federalization of the Party System 1989–2004

	Right	**Center**			**Left**	**Independents, Regional and Others**
Year	**Jana Sangh, Swatantra, Bharatiya Jananta Party**	**Congress Party**	**National Two Party Vote**	**Communist Party**	**Regional Party**	**Inde- pen- dents**
1989	11	40	-	9	35	5
1991	21	38	59	9	27	5
1996	20	29	49	8	38	3
1998	25	26	51	7	40	2
1999	24	28	52	8	37	3
2004	22	26	49	8	39	4

Percentage Vote for Parties in Lok Sabha Elections appears as a spanning subtitle above the header.

political objectives, the Janata Party disintegrated. The disintegration of the Janata Party led to a renewal of opposition fragmentation; unsuccessful efforts at realignment; the proliferation of parties based on caste, community, and tribe; and an increasing federalization of the party system.

The collapse of the Janata experiment in 1979 led to the restoration of Congress dominance for almost another decade. Unlike 1977, however, the defeat of the Congress in the 1989 elections brought an end to Congress dominance, a reconfiguration on the party system, the gradual demise of ideology as a significant force in Indian politics, and the emergence of a new set of issues that challenged the Nehruvian consensus as the dominant political discourse in India. The new issues that have come to dominate Indian politics focus on the role of markets, globalization, Mandal (caste), and Mandir (religion).

The decline of ideology, the proliferation of parties, the end of one–party dominance, and the disintegration of older parties claiming national status have led to a reconfiguration and federalization of the party system since 1989 (Table 6.2). As a result, analysts have come to rely on a typology originally developed by the Indian Election Commission as a way of classifying Indian parties. Under Election Commission rules, all political parties in the country are required to register; are granted official recognition on a state-by-state basis; and

are grouped into three broad categories: recognized state parties, recognized national parties, and Registered (Unrecognized) parties. A recognized state party is one which has won at least four percent of the parliamentary seats in a state or three percent of state assembly seats and has received at least six percent of the popular vote in the state. A recognized national party is a state party that has been recognized in four or more states. All other parties are listed by the Commission as Registered (Unrecognized) Parties. In the 2004 parliamentary elections there were 45 recognized state parties, 6 recognized national parties, and 702 Registered (Unrecognized) parties. The total number of state, national, and Registered (Unrecognized) parties has grown from 36 in 1980 to 753 in 2004.

The explosive growth of political parties in India, some critics have argued, has made the Election Commission's typology increasingly outdated and has led to attempts to develop alternative typologies. Douglas Verney, for example, has argued that only two parties—Congress (I) and the BJP—really qualify as national parties, and even these parties remain extremely weak in some parts of the country. All other parties in India, he insists, are in fact state parties and can be divided into five groups. The first group is composed of the residual core of the communist left that is currently allied with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM). The electoral support for these parties has remained relatively static at about eight percent of the popular vote and is largely confined to West Bengal, Tripura, and Kerala. Despite continuing efforts, the communist left has been unable to expand much beyond these traditional areas of strength.

A second group of state parties is composed of the large number of ephemeral and transitional parties that tend to disappear after one or two elections. Of the 338 political parties that have contested elections from 1952 to 1991, notes Verney, only 49 have fought in more than two elections. Since 1998, these ephemeral and transitional parties have continued to proliferate and have come to play an important role in the formation of coalition governments

A third group of parties are those that are based on group appeals to religion, caste, or tribe. Most of these parties are found only in a single state. They include parties like the tribal-based Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Jharkhand; the Shiromani Akali Dal, a Sikh party in the Punjab; and the caste-based Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar.

A fourth group consists of parties that focus on ethnic and regional identities such as the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) of Andhra and various Tamil nationalist parties in the Tamil Nadu. The fifth type is represented by potential national parties like the Bahujan Samaj

Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) that cater to the Dalit and OBC communities and are present throughout most of the country.

The increasing diversity and fragmentation of the India party system, Verney argues, requires a scrapping of the existing typology used by the Indian Election Commission. Political parties in India, he suggests, should be classified as either national parties or federal parties. A national party would need to operate in at least one-half of all constituencies in the country, receive at least five percent of the popular vote, and win at least five percent of the seats. All other parties would be designated federal parties. Verney admits, however, that reform of the present system used by the Election Commission will be very difficult.[5]

Regardless of their classification, each of India's political parties has developed its own history, organization, program, and base of support. Each party also faces its own set of internal problems that continue to threaten its internal unity and prevent realignment into a national political force.

THE CONGRESS PARTY

Historically, the largest, most successful, and most durable political party in India has been the centrist Congress Party. Although the party as it exists today traces its history back to the Indian National Congress—which was founded in 1885 and led the fight for independence—repeated splits, fragmentation, organizational weakness, and personalization of power have made it a very different entity.[6] The postindependence development of the Congress can be divided into several periods. The first, from 1947 to 1967, was a period of one-party dominance based on the Congress "system." The second, from 1967 to 1977, witnessed the breakdown of the Congress system, a

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[5]Douglas V. Verney, "How Has the Proliferation of Parties Affected the Indian Federation: A Comparative Approach," in Zoya Hasan, E. Sridharan, and R. Sudarshan, eds., *India's Living Constitution* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), pp. 134–58.

[6]The Congress centenary, celebrated in 1985, was the occasion for the publication of a number of books. See, among others, Paul R. Brass and Francis Robinson, eds., *The Indian National Congress and Indian Society, 1885–1985: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Dominance* (Delhi: Chanakya, 1987); Ram Joshi and R. K. Hebsur, eds., *Congress in Indian Politics: A Centenary Perspective* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1987); and the official All-India Congress Committee (I), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress (1885–1985),* 5 vols. (New Delhi: Vikas, 1985).

split in the party, a personalization of power, and the temporary eclipse of Congress dominance. The third period, from 1977 to 1991, can best be characterized as the dynastic era of "Indira and Sons," which saw the rapid rise and fall of Sanjay Gandhi, the assassinations of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, and the end of Congress dominance. The fourth phase lasted from May 1991 to April 1998 and marked the temporary eclipse of dynastic rule and a desperate search for a new leadership and a new identity. A fifth phase began in April 1998 with the election of Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv's Italian-born widow, as Congress President, marking the return of the Nehru–Gandhi dynasty. The restoration of the dynasty was reinforced by Sonia's reelection as Congress President in 2000; the entry of Rahul, her son, and Priyanka, her daughter, into active politics; and the return of the Congress to power under Sonia Gandhi's leadership in the 2004 elections as head of a multiparty coalition government after almost a decade in opposition.

The Congress System of One-Party Dominance, 1947–67

The Indian National Congress, from its founding until independence in 1947, was the major force of nationalism in South Asia. With swaraj, as the movement was transformed into a political party, the Congress organization reached from New Delhi throughout India into each state and district. For three decades the Congress was the only genuinely all-India party, not merely in terms of its geographic distribution but in terms of its capacity to appeal to virtually all sections of society. By almost any variable—social, economic, demographic—the base of Congress support was the most heterogeneous and differentiated of any political party in India.

From the time of independence until 1967, the critical arena of political competition was the Congress "system" of one-party dominance. Although a single party of consensus occupied a dominant, central position, the system was uniquely competitive. In this system the dominant Congress Party, itself factionally divided, was both sensitive and responsive to the margin of pressure; the opposition did not constitute an alternative to the ruling party but functioned from the periphery in the form of parties of pressure. In such a system the role of the opposition parties, writes Rajni Kothari,

> is to constantly pressurize, criticize, censure and influence it by influencing opinion and interests inside the margin and,

above all, exert a latent threat that if the ruling group strays away too far from the balance of effective public opinion, and if the factional system within it is not mobilized to restore the balance, it will be displaced from power by the opposition groups.[7]

The one-party dominance system had two prominent characteristics. "There is plurality within the dominant party which makes it more representative, provides flexibility, and sustains internal competition. At the same time, it is prepared to absorb groups and movements from outside the party and thus prevent other parties from gaining strength."[8] The breakdown of the Congress "system," therefore, was rooted in its own internal contradictions.

The Factional Character of the Congress   Within the Congress in the years of dominance, factions interacted in "a continuous process of pressure, adjustment and accommodation" to provide a built-in opposition.[9] The party retained the character of the nationalist movement in seeking to balance and accommodate social and ideological diversity within an all-embracing, representative structure. During the struggle for independence, the Congress Party, as the vehicle of the nationalist movement, brought together an eclectic body of individuals and groups in united opposition to the British Raj. Claiming sole legitimacy, the Congress sought to resolve or avoid internal conflict, balance interests, and blur ideological distinctions in its search for consensus. Within its own ranks, however, were the roots of potential opposition. Most opposition parties in India emerged from beneath the Congress umbrella, but each left behind an ideologically congruent and sympathetic faction that provided it with continued influence within the dominant party.

The responsiveness of the Congress to these pressures was revealed in the contradictions of its programs and practices. The Congress sustained itself by undermining the opposition, taking over their programs, conceding basic issues, and co-opting their leadership. At the national level, the Congress stole the thunder of the left through its 1955 resolution in support of a socialist pattern of society. In the states the Congress became the voice of regionalism in order to undercut the growth of separatism. At the local level, the party relaxed its policy

[7]Kothari, "Congress 'System,'" p. 3.

[8]Ibid., p. 6

[9]Rajni Kothari, "Party System," *Economic Weekly,* 3 June 1961, p. 849.

of land reform to keep the support of landlords anchored in the dominant castes and communities of the area, while at the same time repeatedly denounced casteism as a reversion to a tribal mentality.

In consolidating its power after independence, the Congress sought to achieve a national consensus through the accommodation and absorption of all dominant social elements, including those that had kept aloof from the nationalist movement. Traditional caste and village leaders, landlords, and business people made their way into the Congress.

> In its effort to win, Congress adapts itself to the local power structure. It recruits from among those who have local power and influence. . . . The result is a political system with considerable tension between a government concerned with modernizing the society and economy and a party seeking to adapt itself to the local environment in order to win elections.[10]

With the resources of government power and patronage, the Congress attracted careerists who sought to gain support by appealing to the parochial loyalties of language, caste, and community. "The composite character of the party was preserved," writes Gopal Krishna, "indeed made more heterogeneous by promiscuous accommodation of divergent elements, whose commitments to the new consensus created around the objectives of economic development, socialism and democracy remained superficial."[11] Paul R. Brass concurs: The Congress Party chose "to make adjustments and accommodations, to interact with rather than transform the traditional order. In India modernization is not a one-way process; political institutions modernize the society while the society traditionalizes institutions."[12]

As the party penetrated society, it was influenced by it. Political mobilization served to stimulate a new consciousness and solidarity. As a channel of communication and integration providing effective vertical linkage, the party drew increasing numbers into political participation. In a capillary effect, they infused the party with a new leadership that was regional in the base of its support and more traditional in the idiom of its political behavior. Political consciousness was

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[10]Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 15.

[11]Krishna, "One Party Dominance," p. 29.

[12]Paul R. Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 2.

activated faster than the integrative process, however, and as a result group identity was often emphasized at the expense of the national community. As the new electorate, caste-conscious and parochial in orientation, was drawn into a more participant political life, the Congress and the opposition parties sought to win their support through the tactics of the American political machine—patronage, favors, promises, and bargains. As the electorate was politicized, the parties were traditionalized. The parties became "mediating agencies between the largely traditional and politically diffuse electorate and the modern state system with its emphasis on citizenship, purposive direction of public policy and political integration."[13]

Although all parties served to induct the new citizens into the political culture, the Congress, as the dominant party, was the critical channel of linkage between the elite and the masses. Mahatma Gandhi had attempted to bring the Congress directly to the masses, but it was the development of the party organization, with its roots in tradition, that consolidated the Congress and made politics both comprehensible and meaningful to Indian peasants. In the process, however, the Congress became an advocate of much that it had opposed, encouraging both sectionalism and integration, preaching socialism, and sustaining the status quo.

Brass, in his study of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, describes the internal life of the party during this period in terms of factional conflict. The conflict is not ideological but personal; it is characterized by shifting political coalitions: "Alliances develop and splits and defections occur wholly because of the mutual convenience and temporarily shared power-political interests of the group leaders." The groups are "loose coalitions of local, district faction leaders, tied together at the state level partly by personal bonds of friendship, partly by caste loyalties, and most of all by political interest."[14] Although there seem to be no persistent conflicts, Brass argues, there is in each faction a relatively solid inner core, bound together in personal loyalty to the leader and divided from other factions by deep personal enmities. Factional conflict is rooted at the district level, and factional systems are largely autonomous, arising out of conditions and personalities peculiar to the district. This served to compartmentalize conflict, to quarantine discontent, and to make discontent more manageable.

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[13]Krishna, "One Party Dominance," p. 32.

[14]Brass, *Factional Politics*, pp. 54–55.

Factionalism in the party was closely related to factionalism in the villages, since traditional village factions increasingly sought to ally themselves with a party group. The factional character of the Congress served to accommodate local conflict and to internalize it. If the Congress were unable to tolerate factions, opposition parties would secure the support of one of the two factions in each village—as in certain regions they were already beginning to do. Highly institutionalized, the factional system within the Congress, until 1967, was able "to sustain popular support in the midst of intense intra-party conflict."[15]

Although factionalism often led to paralysis at the level of local government, it also performed an integrative function. The faction, as a vertical structure of power, cut across caste and class divisions and was based on a combination of other traditional loyalties and individual interests. "All faction leaders seek cross-caste alliances, for it is political power they desire and not merely the advancement of the claims of their own communities."[16] Factional conflict also broadened the base of participation within the party as each faction competed for wider group support. By drawing in new caste and religious groups, for example, factions politicized them in secular terms.[17]

Factionalism, however, may also lead to a form of immobilism, as each faction holds the other in check. This characteristic of the Congress meant that the chief opposition to the government frequently came from within the Congress itself. Conflict between the governmental and organizational wings of the party virtually constituted a two-party system, but one hardly designed for coherent and effective policy. With minimum response to the problems of economic inequality and social injustice, the Congress system was governed by conflict avoidance and the politics of patronage.

Federalizing the Congress System   In theory the Congress was a highly centralized party, but in the years of one-party dominance it became increasingly federalized in practice. During the struggle for independence, the Congress organization was structured as a parallel government, extending down to the village level. Except for the fact that Congress provincial units were organized along linguistic lines, this structure corresponded to administrative boundaries, such as that of the district, not to electoral constituencies. After

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[15]Weiner, *Party Building,* pp. 159–60.

[16]Brass, *Factional Politics,* p. 236.

[17]Ibid., p. 242.

PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS	Elected by all the delegates for a two-year term
WORKING COMMITTEE	Congress president and twenty members: seven elected by the All-India Congress Committee and thirteen appointed by the president
ALL-INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE	One-eighth of the delegates of each province elected by the delegates of that province
ANNUAL CONGRESS SESSION	President, former presidents, and all delegates (all members of the Pradesh Congress Committees are delegates)

F I G U R E   6.1   The National Decision-Making Structure of the Congress

SOURCE: Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. xxii.

independence the system was retained, with parallel party and govern-
ment structure from top to bottom. In each state, the locus of Con-
gress power was the Pradesh Congress Committee. At the apex of
the national structure, shown in Figure 6.1, was the Working Com-
mittee and the party president.[18]

The first few years after independence were marked by conflict
between the party and the government. The organization attempted

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[18]For specifics of Congress organization, see Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party of
India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968).

to assert its supremacy, but the political center of gravity had shifted from party to government. In 1951 Nehru was elected Congress President, thus bringing the party and government under the control of a single leader. His emergence as undisputed leader of the Congress "confirmed the pre-eminent role of the Prime Minister...."[19] Nehru held the position of Party President for only three years, but he ensured thereafter the subordination of the organization.

Under Nehru, the Working Committee was brought under the dominance of the parliamentary wing, the most powerful chief ministers and important Central Cabinet ministers forming the core of its membership. It

> came to play an important role in providing policy leadership to the party organization, in coordinating party-government relations, and in accommodating the conflicting demands of Congress leaders representing the broadening base of the party. The Working Committee became the sounding board by which the Prime Minister could test the acceptability of new policies as well as an important feedback mechanism by which to assess the reactions of party and state leaders.[20]

Nehru sought to use the Working Committee for the direction of Congress state ministries. The Committee became the agent of arbitration, conciliation, and mediation in an effort to achieve a new national consensus on the Congress economic program. Divergent factions were drawn under the Congress umbrella through persuasion, reconciliation, and accommodation. In the process, however, as power devolved to leaders at the state level, the party confronted the dangers of bossism, entrenchment, and indiscipline.

While the Congress at the national level was made subordinate to the government, the lower levels of the party organization were gradually captured by a new generation of politicians. These men were brokers who, in understanding both traditional society and machine techniques, provided the links between the villages and the modern political system. These new "bosses" were all organization men who, with the party machinery in their hands, took control of their state governments as chief ministers and came to wield considerable power at the national level. As the Nehru era

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[19]Ibid., p. 53.

[20]Ibid., p. 307.

drew to a close, these state-level party bosses informally organized as "the Syndicate" under the leadership of K. Kamaraj, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and the President of the Congress. Upon Nehru's death on May 27, 1964, a united Syndicate was able to almost immediately select Lal Bahadur Shastri as Nehru's successor.[21] The succession process served to reveal the shift in political gravity toward the states.[22]

In January 1966, however, Lal Bahadur Shastri died of a sudden heart attack. Faced with a second succession in less than two years, the Syndicate lost its cohesion.[23] Although Kamaraj sought to weld a consensus behind Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, his efforts were thwarted when Morarji Desai, a senior Cabinet minister, refused to step aside as he had done in 1964 and insisted on an open contest. In the first contested election within the Congress for the Prime Ministership since 1947 Indira Gandhi overwhelmed Desai by a vote of 355 to 169. While the successions revealed the capacity of the Congress to absorb conflict, it also exposed deep division within the party.

The post Nehru succession process revealed the power of the party organization, the pivotal role of the state party units, and the emergence of a polycentric system of decision making in India, in which power was dispersed among several competing but overlapping, groups: the Working Committee, the chief ministers, the central Cabinet, and the Congress Party in Parliament. This dispersion of power and the split within the national leadership, however, undermined the Working Committee's ability to mediate disputes as dominant factions in the states used this greater freedom to consolidate their power. Dissident factions in these states, "feeling isolated from power within the party because of the inability of the central leadership to intervene to protect them," defected from the party.[24] The dilemma confronting the Congress was basic: "To dominate, Congress must accommodate, yet accommodation encourages incoherence which destroys the capacity to dominate."[25] The more autonomous the Congress Party

[21]For an analysis of the succession, see Michael Brecher, *Nehru's Mantle: The Politics of Succession in India* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

[22]Ibid., p. 72.

[23]Ibid., p. 205.

[24]Kochanek, *Congress Party*, p. 315.

[25]W. H. Morris-Jones, "Dominance and Dissent," *Government and Opposition*, 1 (July–September 1966), p. 460.

in each state became, with its effectiveness derived from local resources, the more vulnerable it was to displacement by regional opposition parties from the same sources of strength.

The Breakdown of the Congress System, 1967–77

Congress dominance had come under increased strain by the first half of the 1960s as the Nehru era began to draw to a close. Nehru's fading charisma, the erosion of the Congress Party's organizational effectiveness, the disastrous failure of the Prime Minister's China policy, and a growing economic crisis placed enormous strains on the party. Despite the party's success in orchestrating two smooth leadership successions in 18 months, Congress dominance began to erode in the second half of the decade. Electoral defeats in eight states in 1967 and a reduced majority in the Lok Sabha revealed a breakdown in the Congress system of reconciliation and consensus and set in motion a series of schisms that led to a historic split in the party in 1969.[26] Although the party was reincarnated under the leadership of Indira Gandhi in the early 1970s, the new Congress became increasingly centralized and personalized and altered its traditional political style from one of accommodation to confrontation. In 1975, in an atmosphere of crisis and unrest, a beleaguered Indira Gandhi declared a national emergency and embarked upon an effort to transform the country's democratic system.

Crisis and Split   Although the electoral defeats suffered by the Congress in 1967 led to internal dissension, defections, and increased tension between Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai,[27] the defeats also "generated tremendous pressures for a consensus on the leadership issue in order to avoid a schism in the already weakened party."[28] The result was a compromise whereby Mrs. Gandhi was unanimously reelected Prime Minister, while Morarji Desai was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

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[26]Norman D. Palmer, "India's Fourth General Elections," *Asian Survey*, 7 (May 1967), p. 277.

[27]See Paul R. Brass, "Coalition Politics in North India," *American Political Science Review*, 62 (December 1968), pp. 1,174–91. For a discussion of the phenomenon of defection, see Subhash C. Kashyap, "The Politics of Defection: The Changing Contours of Political Power Structure in State Politics in India," *Asian Survey*, 10 (March 1970), pp. 195–208; and Kashyap, *The Politics of Defection* (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1969).

[28]Kochanek, *Congress Party*, p. 412.

From the time she came to power, however, Indira Gandhi was determined not to become a puppet of the Syndicate. Since many Syndicate bosses had been defeated at the polls, Mrs. Gandhi emerged with increased political clout. Challenging the Syndicate, Mrs. Gandhi sought to reestablish the preeminence of the Prime Minister within the party. To gain the initiative, she sought to transform a factional conflict within the Congress into a populist ideological crusade by demanding nationalization of major commercial banks, effective implementation of land reforms, ceilings on urban income and property, and curbs on industrial monopolies. In the past these policy changes had been repeatedly resisted by leaders of the Syndicate.

In response to his notable lack of enthusiasm for her new policies, the Prime Minister relieved Morarji Desai of his Finance portfolio and announced the immediate nationalization of all major banks. This action won widespread popular support and the Prime Minister declared that this action was "only the beginning of a bitter struggle between the common people and the vested interests in the country."[29]

The tension between Indira and the Syndicate over her new populism was reinforced in 1969 by the need to elect a new President of India. In alliance with its old nemesis Morarji Desai, the Syndicate was determined to retain its hold over the party and nominate its own candidate. Despite Mrs. Gandhi's preference for Acting President V. V. Giri, the Syndicate nominated N. Sanjiva Reddy, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, as the official Congress Party candidate.[30] In response to this open challenge to her leadership Mrs. Gandhi provided unofficial support to Giri's candidacy and Giri won. Accusing Mrs. Gandhi of indiscipline, the Syndicate expelled the Prime Minister from the Congress Party and instructed Congress legislators to elect a new leader. Congress MPs, however, defied the Syndicate and re-elected Mrs. Gandhi by a vote of 226 to 65. In the centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi's birth the Congress Party had split in two. As seen in Figure 6.2, the 1969 split in the Congress proved to be simply the first in a long series that gradually sapped the strength of the once mighty Indian National Congress.

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[29]*Hindu* (Madras), 5 August 1969.

[30]For a detailed account of the events leading up to and surrounding the schism, see Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "The Congress in India: Crisis and Split," *Asian Survey*, 10 (March 1970), pp. 256–62; and Mahendra Prasad Singh, *Split in a Predominant Party: The Indian National Congress in 1969* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1981).

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The Personalization of Power   As a result of the split, the Indira-led Congress lost its majority in the Lok Sabha and became dependent upon the support of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Tamil nationalist DMK. Determined to secure a new mandate, the Prime Minister dissolved the Lok Sabha and called new elections for March 1971. In an effort to focus on national issues and create a stable Congress majority at the Center, Mrs. Gandhi decided to hold parliamentary elections separately from the state elections.

In a nationwide campaign the Prime Minister sought to bypass the intermediary structures of village notables and "vote banks" that had formed the base of the old Congress machine and appeal directly to the voters.[31] The campaign was aimed at attracting the support of disadvantaged groups, especially the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Muslims, and the young. Her message was clear: Garibi Hatao, "Abolish Poverty." In their attempt to personalize the campaign, opposition parties responded with their own slogan of "Indira Hatao," the removal of Mrs. Gandhi.[32] The results of the 1971 elections became known as the "Indira wave." With 44 percent of the vote, Mrs. Gandhi's party won 352 of the 518 seats in the Lok Sabha.

With a two-thirds majority in Parliament, Indira Gandhi had won the mandate she sought, but she proved unable to pursue her program of economic transformation. On March 25, 1971, the force of the Pakistani army came down upon the people of East Pakistan, and in the next nine months, 10 million refugees poured into India, creating a situation that for India was economically, socially, and politically unacceptable. Determined to ensure the return of the refugees and humble Pakistan, Indira ordered the Indian army to intervene in the crisis on December 4, 1971. With the fall of Dhaka (Dacca) two weeks later, the State of Bangladesh came into being.

India was euphoric over its victory. Humiliated militarily, broken as a nation, Pakistan could no longer challenge Indian hegemony on the subcontinent. A new opportunity for stability and development was seen on the horizon of Pax India. Ebullient with success, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi now sought to consolidate her mandate. In March 1972 she held new elections for the legislative assemblies in all but four states and won a second landslide victory. Freed from the interference of the old Syndicate bosses and the communists,

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[31]See Myron Weiner, "The 1971 Elections and the Indian Party System," *Asian Survey*, 11 (December 1971), pp. 1,153–66.

[32]W. H. Morris-Jones, "India Elects for Change—and Stability," *Asian Survey*, 11 (August 1971), p. 727.

the "Indira wave" of 1971–72 gave Mrs. Gandhi unprecedented power and appeared to place the Prime Minister in a position to implement her pledge to fulfill popular demands for social justice and economic betterment. "The country has taken her at her word," the *Hindustan Times* wrote, "and she will now have to deliver her promises."

The great electoral victories of March 1972, however, proved to be more a reflection of opposition weakness than Congress strength. Although the Congress had won 70 percent of assembly seats, it received only 48 percent of the popular vote. Virtually appointed by the Center, many of the newly elected Congress legislators were young, inexperienced, and lacked any local power base; and the newly elected state chief ministers were vulnerable to challenges from entrenched local factional interests. As a result, within 18 months of the 1972 elections, six chief ministers had been eased out of office. In relying heavily on personal charisma and populist politics, Indira Gandhi had destroyed the boss structure of the old Congress, but failed to replace it with an effective party structure that could link the Center with the local party units. "Moreover, the tendency to concentrate power at the centre," write Joshi and Desai, "reduced tolerance of factional competition and the decline in the autonomy of state party structures . . . led to a weak and attenuated party and lack of stable loyalty structures."[33]

On the surface, the "Indira Wave" appeared to have restored the pattern of one-party dominance that had characterized the Nehru era. In practice, however, the new pattern of dominance was very different and contributed to a severe political crisis in the midst of the greatest economic crisis in postindependence India. Under Indira Gandhi's leadership, authority within both the party and the government became highly centralized and personalized, decision making was concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister, and Mrs. Gandhi sought to centralize what was fundamentally a federal party. In an attempt to prevent the consolidation of power by potential challengers,[34] Cabinet members, party presidents, and even chief ministers held tenure solely on the basis of personal loyalty to Mrs. Gandhi. Even entrenched chief ministers who had backed the Prime Minister in her battle against the Syndicate were replaced by leaders who were personally loyal to her.

[33]Ram Joshi and Kirtidev Desai, "The Opposition: Problems and Prospects," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20 October 1973, pp. 1,913–22.

[34]Stanley A. Kochanek, "Mrs. Gandhi's Pyramid: The New Congress," in Henry C. Hart, ed., *Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraised* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976), p. 101.

These state leaders, however, lacked an established base of power and proved unable to provide stable and effective government.[35] At the Center, cabinet positions were regularly reshuffled to keep possible rivals off balance; key portfolios were held directly by the Prime Minister; and from 1969 to 1977 the Congress Party had five different presidents.[36] Mrs. Gandhi also sought to transform the social base of Congress support by recruiting party members from the "weaker sections" of society—youth, women, Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and the poor. These newly mobilized sectors, however, were too weak to wrest control of the party organization from formerly dominant party factions.

Despite the split in the Congress, the new Indira-led Congress remained a rainbow coalition of highly disparate interests; the long predicted ideological polarization of the party failed to materialize; and in state after state party factionalism reigned supreme. The state chief ministers appointed by Mrs. Gandhi's were repeatedly challenged by dissident factions within the party and many were forced to resign. As weak, factionalized and ineffective state governments struggled to survive, popular discontent began to mount. Increasingly intolerant of any dissent, Mrs. Gandhi took attacks on inept and often corrupt state governments as a personal affront and came to rely more heavily on coercion than persuasion. She began to see almost any criticism as traitorous, antinational, fascist, or even foreign-inspired.

The 1975–77 Emergency[37]   Although the populist "Indira wave" had given Mrs. Gandhi a massive mandate, the Prime Minister proved to have no clear program to deal with India's troubled economy. Burdened by a flood of East Pakistani refugees, the cost of the 1971

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[35]Ibid., p. 96–97.

[36]Ibid, p. 110.

[37]The indispensable source on the 1975–77 emergency is the three-volume *Interim Report* of the Shah Commission of Inquiry, 1978. Since the emergency was lifted, numerous books have been published. Among the most useful are Michael Henderson, *Experiment with Untruth: India under the Emergency* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1977); Kuldip Nayar, *The Judgement* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1977); Prashant Bhushan, *The Case That Shook India* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978); and J. Thakur, *All the Prime Minister's Men* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978). Also see Marcus F. Franda's series of reports from South Asia for the American University Field Staff, 1975. Distinguished Indian scholars contributed to a symposium, "Images of the Emergency," in the March 1977 issue of *Seminar*. An assessment of the sources of the emergency is provided by P. B. Mayer, "Congress (I), Emergency (I): Interpreting Indira Gandhi's India," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 22 (July 1984), pp. 128–50. A special issue of *Sunday* (Calcutta), 30 June–8 July 1985, provides an excellent retrospective on the emergency.

Bangladesh war, a severe drought in 1972–73, food shortages, spiraling prices, and the world energy crisis of 1973, India faced an unprecedented economic turmoil. The economic crisis moreover served to further exacerbate the existing climate of political unrest spurred by inept Congress rule especially in the states. Processions and demonstrations took place almost daily, university campuses were torn by "indiscipline," and a wave of strikes threatened the economy with chaos, especially the 1974 railway strike. By the mid-1970s, hardly a day passed without newspapers reporting a lathi charge or police firing somewhere in India.

Prelude to the Emergency   Spontaneous outbreaks of protest and violence against ineffective Congress rule occurred first in Gujarat, spread to Bihar, and then expanded to the capital. The situation exploded in Gujarat in 1974, with widespread student agitation against the Congress government of the state resulting in President's Rule.[38] In Bihar, as discontent erupted into mass agitation, Sarvodaya leader Jayaprakash Narayan (affectionately known as J. P.), emerging from political retirement, assumed leadership of the movement against the corrupt Congress government. Gradually, the inchoate nature of these regional explosions were galvanized into a national political movement led by Narayan that called for "total revolution"—the fundamental transformation of Indian society.

It was against this backdrop that, in the summer of 1975, Indira Gandhi suffered two devastating political blows. On June 12, Mrs. Gandhi was found guilty by the High Court of Allahabad of election code violations. The High Court decision was the result of charges of corrupt election practices brought against Mrs. Gandhi for actions that had taken place during the 1971 elections. Although the Court dismissed the more serious charges of bribery and intimidation, it found the Prime Minister guilty of two relatively minor technical violations of the election law, declared her election in 1971 invalid, and barred her from office for a period of six years. In order to permit an appeal to the Supreme Court, however, the sentence was stayed for 20 days.

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[38]See Dawn E. and Rodney W. Jones, "Urban Upheaval in India: The 1974 Nav Nirman Riots in Gujarat," *Asian Survey*, 16 (November 1976), pp. 1,012–23; and Ghanshayam Shah, *Protest Movements in Two Indian States: A Study of the Gujarat and Bihar Movements* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1977).

The Court ruling was followed by a second blow a day later when the Congress suffered a massive defeat in the state assembly elections in Gujarat.[39] The combined court verdict and the Congress defeat in Gujarat led major opposition parties, national newspapers, and even a few members of her own party to urge Mrs. Gandhi to step down as Prime Minister, but she refused.

The political situation became further muddled when on June 24 Justice Krishna Iyer, the "vacation judge" of the Supreme Court, rejected the Prime Minister's request for a "complete and absolute" stay of the court judgment against her. Instead, he granted a conditional stay until the Court could convene to consider her appeal. He ruled that Mrs. Gandhi could remain as Prime Minister, but she could neither vote nor participate in the proceedings of Parliament.

Imposition of Emergency Rule   On the following evening, June 25, a mass rally was held on the Ramlila festival grounds in New Delhi. Leaders of the opposition, including Jayaprakash Narayan and Morarji Desai, called for a nationwide movement to unseat the Prime Minister. Denouncing Indira Gandhi as "moving toward dictatorship and fascism," J. P. called upon the people of India to resist the corrupt and illegitimate government. As he had done before, he urged the police and the armed forces to refuse to obey "illegal and immoral" orders and to uphold the Constitution against those who would destroy it.

That night, across the city in the home of the Prime Minister, final plans were made for the declaration of emergency.[40] The decision was taken by Mrs. Gandhi's inner circle of personal advisors known as the prime minister's "household." No Cabinet member had been consulted, and even the Home Minister was not informed until late on the night of the 25th. Although he told the Prime Minister that an emergency was already in force since the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 and that the government had sufficient powers to deal with the situation,[41] his argument was to no avail. On the morning of June 26, the

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[39]See Marcus F. Franda, "The Gujarat Election, 1975," *American University Field Staff Reports, South Asia Series*, XIX (9), 1975; and Ghanshyam Shah, "The 1975 Gujarat Assembly Elections in India," *Asian Survey*, 16 (March 1976), pp. 270–82.

[40]A detailed account of the events leading to the declaration of the emergency is presented in Chapter Five of the Shah Commission of Inquiry, Interim Report 1, 11 March 1978, pp. 17–32.

[41]See the earlier discussion of emergency powers, pp. 79–81.

Government of India assumed extraordinary emergency powers under Clause (1), Article 352 of the Indian Constitution.

Earlier that morning, before the Proclamation was issued, the principal leaders of the opposition were arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA)—676 people by the official tally. On orders of the government, at 2:00 a.m., electricity to the major newspapers in New Delhi was also cut off, imposing a news blackout on the city. At 8:00 a.m. Indira Gandhi addressed the nation on All-India Radio:

> The President has proclaimed an emergency. This is nothing to panic about. I am sure you are conscious of the deep and widespread conspiracy which has been brewing ever since I began to introduce certain progressive measures of benefit to the common man and woman of India. In the name of democracy it has been sought to negate the very functioning of democracy. . . . Certain persons have gone to the length of inciting our armed forces to mutiny and our police to rebel. . . . Now we learn of new programs challenging law and order throughout the country. . . .

The conspiracy, she asserted, threatened to disrupt the "normal functioning" of government and the prospects of economic development. Rigid press censorship was imposed from the first day of the emergency—more complete than at any time under the British—and during the 21 months of the emergency,[42] a total of 110,000 people were arrested and detained without trial.[43] By presidential order, India's bill of rights was, in effect, abrogated.

Constitutional Change and the 20-Point Program   Among its first acts, Parliament amended the electoral law under which Mrs. Gandhi had been convicted. The two offenses of which she had been found guilty were deleted retroactively so as to exonerate the Prime Minister and render her appeal to the Supreme Court unnecessary. The Thirty-eighth Amendment, the first of three major structural assaults on the Constitution, denied the courts the power to review a presidential proclamation of emergency or the orders imposed under an emergency. The

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[42]See the three-part series by Marcus F. Franda, "Curbing the Press," *American University Field Staff Reports, South Asia Series*, XX (12, 13, 14), 1976.

[43]According to figures now available, through the Government of India, the number of persons arrested under emergency regulations was 110,806 (34,988 under MISA and 75,818 under the Defense of India Rules).

Thirty-ninth Amendment barred the courts—again retroactively—from considering electoral disputes involving the Prime Minister, President, Vice President, or the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Although there was talk of a new constitution, this was shelved in 1976 in favor of the Forty-second Amendment.[44] The most sweeping of the constitutional changes brought during the emergency, it affected 59 clauses of the Constitution and was designed to further diminish the power of the courts and to secure parliamentary—that is, the Prime Minister's—supremacy.

The Rise of Sanjay Gandhi   "The Emergency," Mrs. Gandhi declared, "provides us with a new opportunity to go ahead with our economic tasks."[45] Her 20-Point Program of economic and social reforms offered something for everyone and was largely a rehash of long unimplemented Congress policies. The Prime Minister's 20-Point Program was augmented in 1976 by her son Sanjay Gandhi's Four-Point Program: "Limit families to only two children. Never accept dowries as a condition for marriage. Teach one illiterate person to read and write, plant one tree every year and secure better sanitation." From the time of the Allahabad decision, Sanjay had exerted increasing sway within "the household." Tainted by a scandal surrounding the manufacture of the Maruti (a small car), Sanjay had an unsavory reputation, and his rise was viewed with apprehension in Congress Party circles. Sanjay was reputed to have considerable influence over his mother and was clearly being advanced as the heir apparent.

Sanjay's favored cause was family planning, and in Delhi and the Hindi-speaking states of northern India, the government's vasectomy program was aggressively pursued. Some states imposed vasectomy quotas on government officials and quotas provided the impetus for compulsory sterilization. Widespread stories recounted raids on villages by government officials and roundups from the "weaker sections" of society—the poor and uneducated, untouchables, and Muslims. There were reports of antivasectomy riots and police firings. The most notorious incident of emergency "excesses," occurred at Turkman Gate in Muslim old Delhi where police opened fire on protestors resisting forced slum clearance, another of Sanjay's pet projects.

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[44]For an analysis of the constitutional changes during the emergency, see Rajiv Dhavan, *The Amendment: Conspiracy or Revolution?* (Allahabad, India: Wheeler, 1978).

[45]Marcus F. Franda, "India's Double Emergency Democracy," Pt. 1: "Transformations," *American University Field Staff Reports, South Asia Series*, XIX (17), 1975, p. 16.

In concert with forced sterilization, Sanjay's projects involved a number of slum clearance projects in the capital.[46]

The 1977 Elections and Congress Defeat   On January 18, 1977, having twice postponed elections, Indira Gandhi unexpectedly announced that parliamentary elections would be held in March. The rules of the emergency would be "relaxed," press censorship lifted, public meetings permitted, and thousands of opposition politicians released from jails.

A number of factors entered into Mrs. Gandhi's decision to hold elections. Most important, she expected Congress to win. The economy had improved, and the benefits attributed to the emergency were believed to have won wide support, especially in rural areas and among the poor. In addition, "it seemed unlikely that the splintered opposition parties could organize themselves into an effective political force on such short notice." A third factor may have been Mrs. Gandhi's desire to establish a base in Parliament for Sanjay to succeed her as Prime Minister. Finally, a Congress victory would legitimize the emergency and vindicate her actions before the world.[47]

Soon after the announcement, two decisive events upset Mrs. Gandhi's calculations. The first was the formation of the opposition Janata Party. Mrs. Gandhi was even less prepared for her second jolt—the defection of Jagjivan Ram from the Congress fold. Ram, a senior member of the Cabinet and the most prominent untouchable in Indian public life, had long nursed ambition to be Prime Minister. Having seen his power eroded during the emergency, he resigned from the government; denounced Indira Gandhi for the destruction of democracy in India; and formed his own party, the Congress for Democracy (CFD). The combination of opposition unity and Congress defections posed a serious threat to continued Congress dominance.

The CFD and the Janata Party agreed on a common slate of candidates and, in effect, waged the campaign as one party. The Janata Election Manifesto declared: "The choice before the electorate is clear. It is a choice between freedom and slavery; between democracy and dictatorship...." The Janata Party promised to "revive democracy," restore "fundamental freedom," and re-establish judicial

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[46]For a discussion of the sterilization and slum clearance issues, see Myron Weiner, *India at the Polls: The Parliamentary Elections of 1977* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1978), pp. 35–41.

[47]Ibid., pp. 7–12.

independence. It offered the voters a "Gandhian Alternative" of "Both Bread and Liberty." The Congress message was simple: "For progress and stability—vote Congress."

Despite government claims, the emergency had put the lid on popular discontent, silenced the opposition, and had an adverse effect on most Indians. With no political barometer to measure the level of popular support other than her own intelligence agencies, Mrs. Gandhi was convinced that the Congress would win and was stunned by the results. Both Indira Gandhi and Sanjay were overwhelmingly defeated, the Congress was able to win only 154 seats, and the party's popular vote declined from 43.6 percent to 34.5 percent, the lowest in its history. The Janata and its allies won an absolute majority of 330 out of the 542 seats in Parliament.[48]

The Dynasty Era: Indira and Sons

The Congress in Opposition   Torn by recrimination over the emergency and its "excesses" the Congress Party once again split, and in January 1978 the breakaway Congress (I)—for Indira—was formed. Although she did express "deep sorrow for any hardship caused" by the emergency, Mrs. Gandhi was unrepentant. She continued to justify the emergency in the name of the poor and appealed to the downtrodden landless, minorities, and untouchables for their support.

The March 1978 assembly elections in five states gave Indira Gandhi her first opportunity to test her claim of popular support and attempt a political comeback. In the southern states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh where popular chief ministers sided with Mrs. Gandhi at the time of the split, the Congress (I) won overwhelming majorities. Overall, the Congress (I) won 394 seats in the five states, compared to 271 for Janata and 147 for the old Congress. Eight months later, in November 1978, Indira Gandhi was elected to Parliament in a by-election, returned to New Delhi in triumph, and took her seat in Parliament as leader of the opposition.

Mrs. Gandhi, however, continued to be beleaguered by continued rebellion within her party, attempts to expel her from Parliament, and efforts to jail her for misconduct and abuse of authority. A resurgent Youth Congress led by Sanjay attempted to strengthen her political

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[48]For an analysis of Muslim voting patterns, see Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Muslims and the 1977 Indian Elections: A Watershed?" *Asian Survey*, 17 (December 1977), pp. 1,207–20.

position by rallying popular support in the streets, which ended as a series of Youth Congress brawls. Mounting opposition to Sanjay led to another split in the Congress when the Chief Minister of Karnataka defected from the party.

The 1980 Elections and the Return of Indira Gandhi[49]

If Indira Gandhi was beleaguered, then the Janata Party was under siege. The Janata victory in 1977 had been greeted with euphoria and hailed as a democratic revolution. Twenty-eight months later, however, amidst drift, discontent, and defection, the Janata government collapsed. In its place, an uneasy coalition came to power under Charan Singh, leader of the breakaway Lok Dal faction. Less than one month later, facing a parliamentary vote of no confidence, Singh submitted his resignation as Prime Minister, and the President called new elections.

With both the Janata and the Congress torn by schism, the prospect of any single party emerging with a parliamentary majority appeared dim. Mrs. Gandhi alone commanded the status of an all-India leader. With political skill bolstered by the ineptitude of her opponents, she took the offensive, urging the electorate to vote against the sorry record of the Janata Party and Lok Dal. With the promise of strong leadership, Mrs. Gandhi's appeal was direct: "Elect a Government that Works" and restore "order, stability, purposeful governance and progress."

In January 1980, 33 months after a crushing electoral defeat forced her from office and ended 30 years of Congress rule, Indira Gandhi returned to power as Prime Minister of India. In the landslide victory, Mrs. Gandhi restored Congress (I) dominance by winning 351 seats, a two-thirds majority, and 43 percent of the popular vote. Although the voters responded in terms of immediate self-interest, symbolized by the price of onions, their verdict was also a plea for decisive and effective government.

The Death of Sanjay, the Rise of Rajiv   Indira Gandhi's return to power brought back to the Congress fold many who had defected from the party during its time in the political wilderness. While the welcome mat was out for all members of Congress to reunite, personal

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[49]For a detailed analysis of the elections, see Myron Weiner, *India at the Polls, 1980: A Study of the Parliamentary Elections* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1983). Also see James Manor, "The Electoral Process amid Awakening and Decay: Reflections on the Indian General Election of 1980," in Peter Lyon and James Manor, eds., *Transfer and Transformation: Political Institutions in the New Commonwealth* (Leicester, U.K.: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp. 87–116.

loyalty remained the touchstone for advancement in the party and for entry into Mrs. Gandhi's inner circle.

In February 1980, Mrs. Gandhi re-enforced her mandate. Citing the 1977 precedent set by the Janata Party in dismissing Congress state governments on the ground that they had lost their mandate, Mrs. Gandhi instructed the President to dissolve nine opposition-controlled state assemblies. The state elections provided an opportunity for Sanjay Gandhi, who had been instrumental in engineering his mother's return to power, to establish his own independent base of political power. Securing 60 percent of the seats, the Congress (I) took power in eight of the nine states. On June 23, however, Sanjay Gandhi, heir apparent to the prime ministership of India, was dead at the age of 33, killed in the crash of a single-engine stunt plane he piloted.

Deeply shaken by her son's death, Indira Gandhi seemed to lose interest in the affairs of both party and state. After some six months of drift, however, she gradually regained her bearings, this time with her elder son, Rajiv, at her side. As a youth, Rajiv Gandhi attended the prestigious English-medium Doon School and went on to Cambridge University where he studied engineering. It was in England that he met his wife, Sonia, the daughter of an Italian businessman. Upon his return to India, Rajiv became a pilot of Indian Airlines, the domestic carrier. With no experience in politics, it was only upon the death of Sanjay that Rajiv made his reluctant entry into public life. In contrast to his brash and aggressive younger brother, Rajiv—dubbed "Mr. Clean" by the press—had an open, subdued style. In 1981 Rajiv was elected to Parliament from Amethi, Sanjay's constituency in Uttar Pradesh. Six months later, he accepted leadership of the Youth Congress. It was as his mother's adviser and confidant, however, that Rajiv, now being groomed for dynastic succession, was drawn toward the center of political power. Party leaders and state chief ministers paid him court, a sycophancy he openly disdained. Without any official position, save that of Member of Parliament, Rajiv took an increasing hand in reorganizing the weakened Congress Party.

The Congress in Disarray[50]   Although Mrs. Gandhi made an attempt to rebuild the Congress organization following the party split in 1969, the party fell into increasing disarray. The "deinstitutionalization" of the Congress Party was rooted in the leadership

[50]Portions of this section are adapted from Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., *India under Pressure: Prospects for Political Stability* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 85–89.

and style of Indira Gandhi.[51] She had sought to transform the party into an instrument of personal power and to ensure that it nurtured no one who might challenge her position as Prime Minister or endanger the succession of her sons—first Sanjay, then Rajiv. Despite the party constitution, organizational elections had not been held since 1972. The All-India Congress Committee and the Working Committee, once the crucial decision-making center of the party, were moribund. State party units had no autonomy, and provincial, district, and local Congress committees, insofar as they functioned at all, were creatures of the central party "high command"—a euphemism for Mrs. Gandhi. The grass roots had been cut, and the Congress, as it approached its centenary year, was an organization with no base. Inder Malhotra of *The Times of India* described the Congress as "no more than a rabble held together by one towering personality."[52]

While the state Congress Party organization was torn by dissension, clearly identifiable and stable factions existed in only a few states. The bases of dissidence and factionalism varied from state to state—region, urban-rural, caste, personality—but in no state could factionalism be said to be ideologically based. Instead of factions, in most states there were free-floating, self-styled leaders in search of support. The Center played each against the others, with no claimant for power permitted to establish an independent base of support. All professed personal loyalty to Mrs. Gandhi, and all were dependent on her. Indeed, one of the principal reasons the party had not conducted organizational elections was the fear that they would have provided local and state leaders not only the opportunity to test their strength against one another, but also provide the victors with a base of support independent of New Delhi. Mrs. Gandhi kept the pot boiling, and party dissension was the inevitable product.

In those states where the Congress was in power, chief ministers dangled like puppets on strings. Rather than rise up from their own base of political strength as leaders of the state legislative parties,

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[51]James Manor examines the process of deinstitutionalization in two articles: "Party Decay and Political Crisis in India," *Washington Quarterly*, 4 (Summer 1981), pp. 25–40, and "Anomie in Indian Politics: Origins and Potential Impact," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18 May 1983, pp. 725–34. Rajni Kothari offers an even darker view in "Towards Intervention," *Seminar*, 269 (January 1982), pp. 22–27, and "A Fragmented Nation," *Seminar*, 281 (January 1983), pp. 24–29.

[52]Inder Malhotra, "State of the Ruling Party: A Cause for Serious Concern," *The Times of India*, 29 April 1982.

they were imposed from above by Mrs. Gandhi. The Congress legis-
lative parties, in fact, clamored for her to do so, unwilling to assume
responsibility themselves. Personal loyalty, rather than competence,
was the prime qualification for office. That Mrs. Gandhi largely lim-
ited her choices to those "faithful" who stood with her during her
time out of power, rather than include more experienced politicians
who came back to the Congress fold when they sensed a change in
the political winds, was understandable, but it considerably narrowed
the talent pool. Moreover, it put a premium on "sycophancy," a term
widely used in India to describe the relationship of chief ministers and
Cabinet ministers alike with Mrs. Gandhi.

Continued manipulation from above encouraged dissidence in
the party and increased the commuter traffic between the state capi-
tals and New Delhi, as the various groups, trading allegations of dis-
loyalty, corruption, and favoritism, vied for the ear of the Prime
Minister. In an atmosphere of court politics, chief ministers were in
frequent attendance to curry favor and to bring matters of policy
and politics before the party's high command. Chief ministers felt
compelled to clear all cabinet appointments with New Delhi. The
high command ensured the continued dependence of state Congress
politicians on Mrs. Gandhi by holding out hope to party dissidents
that their turn might come next.

Following Sanjay's death, Mrs. Gandhi began to ease out of some
of her more serious liabilities in the states and increasingly distanced
members of the Sanjay brigade from power and influence. In March
1982 the most disgruntled among them linked arms with Maneka
Gandhi, Sanjay's young widow, and challenged the party leadership.
In a dramatic confrontation with her mother-in-law, Maneka was
thrown out of the house.[53] In the following months, Maneka formed
her own political party, the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch.

Against the backdrop of party disarray, Congress looked to the
next parliamentary elections with increasing apprehension. Indira
Gandhi's imperial style[54] had weakened the Congress organization,
fueled regional resentment, and spawned the rise of local state parties.

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[53]After Sanjay's death, Maneka continued to live in the Prime Minister's residence, in
accordance with Indian tradition, even as they were joined by Rajiv and family. For an
account of these events, see *India Today*, 15 April 1982, pp. 14–21; 30 April 1982,
pp. 22–32.

[54]For an analysis of the Andhra and Karnataka elections and their impact, see Robert L.
Hardgrave, Jr., "India in 1983: New Challenges, Lost Opportunities," *Asian Survey*, 14
(February 1984), pp. 212–13.

Assassination and Succession[55]   On the morning of October 31, 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh members of her security guard. Within hours of Mrs. Gandhi's death, Rajiv Gandhi, at the age of 40, was sworn in as Prime Minister. The choice of Rajiv, confirmed three days later by a unanimous Congress Parliamentary Party, was a foregone conclusion. Though criticized by elements of the press and opposition, haste was considered necessary to provide reassurance to the shaken nation. Rajiv's strength and calm demeanor in his statements that day were impressive, and in the wake of the assassination, the nation and the party of which he became president rallied to him. In a time of national crisis, he was the symbol of stability and continuity. Moreover, it was widely believed that only Rajiv, as bearer of the Gandhi name and the Nehru legacy, could lead the Congress to victory in the forthcoming elections. Adhering to the schedule believed to have been set before his mother's death, Rajiv announced that parliamentary elections would be held on December 24.

Rajiv in Power   Less than two months after taking office as the youngest Prime Minister to serve India, Rajiv Gandhi won a massive electoral victory. With 48.1 percent of the vote, the highest ever for Congress, the party won 77 percent of the seats contested, an unprecedented majority in the Lok Sabha. Rajiv's victory came against a background of fear, cynicism, and uncertainty. Jawaharlal Nehru had bequeathed to his daughter, Indira Gandhi, a unified nation; a highly institutionalized political order; a basic national consensus on the government's socioeconomic and foreign policies; and a reasonable climate of public morality. Indira Gandhi bequeathed to her son a divided nation; a highly centralized and personalized system of power; and a criminalized, weak, and corrupt party of sycophants.[56]

Rajiv Gandhi had begun his political career under the tutelage of his mother and initially appeared to have adopted her style. Insecure and uncertain, he entered the 1984 electoral campaign as highly

[55]Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "India in 1984: Confrontation, Assassination, and Succession," *Asian Survey*, 15 (February 1985), pp. 139–44; and Hardgrave, "India after Indira," *Country Briefing: India* (New York: The Asia Society, 1985).

[56]For a review of Rajiv Gandhi's tenure, see James Manor "India: State and Society Diverge," *Current History*, vol. 86, no. 578 (December 1985), pp. 429–32, 447; Myron Weiner, "Rajiv Gandhi: A Mid-Term Assessment," in Marshall M. Bouton, ed., *India Briefing, 1987* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 1–23; and Lloyd I. Rudolph, "The Faltering Novitiate: Rajiv at Home and Abroad in 1988," in Marshall M. Bouton and Philip Oldenburg, eds., *India Briefing*, *1989* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 1–33.

combative and divisive. During the campaign he played very heavily upon anti-Sikh sentiments, Hindu chauvinism, and confrontation with his opponents. This communalist, BJP-style "soft Hindutva" (Hinduness) approach was initially developed by his mother in the early 1980s as Congress support in the South began to erode and the party's organizational base atrophied. The approach was an attempt to disarm the Hindu right just as the Garibi Hatao strategy of the late 1960s had been used to absorb and disarm the socialist left. Unlike populism, however, the strategy of communalism proved to be extremely dangerous in a heterogeneous country like India, where religious identities remain strong and just below the surface.

Rajiv's massive victory at the polls in December 1984 appeared to have given him sufficient reassurance to begin to retreat from the rhetoric of the campaign. Having received a clear mandate, Rajiv gained greater self-confidence and shifted from a style of confrontation to one of bargaining and consensus. He promised to "clean up" public life and moved quickly to defuse the major threats to Indian unity. Settlement of the Punjab and Assam problems, which his mother had allowed to get out of control, became one of his highest policy priorities.

The first major action taken by the new government was the enactment of an "antidefection" bill, passed unanimously by both houses of Parliament in January 1985 as the Fifty-second Amendment to the Constitution. The legislation was designed to "clean up" public life and, in the words of Rajiv Gandhi, put an end to "politics without principles." Defections, or "floor-crossings," had long been the bane of Indian politics, with more than 2,700 recorded cases since 1967, most within the state assemblies. As the dominant party, the Congress had been the principal beneficiary, with as many as 1,900 defections to its ranks. The typical pattern was to lure legislators away from a vulnerable party in a state with cash or the promise of a Cabinet appointment that would provide access to patronage and power. During the heyday of defections from March 1967 to June 1968, 16 state governments were brought down by defectors. Of the 438 legislators who changed parties during this period, 210 were rewarded with ministerships.

Rajiv Gandhi's initiative in passing the long-promised antidefection law was hailed as ushering in a new era of politics. The act, however, also gave Rajiv a powerful weapon to maintain discipline within his own party. Under the Amendment, which applied to both Parliament and the state assemblies, legislators would lose their seat if they quit their party to join another; if, without prior permission or

subsequent approval, they voted or abstained from voting in the house "contrary to any direction" issued by the political party to which they belong; or if they were expelled from their party "in accordance with the procedure established by the Constitution, rules, or regulations" of such party. Splits were permissible only if it involved at least one-third of the legislative party. Mergers would require two-thirds approval.

Like his mother's victory in 1972, Rajiv's massive mandate in the December 1984 Lok Sabha elections gave him considerable freedom in selecting Congress candidates for the March 1985 Assembly elections in 11 states and one of the Union Territories. Under Rajiv's direction, the Congress conducted one of the most widespread purges of the party since the early 1970s. Some 40 percent of all sitting candidates were dropped and replaced by a new generation of young, educated professionals who fit the new management-oriented mold of Rajiv and his advisors. Ability to win, however, was given less weight than the candidate's relationship to the competing personalities within Rajiv's kitchen cabinet, as each member of the coterie tried to strengthen his positions within the party.

Unfortunately for Rajiv, his experiment at recasting the party, like the one attempted by his mother in 1972, was largely a failure. Many of Rajiv's new candidates simply lacked a local base of support and were defeated at the polls. Poor candidate selection, therefore, contributed at least in part to an overall decline in Congress support. The party succeeded in winning only 56 percent of the seats in the assemblies in contrast to the 70 percent it had won during the December Lok Sabha poll.

Despite the electoral reverses of 1985, Rajiv continued his conciliatory approach in an attempt to solve ethnic and religious conflicts in the Punjab and Assam. In July 1985, he signed an accord with Akali president Longowal on the Punjab, and a month later reached an agreement with militants in Assam to end their anti-immigration agitation.[57]

Rajiv's reform agenda also embraced a program to make the economy more dynamic, rejuvenate the Congress (I), and prepare India for the 21st century. Popular euphoria reached an all-time high as Rajiv was hailed as the messiah of a new, modern India and as a man of courage, integrity, and vision. As in the past, however, the euphoria did not last. By 1986 Rajiv's apparent solutions of India's seemingly intractable problems began to unravel. The scheduled transfer of Chandigarh to the

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[57]For a discussion of the two accords, see pp. 171, 178–79.

Punjab, which was to take place on January 26, 1986, was deferred. Communal violence erupted over the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya; Rajiv was accused of placating Muslims by supporting a bill that would reverse the 1985 *Shah Bano* case and limit the financial responsibility of Muslim men in divorce cases; and violence intensified in the Punjab. One of the few bright spots was the Mizoram Accord of July 26, 1986, which ended a 20-year insurgency in the Northeast. Even this accomplishment, however, was offset by renewed trouble in Kashmir and a Gurkha agitation in West Bengal for the creation of a separate state of Gurkhaland. Euphoria quickly turned to despair as India was once again plunged into a major political crisis that threatened the stability of the regime and the country.

Rajiv's Leadership Style   By midterm, Rajiv's postelection style of openness, compromise, and consensus was superseded by a return to the pattern of behavior reminiscent of his mother, but without her ruthlessness and decisiveness. He became increasingly arrogant, centralized power in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, and showed a lack of respect for institutional norms. This leadership style contributed to major failures in performance and an erosion of credibility. As Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi centralized power to an even greater extent than his mother. The Cabinet was subject to frequent changes, and power became concentrated in the hands of a very small, narrowly based group of inexperienced personal advisors in the Prime Minister's Secretariat. In less than three years, the Indian Cabinet was reshuffled at least a dozen times, and each change was accompanied by a promise that additional adjustments would follow. Every Cabinet minister was transferred at least once, and some ministers changed jobs four times. No one was in office long enough to learn the job or to take any meaningful action. During 1987, not only was the Cabinet reshuffled several times, but most of the effective and talented ministers simply resigned. Rajiv's lack of respect for institutions extended to the President of the Republic and during 1987 it erupted into a major constitutional crisis.

Corruption Scandals   While Rajiv's relations with the President created a credibility crisis, his handling of a series of corruption scandals substantially tarnished his image of incorruptibility. Rajiv had given V. P. Singh, his new Finance Minister, a broad mandate to weed out corruption and reduce the size of the "black" underground economy. Singh attempted to implement this mandate by cutting tax rates while simultaneously launching a major enforcement effort. Tax

raids, court cases, and the arrest of leading industrialists became the hallmarks of his new regime.

V. P. Singh's rigorous enforcement efforts generated enormous resentment among India's top industrialists. On January 24, 1987, Singh was suddenly removed as Finance Minister and made Minister of Defense. Shortly after he had left the Finance Ministry, however, a major furor erupted when it was learned that in October 1986 Singh had authorized his subordinates to hire the Fairfax Group, an American private detective agency, to investigate the overseas finances of wealthy Indians. Instead of supporting Singh's initiative, Congress members publicly criticized these actions.

At the height of the Fairfax affair, a second major scandal exploded involving the possible payment of kickbacks on a major defense contract. On April 9, 1987, Singh announced that he had ordered an inquiry into an alleged commission paid on the purchase of two submarines from Howaldt Deutsche Werke (HDW) of Kiel, West Germany. As in the Fairfax case, Singh's decision was openly denounced by Congress MPs, and some of Rajiv's close aides saw Singh's actions as an attempt to topple the Prime Minister. In response to repeated attacks Singh resigned from the Cabinet on April 12, 1987, and was later expelled from the Congress Party.

The Fairfax affair, the HDW deal, and Singh's resignation combined to tarnish Rajiv's "Mr. Clean" image. Before the Prime Minister could even attempt to recover, his government was hit by yet another scandal. On April 15, 1987, a state-owned Swedish radio station broadcast a story alleging that a commission of $4.92 million had been paid to Indian intermediaries on a $1.3 billion defense contract to purchase Swedish Bofors 155-mm howitzers. Later reports confirmed the payment of an estimated $38 million in commissions. When Rajiv and his Cabinet denounced the report as part of a foreign conspiracy to destabilize India, the Swedish radio station not only repeated the charge, but added that it had documentary proof that four payments were made into a Swiss bank account code named "Lotus."

Rajiv's repeated denials and refusal to cooperate with any further investigation led to the resignation of Arun Singh, Minister of Defense Production and one of Rajiv's closest advisors. In an effort to defuse the crisis, Rajiv agreed to appoint a Congress-dominated parliamentary committee to investigate the charges. In addition, for the first time since independence an Indian Prime Minister felt compelled to make a disclaimer before Parliament that neither he nor his family had been involved in any cases of corruption.

Although Rajiv survived the political crisis of the summer of 1987, the issues of alleged corruption and of relations with the President of India continued to haunt him. His image tarnished and his credibility severely damaged, Rajiv was forced to turn to the Congress Party for support and to embrace the very system he had pledged to transform. He made peace with the Congress old guard and power brokers, who were now characterized as "proven workers and leaders," and many were even given seats in the Council of Ministers.

Rajiv's political counterattack initially helped in restoring his political standing. New disclosures involving his relations with the former President of India and charges of corruption, however, blunted his counterattack, gave new life to India's divided opposition, and threatened to undermine his political recovery. In late February 1988, former President Zail Singh publicly claimed he had been offered money and the political support from dissident Congress MPs and ministers to contest for re-election but had refused. In June, shortly after a joint commission of the Indian Parliament had exonerated him, Rajiv was further embarrassed by new revelations that $50 million in commissions had in fact been paid to Indian intermediaries in the Bofors case. These charges breathed new life into India's divided opposition, and in late January 1989 the Congress (I) suffered a crushing defeat in the key South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The defeat was especially humiliating for Rajiv because of the highly visible and direct role that he played in the campaign. Since 1985, Rajiv's party had not won a single election in a major Indian state.

Electoral defeat in the South was compounded by a simultaneous revolt of Congress (I) dissidents in the North brought on by Rajiv's ineffective style of party management. This style restored the centralized, manipulative system employed by his mother to maintain personalized control. Rajiv had changed the Chief Minister in Congress (I)–ruled states 16 times since 1985, for an average of one every three months. As was the case under Indira Gandhi, this style prevented the emergence of competing power centers, but also resulted in party revolt, the rise of regionalism, and the loss of elections and popular support.

In a desperate effort to recapture the initiative, Rajiv took the dramatic step of reshuffling his advisors. He recalled R. K. Dhawan, a former stenographer who had risen to become one of the most powerful advisors in his mother's household. Dhawan enjoyed the confidence of the Congress old guard, was a superb crisis manager, was a loyalist without personal political ambitions, and he had the remarkable ability

of deflecting criticism away from Indira Gandhi. His appointment, however, also symbolized the restoration of the very power brokers Rajiv had earlier condemned.

The return of Dhawan brought a temporary halt to drift and paralysis, and Rajiv began to counterattack by announcing a series of new populist programs designed to offset his pro-rich image. By the summer of 1989, however, the defense kickback scandals that had plagued Rajiv since 1987 surfaced once again. In May the opposition in the Indian Parliament charged the Congress (I) with stalling the publication of a report by its Public Accounts Committee on the purchase of West German submarines by the Indian navy. An even greater hailstorm broke in July when the Controller and Auditor General issued a report highly critical of the government's handling of the defense contract to purchase Swedish Bofors howitzers. Charging that the report was a clear indictment of the Congress (I) and Rajiv, the opposition stalled the proceedings of Parliament for three days, demanded Rajiv's resignation, and shouted "Rajiv is a thief."

The Congress (I) entered the November 1989 Lok Sabha elections in a severely weakened position. Rajiv's tarnished image, the absence of a major policy success, kickback scandals, and party factionalism, combined with a newly formed National Front of opposition parties, produced a stunning defeat for the Congress (I). Despite the fact that it received 39.5 percent of the popular vote, the high level of opposition unity enabled the Congress (I) to win only 197 seats. Although the Congress (I) did very well in the South, a massive swing against the party in the North among Muslims, untouchables, and upper-caste voters brought an end to Congress (I) dominance.[58]

The defeat of the Congress (I), however, was accompanied by a hung Parliament. For the first time since independence, no single party was able to secure a majority in the Lok Sabha. The National Front, a group of centrist and regional parties, was finally able to cobble together a minority government under the leadership of V. P. Singh with the support of the Communists and the BJP. Like the Janata Party in 1977, however, the National Front became embroiled in factional conflict and V. P. Singh was forced to resign after less than a year in office. A new government led by Chandra Shekhar was formed with the support of the Congress (I). Like Charan Singh in 1979, however, Chandra Shekhar's government was unable to survive

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[58]See Atul Kohli, "From Majority to Minority Rule: Making Sense of the 'New' Indian Politics," in Marshall M. Bouton and Philip Oldenburg, eds., *India Briefing*, *1990* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 1–23.

and was forced to resign in March 1991. India was forced to the polls for a second time in less than two years.[59]

The Eclipse of the Dynasty: 1991–98

Although no party was expected to secure a clear majority in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, public opinion polls pointed to the Congress (I) as likely to win the largest number of seats. On May 21, however, Rajiv was assassinated by a Sri Lankan Tamil guerrilla, probably in retribution for his role in sending Indian troops to Sri Lanka in 1987.[60] In the wake of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, and in fear of widespread violence, the Election Commission postponed the second and third rounds of voting until June 12 and 15.

Hoping to draw a sympathy vote and to paper over deep factional divisions within the party, the Congress (I) high command invited Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv's widow, to succeed her slain husband as party president. She declined the invitation, bringing a temporary halt to dynastic rule. The party then turned to P. V. Narasimha Rao, a 69-year-old former Foreign Minister. Rao had no real political base, seemed to lack political ambition and was seen an acceptable compromise.

The assassination had a dramatic effect on the election results. In the first round of voting held prior to the assassination, polls showed a growing shift of support away from the Congress (I). In the second and third rounds that followed the assassination, however, there was a major swing of sympathy votes in favor of the Congress (I). Although the popular vote for the Congress (I) declined from 39.5 percent in 1989 to 37.6 percent in 1991, a divided opposition enabled the party to win 227 seats—just 29 seats short of a majority.

On June 21, Narasimha Rao[61] was sworn in as Prime Minister and given four weeks to prove in a vote of confidence that the

[59]See Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "South Asian Internal Politics and Policies," in Robert A. Scalapino, et al., eds., *Asia in the 1990s: American and Soviet Perspectives* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, the University of California, 1991), pp. 194–210; and Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "After the Dynasty: Politics in India," *Current History*, 91 (March 1992), pp. 106–12.

[60]On the assassination, see the special issue of *India Today,* June 15, 1991, and for the details of the conspiracy, "Rajiv Assassination: The Inside Story," *India Today*, July 15, 1991, pp. 82–89.

[61]Rao had not contested the elections, and he was thus named Prime Minister contingent on his election to the Lok Sabha within six months. In by-elections held in November, Rao was returned from a "safe" Congress (I) seat in Andhra Pradesh.

Congress (I) could command the parliamentary support necessary to govern. The vote of confidence came on July 15. Since no party was prepared to face new elections, the Congress won the vote of confidence when 112 National Front and Left Front MPs abstained and opposition parties indicated a willingness to support the government on an issue-by-issue basis.

Although he held a tenuous hold over his own party and headed a minority government, Narasimha Rao began his term quite well and his first 18 months in office were impressive. He acted decisively, initiated a series of dramatic economic reforms designed to open up the Indian economy, held assembly elections in the troubled state of the Punjab that the Congress won, and conducted the first internal party elections in two decades. His nonassertive political style and willingness to accommodate appeared to be ideal leadership qualities to lead a minority government and to rejuvenate the postdynastic Congress.[62]

With the passage of time, however, Rao's authority began to erode. The exposure of a series of corruption scandals, his poor handling of the Ayodhya crisis, and an increasingly indecisive, procrastinating, and bumbling leadership style diminished his stature and support. Rao's problems began in April 1992 when news broke of a major stock market scam involving a massive diversion of bank treasury funds. It was followed by the forced resignation of one of Rao's ministers for passing on an anonymous letter to the Swiss government suggesting that the Bofors payoff investigation did not enjoy much of a priority with the government of India. These incidents were followed by the publication of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) documents in a major news magazine implicating Rao in a major corruption scandal.

Even more devastating than the charges of corruption was Rao's poor management of the Ayodhya crisis.[63] Rao had adopted a conciliatory approach to the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on the issue of Ayodhya. He seemed to be convinced that he could negotiate a satisfactory solution to the problem. In the midst of the negotiations, however, thousands of militant Hindus marched on Ayodhya and on December 6, 1992, stormed the mosque and demolished it.

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[62]Ramashray Roy, "India in 1992: Search for Safety," *Asian Survey*, 33 (February 1993), pp. 119–28.

[63]For a comprehensive review of the aftermath of Ayodhya, see John McGuire, Peter Reeves, and Howard Brasted, eds., *Politics of Violence: From Ayodhya to Behrampada* (New Delhi: Sage publications, 1996).

Rao initially reacted very slowly and seemed to stand by and simply watch events unfold. As communal riots spread across the country, however, Rao was forced to act. He banned five communal organizations, dismissed four BJP-led state governments, and dissolved the BJP-controlled legislative assemblies.

Rao's actions, however, had little effect and the new year brought renewed riots in Bombay and Gujarat and an open challenge to his leadership of the Congress. The challenge to Rao's leadership came from Arjun Singh and a group of pro-Rajiv dissidents who were unhappy with Rao's handling of the Ayodhya crisis. The growing charges of corruption in the Rao government added to the friction.

Although Rao was able to contain the challenge of the dissidents, his leadership position within the party was gradually undermined by a series of state assembly defeats in November 1993[64] and November–December 1994. The Prime Minister's opponents within the Congress (I) argued that the election defeats were a referendum on Rao's leadership and a direct result of the erosion of Congress secularism, corruption allegations against the Rao ministry, and the government's anti-poor policy of economic liberalization. Although Rao's control of the party machinery enabled him to defeat the challenge to his leadership, the clash led to another split in the party. Dissidents led by Arjun Singh resigned from the Congress (I) and later launched a new party in May 1995.

Having marginalized his opponents, Rao moved quickly to try to regain the political initiative. Responding to the charges raised by the dissidents, the Prime Minister forced two allegedly corrupt ministers to resign, reshuffled his Cabinet in an effort to bolster his support among pro-Rajiv loyalists, and began to court support from Sonia Gandhi. On the policy front he responded by reverting to old populist Congress (I) policies including tax breaks for the poor, new rural development programs, and increases in fertilizer subsidies.

Rao's recovery, however, proved to be short-lived. In March 1995 the Congress (I) suffered another series of state assembly election defeats and Rao's enemies saw a chance to renew their assault on his leadership.[65] Rao, however, again successfully outmaneuvered his opponents. He counterattacked by using patronage and cabinet

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[64]Ramashray Roy, "India in 1993: The Struggles of Economic Reform," *Asian Survey*, 34 (February 1994), pp. 200–208; and Walter Andersen, "India in 1994: Economics to the Fore," *Asian Survey*, 35 (February 1995), pp. 127–39.

[65]Walter K. Andersen, "India in 1995: Year of the Long Campaign," *Asian Survey*, 36 (February 1996), pp. 165–78.

appointments to maintain party support and attempted to defuse the issue of corruption by unleashing the CBI on his own Cabinet ministers and political opponents. The strategy, however, backfired when the CBI filed charge sheets against a wide array of politicians and bureaucrats implicating them in what became known as the *hawala* scandal, which involved illegal foreign exchange transactions and bribery. Among the hawala–tainted politicians were five members of Rao's cabinet and several opposition party leaders, including the BJP leader L. K. Advani. Although Rao tried to portray himself as a corruption-buster by forcing several of his accused ministers to resign, in late 1996 he himself became implicated when his name came up during the police investigation into the scandal.

As India went to the polls in May–June 1996 the prospects for the Congress (I) looked bleak.[66] The elections marked the first time since independence that the Congress (I) had to go to the polls without a member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty at the helm; the party was divided as Rao's alliance strategy had heightened internal factionalism and led to a large number of defections and 5 years of Congress rule had reignited anti-Congress opposition unity. On the eve of the elections a group of leftist and regional opposition parties came together to form a National Front-Left Front coalition that attacked Rao for corruption and called his economic reform policies anti–poor and antinational. On the right, a resurgent BJP was confident that its new found popularity would enable it to replace the Congress (I) as the nation's largest party. Although the elections resulted in a hung Parliament, the Congress (I) suffered the worst defeat in its history. The Congress (I) was able to win only 140 seats and its popular vote dropped sharply from 37 percent to 28.8 percent. The 14-party United Front government that was cobbled together, however, had to depend on Congress (I) support to remain in power.

The postelection period proved to be especially devastating to Narashima Rao. Rao's position as leader of the Congress (I) was severely undermined by the party's electoral defeat and by a tarnished past that began to catch up with him. In the months following the 1996 elections, a variety of corruption charges were levied against Rao and he became the first former Prime Minister in Indian history to appear before a court of law for trial. These corruption cases involved charges of having bribed four MPs to gain their support on a no-confidence motion against the government in 1993; a charge by a British businessman of Indian origin that he had paid Rao $100,000 as a bribe to secure a government

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[66]Sumit Ganguly, "India in 1996: A Year of Upheaval," *Asian Survey*, 37 (February 1997), pp. 126–35.

contract in 1983, which was never awarded; and a charge that Rao had orchestrated the forgery of documents designed to implicate the son of V. P. Singh in an illegal foreign exchange transaction in St. Kitts in the Caribbean. As result of these corruption charges, Rao was forced to resign as Congress (I) President and was replaced in September 1996 by Sitaram Kesri. A few months later Rao was also forced to resign as Leader of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party.

At the age of 77, Sitaram Kesri was not prepared to wait for the 14-party United Front coalition to collapse of its own weight. He immediately embarked upon an effort to win back party defectors, strengthen his hold over the Congress (I), topple the United Front government and become Prime Minister. Suspecting that Prime Minister H. D. Devi Gowda was conspiring with Narasimha Rao against him, Kesri attacked Gowda for being over zealous in pursuing corruption cases against Congress (I) leaders and suddenly withdrew Congress (I) support from the United Front government. As a result of the withdrawal of Congress (I) support, Gowda lost a vote of confidence on April 11, 1997, and was forced to resign.

The removal of the H. D. Devi Gowda government, however, did not catapult Kesri to the prime ministership. Instead, after a prolonged crisis the Congress (I) was forced to agree to mend fences with the United Front and allow the coalition to select a new leader that would be more acceptable to the Congress (I). On April 22, the United Front elected I. K. Gujral as Prime Minister. Gujral was able to survive for only a few months and was forced to resign on November 31, 1997, when the Congress (I) again withdrew its support. The new crisis erupted when a commission that had been appointed to investigate the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi issued a report implicating the DMK, a key constituent of the United Front, in the assassination. The Congress (I) immediately demanded that the DMK be ousted from the coalition. When the United Front refused, the Congress (I) withdrew its support on November 28, 1997; the government collapsed and India once again went to the polls.[67]

The Return of the Dynasty

The Congress (I) entered the February–March 1998 election campaign demoralized and in disarray as many Congressmen defected to the BJP or created their own regional parties. The climate changed

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[67]Sumit Ganguly, "India in 1997: Another Year of Turmoil," *Asian Survey*, 38 (February 1998), pp. 126–34.

dramatically, however, in early January 1998 when Sonia Gandhi agreed to openly campaign on behalf of the Congress (I) "to save India from those who use religion and caste to divide the country." Her decision had the immediate effect of stemming the tide of Congress (I) defections, raising party morale, increasing financial flows to the party, and blunting the seemingly irreversible pro–BJP electoral wave. Sonia's election rallies attracted large crowds and appeared to alter the entire dynamic of the elections.

The "Sonia effect" had only a limited impact on electoral fortunes of Congress (I), however, as the large campaign crowds she attracted failed to translate into increased votes for the party. Still, the 1998 election results seemed to have slowed, at least temporarily, the decline of the Congress (I) that had begun in 1989. The party was able to win 141 seats and 25.88 percent of the vote compared to 140 seats and 28.8 percent of the vote in 1996. The election also brought a return of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty when following the polls, the 52-year-old Italian-born Sonia Gandhi replaced Sitaram Kesri as President of the Congress (I). Sonia immediately began a major attempt to rebuild the Congress (I) organization, win back party dissidents, and develop plans to cobble together a coalition capable of replacing the highly unstable 14-party BJP government.[68]

Sonia Gandhi took control of a party in near total disarray; a party that lacked a clear vision; and a party whose base of support had eroded significantly over the years. Initially, Sonia's foreign origins, inexperience, lack of confidence, poor public speaking style, and limited understanding of the intricacies of Indian politics made her highly dependent upon a small coterie of senior Congress members who had remained close to the Nehru-Gandhi family over the years. Despite her inexperience, Sonia did possess a variety of positive strengths that gradually enabled her to consolidate her position. She enjoyed a high degree of personal integrity, proved to be a fast learner, consulted widely, was decisive, and over time came to master the complexities of Indian politics.[69]

During Sonia Gandhi's first few years as Congress President, the party continued to flounder and Congress MPs continued to see their party as the "natural party of government." Because of its ambivalent policies, many in India came to see the Congress (I) as simply the

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[68]Atul Kohli, "Enduring Another Election," *Journal of Democracy*, 9 (July 1998), pp. 7–20; and Ramesh Thakur, "A Changing of the Guard in India," *Asian Survey*, 38 (June 1998), pp. 603–23.

[69]*India Today* (New Delhi), December 2, 2002, pp. 13–20.

"B team" of the BJP. Although Sonia's leadership provided the glue to keep the party together, she seemed incapable of rebuilding it. Sonia inherited a party organization dominated by power brokers and corrupt, venal, manipulative, local party bosses who had been in power for decades. She also inherited a party whose secular image had been tarnished by decades of Indira, Rajiv, and Rao's "soft Hindutva" policies that attempted to cater to Hindu voters and whose center–left image had been undermined by its economic reforms of 1991. These organizational and policy problems were further compounded by Sonia's botched efforts at toppling the BJP coalition government in April 1999 and by her failure to muster the necessary majority to replace it. This failed attempt to win power made her appear inept and power hungry and was followed by the worst defeat in the party's history in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, when the party was able to win only 114 seats.

Sonia's political ineptitude, the poor showing of the Congress (I) in the 1999 elections, and continued uneasiness over her foreign origins were reinforced by a growing sense of resentment within the party over Sonia's coterie rule, her failure to consult with senior Congress leaders, and her failure to articulate a coherent policy or vision for the party. Dissatisfaction with Sonia's leadership led to a rare public challenge to her reelection as Congress (I) President in November 2000. The challenge came from Jitendra Prasada, a U.P. Congress leader who had held numerous party positions and had been part of Rajiv's inner circle.[70] Sonia Gandhi, however, defeated Prasada by a vote of 7,448 to 94. Sonia's reelection as Congress (I) President in November 2000 marked the beginning of a major turnaround for her and her party. Her overwhelming reelection appeared to strengthen her sense of self–confidence and independence. Sonia became more upbeat; her speaking style appeared more confident, focused, and forceful; she began to act more decisively and depended less on the advice of her coterie of advisors; she appointed her own nominees to the party's Working Committee; and she chose reconciliation not retribution in dealing with Jitendra Prasada and those who had opposed her.

Following her reelection, Sonia Gandhi embarked upon a major effort at reshaping the image, policy, and strategy of Congress (I). At a meeting of the AICC in Bangalore in March 2001, the usually grim Sonia was especially upbeat as she began the process of

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[70]*Frontline* (Chinnai), June 10–23, 2000.

reasserting the party's traditional left of center image by endorsing a more pro-poor, pro-farmer economic agenda. The Bangalore session not only distanced the Congress (I) somewhat from its association with the market-oriented economic reforms of 1991 but also attempted to strengthen its secularist credentials and tempered its traditional hostility toward electoral alliances.

By the summer of 2002, popular opinion polls and a resurgence of support for the Congress (I) revealed a continuing erosion of popular support for the BJP-led NDA government. Following its victory in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had lost power in five of the eight states it had controlled. By contrast, under Sonia Gandhi's leadership, the Congress (I) had increased its control from five states in March 1998 to 16 of India's 28 state governments in 2002. The erosion of support for BJP was attributed to mediocre economic growth, high unemployment, a series of party corruption scandals, an increase in terrorism, a resurgence of the Ayodhya issue, and sharp divisions within the NDA coalition over the BJP's economic reform agenda. These problems were later compounded in December 2002 by the anti–Muslim program in the BJP-controlled state of Gujarat.

Meanwhile, after four years as Congress (I) President and numerous disastrous political stumbles, Sonia Gandhi grew more self-confident and began to emerge as a credible national leader in both style and substance. In 1998 the shy, inexperienced Sonia Gandhi merely read speeches prepared by others, her speaking style was awkward and stilted, and her speeches lacked real substance. By 2002 she pored over files on major policy issues, was more capable of speaking extemporaneously from notes, and her speeches were more substantive and complex. Her change in style was accompanied by a greater grasp of substance. She began to play a major role as leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, became more independent of her coterie of advisors, no longer relied on any one person for advice, consulted a wide range of specialists on various issues, and began to act more independently. She even felt confident enough to overrule the advice of senior party leaders.[71]

Sonia's assertion of leadership was accompanied by an attempt to refurbish the party's popular image by projecting a more aggressive left–of–center populist program similar to the "Garibi Hatao" strategy employed by Indira Gandhi in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This new program emphasized a more "humane" approach to economic

[71]*India Today* (New Delhi), December 2, 2002, pp. 13–20.

reforms that drew upon successful examples of policies implemented by Congress (I) controlled state governments that were designed to fight poverty, assist farmers, and alleviate the suffering of the poor.

Despite its defeat by the BJP in the December 2002 Gujarat assembly elections, the new upbeat mood of the Congress (I) continued into 2003. In an effort to reinvigorate the party organization Sonia called a series of national level conferences and hired an independent consultant to recommend changes in the party organization designed to enhance its performance. The national level conferences included a three-day meeting of block and district level Congress (I) leaders in March 2003 and a conference of Congress (I) chief ministers in June. At the block and district party meetings in March, Sonia attended all sessions of the conference; listened intently to the debates; took notes; and emphasized the party's renewed commitment to poverty reduction, farmers, and oppressed communities. The most important action taken by the chief ministers conference in June was to further clarify the Congress Party's 1998 policy toward the formation of alliances. This clarification of Congress (I) alliance strategy drew upon a report prepared by a group of consultants that had concluded that the Congress (I) could win a clear majority of 293 seats in the Lok Sabha if it negotiated the right set of strategic alliances with regional parties. The report specifically recommended the formation of alliances with the Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar, the Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra, the DMK in Tamil Nadu, the JMM in Chhattisgarh, and the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh.[72]

The apparent resurgence of the Congress (I), however, received a major setback in December 2003 when the party was defeated by the BJP in state assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. The BJP's electoral performance was its best since 1998 and was attributed primarily to the enormous popularity of Prime Minister Vajpayee who was heralded by the party and the press as another Jawaharlal Nehru. Even the RSS credited the positive image of Vajpayee as the key to the party's success.[73] Buoyed by Vajpayee's popularity, the BJP's stature was further enhanced by a sudden boom in the economy that resulted in a GDP growth rate of 8 percent following several years of mediocre growth. The enhanced growth rate was sparked by a good monsoon that had followed a year of severe drought. India's enhanced rate of economic growth, its nuclear status, and the emergence

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[72]*India Today* (New Delhi), August 25, 2003.

[73]*India Today* (New Delhi), December 15, 2003.

of the information technology and business services industry produced an overwhelming sense euphoria and self confidence. The country's media proclaimed the 21st century to be the "Indian Century," and the BJP launched a massive "India Shining" public relations campaign. In the euphoria of the moment, the BJP decided to call an early national election to renew its mandate.

Rattled by defeats in the December 2003 assembly elections, the Congress (I) initiated a series of steps designed to strengthen the party in preparation for the Lok Sabha elections. Sonia reorganized the Congress (I) high command; her son Rahul and daughter Priyanka were enrolled as primary members of the party, which made them eligible to become party candidates in the elections; and most important, the Congress (I) entered into a series of strategic alliances with state and caste parties in critical states to enhance its electoral prospects.

Despite Sonia's initiatives, most political pundits and public opinion polls predicted a Congress (I) defeat in the April–May 2004 national elections, which would be its fourth time in a row since 1991. The first signs of a possible election upset came in late April 2004 when new public opinion polls indicated that the Congress (I) and its allies were gaining momentum. By the time of the second round of balloting on May 5th and 10th polls indicated that a major upset was in the offing. The Congress upsurge was confirmed when the final results gave the Congress (I) 145 seats and 26.4 percent of the vote and its allies 77 seats and 10.1 percent of the vote for a total of 222 seats—just short of a majority in the Lok Sabha. The BJP suffered a major defeat and the Congress (I) was returned to power after 8 years in opposition when the communist Left-Front agreed to support the coalition based on a Common Minimum Program.

Following its victory, the Congress (I) and its allies formed a coalition government called the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). India was suddenly forced to confront a basic question: Would the country accept a foreign-born woman as its new Prime Minister? The BJP, the RSS, and the Sangh Parivar immediately launched a major attack against Sonia and her foreign origins. In a dramatic gesture of renunciation Sonia defused the issue of her foreign origins by stepping aside and nominating Manmohan Singh, a Congress (I) Sikh and architect of the 1991 economic reforms, as Prime Minister and leader of the new government. Her action not only defused the issue of her foreign origins but played a major role in enhancing her stature as a leader. Manmohan Singh became the first nominated Congress Party Prime Minister of India since independence. His appointment, however,

raised the fundamental issue of dual leadership and the relationship between party and government. This issue had plagued the Congress Party during the early years of the postindependence until Prime Minister Nehru clearly established the supremacy of the government over the party. This tradition had prevailed throughout the period of Congress dominance and after.

Although the relationship between Sonia and Manmohan Singh was far from equal, the two leaders appeared to have worked out a successful power-sharing arrangement. Mindful of the dignity of the Prime Minister, Sonia provided Manmohan Singh considerable leeway in running the affairs of the government. As Congress President, Sonia became the chairman of the National Advisory Council (NAC), a coalition coordinating body designed to ensure the smooth functioning of the alliance. Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh developed a complex consultative process that included frequent meetings, private briefings, and informal contacts. Sonia projected herself as chairman of the UPA and not the Congress President. Sonia Gandhi's leadership of the coalition, however, provoked a sudden crisis when it was determined that she was in violation of the law by holding an "office of profit" as chairman of the NAC, which had provided her with a government staff and office. She defused the crisis by resigning as chairman of the NAC and as a Member of Parliament only to win a massive victory in a new by election in 2006.[74]

The decline of the Congress since 1989 has had a profound impact on Indian politics and the Indian political system. Over the past 25 years the Congress has seen its support base erode as Brahmins, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Muslims, and other minorities drifted away to the BJP, the Janata Dal, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and regional and caste parties. The return of the Nehru–Gandhi dynasty marked by the election of Sonia Gandhi as Congress President does not, however, really solve the problems faced by the party. Indira Gandhi, Sanjay, and Rajiv all held out similar promises of a transformation of the Congress Party and failed. The Italian-born Sonia is in an even less envious position. Sonia lacks the experience, leadership skills, and charisma of her mother-in-law and husband and is unlikely to succeed where they have failed. The Congress (I) must be rebuilt from the bottom up, not the top down, and needs a new generation of skilled leaders, a new program, and a reconstructed social base if it hopes to become a majority party. While Congress may return to power as the largest

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[74]*Economist* (London), May 13, 2006, pp. 51–52.

party in a coalition government or even as a majority party, the days of Congress dominance have passed.

RECOMMENDED READING

Ahuja, M. L., *General Elections In India: Electoral Politics, Electoral Reforms and Political Parties*. New Delhi: Icon Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2005. A comprehensive analysis of India's 14 general elections since 1952 including detailed results of the 2004 elections.

Chhibber, Pradeep K., *Democracy without Associations: Transformation of the Party System and Social Cleavages in India*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999. An excellent study of the relationship between electoral competition and the politicization of social differences in India.

Chhibber, Pradeep, and Ken Kollman, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and The United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004. A comparative study the formation of national party systems and federalism.

Frank, Katherine, *Indira: The Life of Indira Gandhi*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. An in depth study of India's former Prime Minister.

Graham, Bruce, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. An excellent study of the origins and development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

*Hart, Henry C., ed., *Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraised*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976. A superb collection of papers that places the 1975–77 emergency in wide perspective.

Hasan, Zoya ed., *Parties and Party Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002. An attempt to capture the evolving nature of the party system in India by incorporating some seminal essays.

Jayakar, Pupul, *Indira Gandhi: A Biography*. New Delhi: Viking/Penguin, 1992. An intimate portrait by a close friend.

Kochanek, Stanley A., *The Congress Party of India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968. Focuses on the development of the party at the national level in the years since independence, the changing role of the Congress President and the Working Committee, and their relationship to the Prime Minister and the government.

*Kohli, Atul, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. An astute analysis of an interventionist national government and weak political parties that have made governing India so difficult.

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Kothari, Rajni, ed., *Party Systems and Election Studies*. Occasional Papers of the Center for Developing Societies, No. 1. Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1967. A collection of essays by some of India's most astute political scientists. Of particular importance are the essays on the system of one-party dominance.

Merchant, Minhaz, *Rajiv Gandhi: The End of a Dream*. New Delhi: Viking/ Penguin, 1991. The first major biography.

Mehra, Ajay K., D. D. Khanna, and Gert W. Kueck, *Political Parties and Party Systems*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003. A collection of papers that analyze the relationship between coalition politics and caste, tribe, and community.

Overstreet, Gene D., and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959. Still the most complete study of the early communist movement in India, its history, organization, and leadership.

Sen Gupta, Bhabani, *Rajiv Gandhi: A Political Study*. New Delhi: Konarak Publishers, 1989. An excellent critique of Rajiv Gandhi's performance.

Singh, Mahendra Prasad, and Anil Mishra, *Coalition Politics in India: Problems and Prospects*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2004. A collection of papers that analyse various dimensions of coalition government.

Sisson, Richard, and Ramashraya Roy, eds., *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics*, 2 vols. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990. A perceptive collection of essays dealing with the adaptation, changing environment, electoral support base, and transformation of the Congress Party.

*Weiner, Myron, *The Indian Paradox: Essays in Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989. An excellent survey of the post-Nehru development of India.

Zaidi, A. M., *The Annual Register of Indian Political Parties*. New Delhi: S. Chand, 1973–. A yearly compendium of information and documents pertaining to all the recognized national parties.

*Available in paperback edition.

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The Emergence
of Coalition Politics
and Rise of the BJP

THE GRADUAL DECLINE OF THE CONGRESS SYSTEM and the end of one-party dominance was accompanied by the fragmentation of national parties, the regionalization of the party system, rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP, and the emergence of a new era of multiparty coalition politics. The first decade following the end of one-party rule in 1989 was dominated by several failed attempts by the country's fragmented opposition to forge a stable, centrist, secular, third force alternative to Congress rule. By the late 1990s, however, the repeated failure of India's increasingly fragmented opposition to construct an effective and stable government bought a halt to third force politics. While the idea of forming a third force coalition remained a possibility, it became increasingly unlikely. By the late 1990s third force politics was supplanted by the rise of the Hindu Nationalist BJP and the gradual emergence of a "bi-nodal" party system built around dominant party coalitions led by the BJP and the Congress.[1]

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[1]See Balveer Arora, "Federalization of India's Party System" and Ajay K. Mehra, "Historical Development of The Party Systems in India," in Ajay K. Mehra, D. D. Khamma, and Gert. W. Kueck, eds., *Political Parties and Party Systems* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 49–82, 83–999.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THIRD FORCE POLITICS

Initial efforts at forging a durable, centrist, secular alternative to the Congress were begun in the late 1970s, but the efforts accelerated rapidly in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There have been three unsuccessful efforts at forging a stable, effective, centrist third front governing coalition government. The first attempt at establishing a national alternative to the dominant Congress Party was the emergence of the Janata Party in the late 1970s following the end of emergency rule in 1977. A second experiment was attempted in 1989–91 with the emergence of Janata Dal as the leader of a broad coalition of regional parties. The third centrist coalition was forged by the United Front in 1996–98, a loose alliance of 14 regional parties. Due to factionalism, personality clashes, and ideological divisions, none of these alliances was able to survive for a full five-year term, and by the late 1990s the era of failed third force politics had run its course. While the potential for the formation of a third front remains a long term possibility, it appears highly unlikely in the short run.

The Janata Party (1977–79)

The Janata Party, created in 1977, was the first major effort in postindependence India to forge a centrist alternative to the Congress Party. The Janata Party was composed of four national parties: the Congress (O), the Jana Sangh, the Socialist Party, and the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD). In the elections that brought the party to power, the Janata Party allied itself with the Congress for Democracy (CFD), a Congress splinter led by Jagjivan Ram.[2]

The largest of the four parties was the Congress (O), led by former Deputy Prime Minister Morarji Desai. The party was the product of the 1969 Congress split. Bound by personal association and only loosely ideological, the Congress (O) represented a blend of conservative and Gandhian perspectives. Its support (10.5 percent of the vote in 1971) was geographically dispersed and socially heterogeneous,

[2]For a lively, if biased, account of the alliance, see Brahm Dutt, *Five Headed Monster* (New Delhi: Surge Publications, 1978). The colorful personalities involved are portrayed in Janardan Thakur, *All the Janata Men* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978).
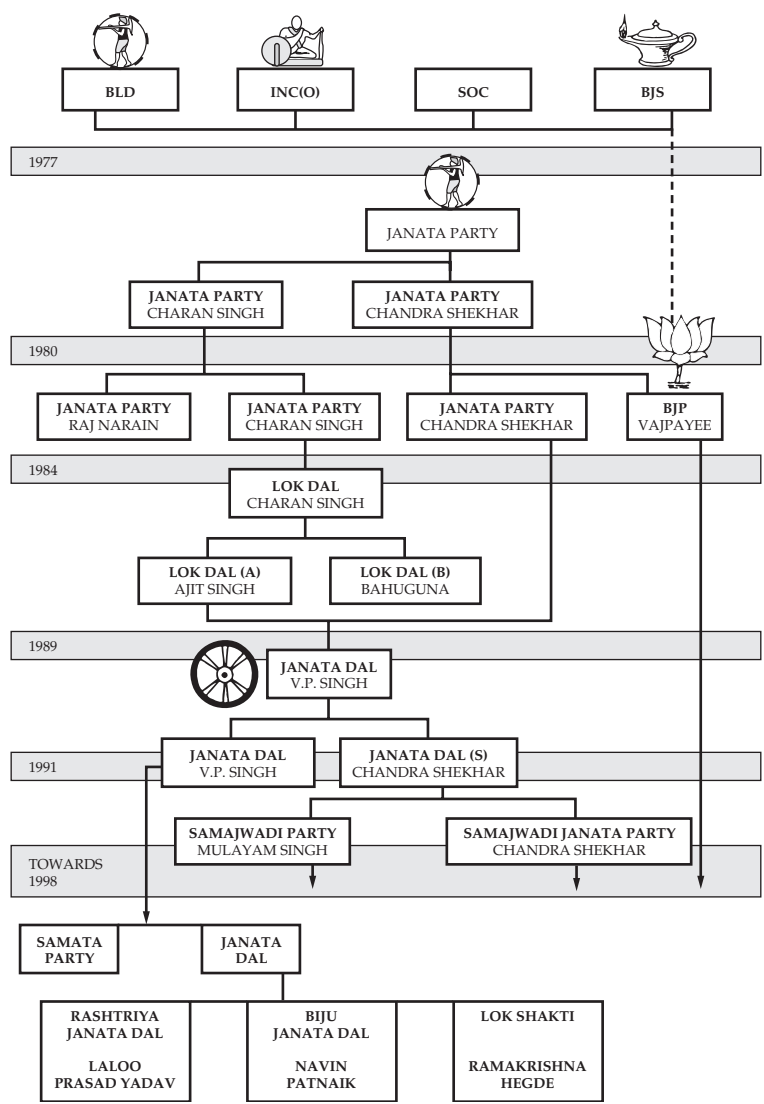
FIGURE 7.1   The Janata Party and BJP 1977–1998

SOURCE: David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1991* (New Delhi: Living Media, 1991), p. 26.

but it brought to the Janata Party important links to the business community and an experienced leadership.

The Jana Sangh was the only party to join the Janata coalition that did not have roots in the Congress. Its origins were in the Hindu nationalism of the Mahasabha and the RSS. At the time of Gandhi's assassination, Dr. S. P. Mookerjee, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, was a member of Nehru's Cabinet. In December 1948 he resigned from the Mahasabha when his proposal to open membership to non-Hindus was rejected. In early 1950 he resigned from the Cabinet; he was a leader in search of a party. The *Organiser,* a semiofficial publication of the RSS, called for a new political party, with Moorkerjee clearly in view, and in 1951 Moorkerjee announced the formation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the people's party. The object of the party was the rebuilding of Bharat (India) as a modern, democratic society, while removing foreign cultural influences as much as possible. Four "fundamentals" guided the party: one country, one nation, one culture, and the rule of law.[3] From its founding, the party had gradually increased its strength to a peak of 9 percent in 1967, with a decline to 7 percent in 1971. The base of the party's support was the urban, educated Hindu middle class—professionals, small businessmen, and white-collar workers.

The Socialist Party, founded in 1971, was heir to the faction-torn Indian socialist movement.[4] An amalgam of Marxist, Gandhian, and democratic socialist elements, the party had split and reunited a half-dozen times. With about 4 percent of the 1971 vote, its base of support, concentrated in North India and mainly Bihar, was predominantly rural, young, and poor. A major portion of its rural support was among untouchables and landless laborers. Through its trade union, the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, the Socialists had a scattered support among urban labor, notably in Bombay. The patriarch of the Socialist Party, though not formally associated with any party, was Jayaprakash

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[3]Craig Baxter, "The Jana Sangh: A Brief Political History," in Donald E. Smith, ed., *South Asian Politics and Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 81. See also Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party* (Press Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1969); and Bruce Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[4]See Lewis P. Fickett, Jr., *The Major Socialist Parties of India: A Study in Leftist Fragmentation* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Maxwell School, Syracuse University, 1976); and Paul R. Brass, "Leadership Conflict and the Disintegration of the Indian Socialist Movement: Personal Ambition, Power, and Policy," in P. N. Pandey, ed., *Leadership in South Asia* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1977), pp. 341–71.

Narayan. The party's chairman was George Fernandes, leader of the railway workers union.

The BLD was formed in 1974 in the merger of seven parties, some caste or personal parties, and each with essentially regional support. Its largest constituents were the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD), led by Charan Singh, and the Swatantra Party. The BKD, a Congress splinter, was confined to Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, and was supported mainly by peasants from the middle castes. The Swatantra Party was India's party of free enterprise. Its support (concentrated in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Orissa) derived principally from the business community, landowners, and former princely families. Among the smaller parties entering into the BLD was a socialist faction led by Raj Narain. Under the leadership of Charan Singh, the BLD was committed to a "middle Gandhian path." The strength of the party was concentrated primarily among the prosperous agricultural classes of North India.

The 1977 Elections   The four parties merged into the new Janata Party, led by Morarji Desai. The bonds that united them had been forged in the jails during the emergency, and the urgency imposed by the impending elections left them little time to explore their differences. The announcement of the formation of the Janata Party was followed within a few days by the resignation of Jagjivan Ram from the Cabinet and his defection from the Congress fold. Loosely organized and poorly financed, the Janata Party, together with Ram's CFD, took the offensive against the emergency and the personal rule of Mrs. Gandhi.

The Janata victory in the 1977 elections was massive. With 43 percent of the vote, the Janata/CFD won 298 seats in the Lok Sabha (55 percent). Together with their allies, the CPM, DMK, and Akali Dal, they took 330 of the 542 seats.[5]

The Janata Government   After the elections, Jagjivan Ram's CFD merged with the Janata, and the internal struggle to form a new government began. In many ways the Janata, as an umbrella party of disparate interests and conflicting personalities, looked remarkably like the old Congress. The task of maintaining party unity fell to Janata president Chandra Shekhar, a former Congress "Young Turk" and

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[5]Myron Weiner provides a firsthand account of the campaign and a systematic analysis of the election results in *India at the Polls*, 1977. Posters and graffiti are described on pp. 23–28.

follower of Jayaprakash Narayan, who was seriously ill and held back from active political involvement.

Within the Janata, the left favored Jagjivan Ram as Prime Minister, but for Charan Singh and many within the Jana Sangh, Ram was unacceptable. As infighting approached crisis levels, a vote was bypassed in favor of relying upon a decision made by two elder statesmen, Archarya Kripalani and Jayaprakash Narayan. They gave the nod to Morarji Desai—81 years of age, austere, and puritanical.[6]

Before the new government took office, Mrs. Gandhi gave the order to lift the emergency imposed on June 26, 1975. This was followed, as one of the first acts of the Janata government, by withdrawal of the external emergency. In the "restoration of democracy," the Janata sought to roll back the more pernicious effects of emergency rule. The government ordered the release of political prisoners, a restoration of press freedom, and a return of judicial authority to the courts.

To consolidate its position, the Janata sought fresh elections for the assemblies in those states where Congress retained power but had suffered defeat in parliamentary polling. If Janata was to ensure the victory of its candidate in the presidential election due in August (six months after the death of President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed), it was imperative that it control a majority in the state assemblies. Congress denounced the effort to dislodge "duly constituted" state governments. Amid controversy, but averting a confrontation with the Janata government that threatened to become a constitutional crisis, the Acting President dissolved the assemblies. Elections were held in June 1977 for the legislative assemblies in 11 states and three Union Territories. Despite internal conflict, Janata again swept the polls.

With a majority of seats in the state assemblies, the Janata was assured that its candidate would be elected President. Sanjiva Reddy, who had been the unsuccessful Congress candidate for President in 1969, was put forward as a consensus candidate. With the support of all parties, including the Congress, he was unanimously elected.

Ideological contradictions and a range of diverse interests reinforced personality and group conflict within the Janata Party. In foreign policy, the party reaffirmed India's commitment to nonalignment and stressed improved relations with India's South

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[6]See the very perceptive article by Ram Joshi and Kirtidev Desai, "Toward a More Competitive Party System in India," *Asian Survey,* 18 (November 1978), pp. 1,091–1,116.

Asian neighbors. Domestic policy was less coherent. The Janata offered a "Gandhian alternative" to the Congress emphasis on heavy industry. Its economic program emphasized decentralization, rural development, and labor-intensive industry. In practice, Janata policy differed little from that of Congress.

Crisis and Collapse   The euphoria that greeted the Janata victory in March 1977 was soon displaced by frustration and uncertainty. Good monsoons and record harvests sustained the economy, but government policy lacked direction. Strikes increased, inflation surged, student "indiscipline" closed universities throughout North India, caste tensions erupted, and communal violence led to a wave of Hindu-Muslim riots. Perhaps the most ominous unrest came in mid–1979, in a wave of police and paramilitary strikes that surged through the country.

Within the Janata Party conflict was endemic. In June 1978, with deepening enmity between Morarji Desai and Charan Singh, it reached a crisis point with the forced resignations of Charan Singh and Raj Narain. Singh's ouster from the Cabinet threatened the party with schism, but the BLD was itself split, and Singh could count on no more than 50 of the BLD's 81 MPs to leave the Janata. Instead, he suggested that the party be reconstituted as a federation of member parties, each retaining separate identities and organizations. It was, in fact, little more than that already, its cohesion maintained by the allure of office, the threat of Congress resurgence, and reluctance to face another general election. By July 1979, however, with the government virtually immobilized by factionalism, the tenuous solidarity of the Janata was finally broken.

The catalyst for the crisis within the Janata Party was the controversy over the role of the Jana Sangh and its continued ties with the RSS. Raj Narain took the initiative, and resigned from the Janata Party, taking with him 46 Lok Sabha members—most from the BLD faction—to form the Janata (Secular). The defections denied the Janata government its majority in Parliament, and on July 11 the leader of the opposition, Y. B. Chavan of the Congress, brought a motion of no confidence. Within the Janata the pace of defection increased.

As the Janata disintegrated, Morarji Desai finally yielded to pressure from within the party to step down as Prime Minister. He submitted his resignation only a day before the parliamentary vote that almost surely would have toppled the Janata government. Following parliamentary practice, President Sanjiva Reddy asked Desai to

remain in office as "caretaker" until a new government could be formed. Charan Singh, crossing the floor to the opposition, took the leadership of the Janata (Secular) and announced his intention to form a new government.[7]

As the government crisis entered the second week, President Reddy gave the nod to Charan Singh who had marshaled a narrow majority of 280 seats—a number clearly open to challenge. The three-party coalition itself commanded only 182 seats: 92 from Charan Singh's Janata (Secular), 75 from the Congress, and 15 from the Socialists. The government's survival rested on outside support—the seven members of the CPI and, most critically, the 73 members of the Congress (I). Charan Singh, jailed by Indira Gandhi during the 1975–77 emergency, was now dependent upon her support—much to his own discomfort as well as that of his coalition partners. On July 28, 1979, Charan Singh, 77 years of age and suffering from a heart condition, became the fifth Prime Minister of India.

The day before the new government took power, Desai turned over the leadership of the Janata Party to Jagjivan Ram. Ram vowed to bring down Charan Singh's "minority government" at the first opportunity. From outside the ministry, Indira Gandhi's Congress (I) held the balance. As the condition for her support, Mrs. Gandhi demanded that the Special Courts established to prosecute cases arising from the emergency be scrapped. Singh was unable to accede to her demand without losing the support of other parties upon whom he was dependent. Facing inevitable defeat on a vote of confidence when Parliament reconvened in late August, Charan Singh, after 24 days in office, resigned.

In stepping down, the Prime Minister asked President Reddy to call new elections. Jagjivan Ram, as leader of the opposition, claimed the right to form a new government if he could secure the necessary majority. Resisting pressure on behalf of Ram, the President dissolved Parliament and called for elections.[8] The first effort to form a national, centrist alternative to the Congress ended in failure.

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[7]In 1982 Morarji Desai gave to Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, some 200 files of papers and correspondence. Using these documents, Gandhi wrote a highly controversial account of the Janata government. See Arun Gandhi, *The Morarji Papers: Fall of the Janata Government* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1983).

[8]M. V. Pylee examines the role of the President in this "sordid drama" in *Crisis, Conscience and the Constitution* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1982).

Renewed Opposition Fragmentation (1980–89)

With the breakup of the Janata Party, the Congress (I) returned to power. Periodic unity efforts by the opposition parties ran aground on questions of leadership, allocation of seats in elections, and the allegedly communal character of the BJP. Initial efforts toward unity were frustrated by the continued bickering of Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, and Jagjivan Ram, in a replay of the dissension that brought the collapse of the Janata government. Increasingly, however, leaders of the next generation, the product of postindependence politics, began to take center stage—but to no greater effect in forging opposition unity.

There were a number of impediments to unity, with the issue of leadership, given the contentious personalities involved, among the most prominent. Regional parties, moreover, had no interest in submerging their separate identities in an all-India party, and those in power were not prepared to share the bounty of office. Furthermore, the newly formed BJP, while supporting party alliance and electoral adjustment, was opposed to merger in principle.

Throughout the 1980s, there were continuing efforts to merge the constituents of the Janata Party and to forge opposition unity, but to no avail. With the assassination of Indira Gandhi in October 1984, the focal point that might have brought the opposition together was gone.

The opposition parties entered the 1984 election campaign divided and in disarray, unable to reach even electoral adjustments in more than a few states. The results virtually wiped out the opposition in Parliament. Having discredited themselves through their petty squabbling, virtually all the opposition party leaders were defeated.

From 1984 to 1988 the opposition to Congress (I) remained fragmented, regionally disparate, and involved in continuous processes of fission and fusion. Efforts by the non-Communist national opposition parties to unite or even reach electoral understandings were frustrated again and again by the ambitions of their various leaders. Although single opposition parties emerged as credible alternatives to Congress rule in a number of states, no single party posed such a challenge at the Center. The electoral strength of the opposition parties, however—regional parties and national parties that are all-India in name but regional in their concentrated bases of support—remained formidable at the state level and as a unified force had the potential to displace Congress at the Center.[9]

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[9]See Hardgrave, "South Asian Internal Politics and Policies," pp. 194–210, and "After the Dynasty: Politics in India," pp. 106–12.

The Janata Dal and the National Front (1989–91)

The Janata Dal Forms   The approach of the 1989 parliamentary elections, defeat of the Congress (I) in several state assembly elections from 1985 to 1989, and Rajiv's increased political vulnerability accelerated efforts by India's fragmented, centrist opposition to forge a new national alternative to the Congress (I). The process of opposition unity was triggered in the summer of 1988 by the massive electoral victory in the Allahabad by-election of V. P. Singh, a dissident Congress member and former Finance Minister. The size of Singh's victory demonstrated the strength of the corruption issue, Rajiv's vulnerability, and the importance of opposition unity. Within months of the Allahabad victory, a three-stage process was set in motion that led to the creation of the National Front. In the first phase, a group of centrist parties, including the rump of the old Janata Party, two factions of the Lok Dal, and the newly created Jan Morcha (People's Movement) came together to form the Janata Dal. In the second phase, the Janata Dal joined with three regional parties—the Telugu Desam of Andhra, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) of Tamil Nadu, and the Asom Gana Parishad of Assam—and the Congress (S) to form the National Front. In the third and final phase, the National Front entered into electoral arrangements with the BJP on the right and the Communists on the left.

The Janata Party   With the breakup of the Janata government, the party split and then reabsorbed elements from its breakaway parties. The party's leadership included those with strong state bases, such as Ramakrishna Hedge (Chief Minister of Karnataka), Biju Patnaik (Orissa), Devi Lal (Haryana), and Kapoori Thakur (Bihar). It also contained socialist gadflies George Fernandes, Madhu Limaye, and Raj Narain on the left and, though inactive politically, former Prime Minister Morarji Desai on the right.

Attempting to hold the party's various factions and feuding leaders together was Janata President Chandra Shekhar, a Gandhian socialist who was one of the few to emerge from the shambles of the Janata government relatively untarnished. Chandra Shekhar, however, fell with virtually all the other opposition leaders in the 1984 parliamentary elections. The party, contesting 207 seats, won 10 seats with 6.97 percent of the vote.

The Dalit Mazdoor Kizan Party/Lok Dal   In October 1984 three parties—the Lok Dal, the Democratic Socialist Party, and the

Rashtriya Congress—together with several disaffected Janata leaders, joined to form the Dalit Mazdoor Kizan Party (DMKP), with Charan Singh, the 83-year-old leader of the Lok Dal, as President. Of its constituent units, the Lok Dal was the most important, with support among the middle peasantry and "backward classes" of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, and parts of Rajasthan. Factional splits had reduced the party in strength and geographic reach, and it had become largely the personal party of Charan Singh. In his home base, however, Singh remained a powerful force.

The Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) was formed in 1981 by H. N. Bahuguna, a former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. Bahuguna, an itinerant politician who broke with Mrs. Gandhi in 1977, joined the Janata Party, went back to Congress, and then came out again to organize his own party. The DSP projected itself as socialist, secular, and left-of-center; its support was limited largely to Uttar Pradesh, where Bahuguna (a Brahmin) had considerable following among Muslims.

The Rashtriya Congress formed in 1982 as a splinter from the Congress (I) in Gujarat, with support largely confined to the Saurashtra region of the state.

In the 1984 elections the DMKP contested 174 seats, and, with 5.6 percent of the vote, it won three. The party, in fact, fared better than the results indicate, for in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan, it ran a strong second in many constituencies, and in the 1985 state assembly elections, the party made a reasonably good showing in U.P. Soon after the state elections, in April 1985, the party changed its name back to the Lok Dal, with Charan Singh as President and H. N. Bahuguna as Vice President. Following the death of Charan Singh, the party split into two factions—the Lok Dal (A) led by Ajit Singh, Charan Singh's son, and the Lok Dal (B) led by Bahuguna.

The Jan Morcha The Jan Morcha was founded by V. P. Singh in October 1987. Upon his resignation from the Congress (I) in April 1987, V. P. Singh appeared to drift. He was not quite sure whether he wanted to be a politician or a Gandhian-style moral crusader. Initially he declared that he would devote his time to cleansing Indian politics of corruption and founded the Jan Morcha as a social reform movement open to members of all political parties. Like Mahatma Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan, Singh wanted to stand above party politics and seek to cleanse the system. In the summer of 1988, however, he decided to contest the parliamentary by-election in Allahabad in his home state of Uttar Pradesh. On

June 16, he won a stunning victory that sent shock waves through the Congress and gave new life to an otherwise warring and divided opposition. In the summer of 1988, the Jan Morcha merged with the Janata Party and the two Lok Dal factions to become the new Janata Dal.

The Congress (S) Since 1980 the opposition Congress, identified as (S) for Socialist, had been weakened by attrition. There had been a steady movement of leaders back to the Congress (I). The Kerala and West Bengal units of the party formally merged with the Congress (I), while the Orissa unit joined the Janata Party in early 1983. The Congress (S) was reduced virtually to the status of a regional party in Maharashtra, where, under Sharad Pawar, it posed a powerful challenge to the ruling Congress (I). In 1984, contesting 31 seats and securing 1.46 percent of the vote, it won four seats. Later, however, even Pawar rejoined the Congress (I), leaving a small residue of Congress (S) fragments led by S. C. Sinha.

The National Front With the formation of the Janata Dal, the new party joined its regional party allies and the Congress (S) to form the National Front. The National Front was the second major effort since independence by India's disparate opposition to forge a national, centrist alternative to the Congress. It differed, however, from the Janata Party of 1977–79 in several ways. In the first place, the National Front represented the first attempt by India's national opposition to accommodate the growing regionalization of Indian politics. Regional leaders played an important role in the formation of the National Front, and several regional parties became members of the new coalition. Second, the National Front did not include the BJP, the successor to the old Jana Sangh. The absence of the rightist BJP gave the National Front a more left-of-center orientation. Third, the Front accepted a centralized leadership structure under V. P. Singh, the only non-Congress leader with a strong national identity. Finally, the Janata Dal, the core of the Front, was built on a solid caste base of support that combined the Rajput leadership of V. P. Singh with an appeal to the "backward" peasant castes of North India. In an effort to attract the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), as they were designated officially, the new party committed itself to the implementation of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report, the government commission that had recommended that 27 percent of government jobs be reserved for OBCs as part of a program of affirmative action.

The 1989 Elections   Although the National Front appeared to represent a formidable challenge to the Congress (I), the performance of the party in the 1989 parliamentary elections fell far short of expectations. The National Front won a total of 145 seats and only 21.7 percent of the popular vote. Most of the seats were won by the Janata Dal, as its regional allies performed poorly. Despite its less than stellar performance, the election was still seen as a mandate for V. P. Singh and a repudiation of Rajiv Gandhi. Singh was able to form a minority government with the help of its electoral allies, the BJP and the Communists.[10]

The National Front Government   Although V. P. Singh was elected Prime Minister, he led a minority government that was dependent upon the support of a diverse group of opposition parties and a factionalized governing party composed of political prima donnas. Following the 1989 elections, the three most important leaders of the Janata Dal, the principal constituent of the National Front, were V. P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, and Devi Lal. Each saw himself as a claimant to the prime ministership. Chandra Shekhar was outmaneuvered when V. P. Singh and Devi Lal struck a last-minute deal whereby V. P. Singh would become Prime Minister and Devi Lal would become Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture. A defeated and embittered Chandra Shekhar was forced to wait on the sidelines for an opportunity to reclaim his perceived right to the prime ministership. Devi Lal, the boss of Haryana politics and leader of the Jats, saw himself as the behind-the-scenes king maker and senior advisor. Within months of its formation, however, the stability of the new government was threatened by the activities of Devi Lal and his family in Haryana politics. In March, Devi Lal resigned from the Cabinet to protest attacks against his son involving fraud and violence in the Haryana Assembly elections. V. P. Singh successfully defused the crisis only to have it reappear when leading members of his Cabinet resigned to protest Devi Lal's success in installing his son as Chief Minister of Haryana. In an effort to regain control, V. P. Singh submitted his resignation as president of the Janata Dal. When the party rallied behind him, he agreed to withdraw his resignation. Devi Lal was dismissed from the Cabinet and immediately began to conspire with Chandra Shekhar to topple V. P. Singh.

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[10]Harold A. Gould and Sumit Ganguly, eds., *India Votes: Alliance Politics and Minority Governments in the Ninth and Tenth General Elections* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 1–217.

In an effort to gain popular support, strengthen his position, and undercut Devi Lal, V. P. Singh suddenly announced in August 1990 that he had decided to move on his party's pledge to implement the Mandal Commission Report and reserve 27 percent of all central government jobs for OBCs. Singh's announcement resulted in a firestorm of criticism from the press, the public, and the opposition parties. High-caste students engaged in numerous acts of self-immolation, and V. P. Singh was accused of having started a caste war. The BJP was especially incensed by Singh's announcement and accused him of failing to consult his coalition supporters. In November 1990 the BJP finally decided to withdraw its support of the V. P. Singh government when the government arrested L. K. Advani, the BJP President, in an effort to block his march on the Babri Masjid, the disputed religious shrine at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh.

On November 9, 1990, with only the backing of the Left Front and what was left of the National Front, V. P. Singh lost a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha, 142 to 346, and submitted his resignation. Prior to the vote, Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal had engineered a split in the Janata Dal and formed a new party, the Janata Dal (Socialist), subsequently renamed the Samajwadi Janata Party. The new party had sufficient support to avoid the sanctions of the antidefection law. Although the President of India asked the BJP and the Congress (I) to form a government, both refused. The President then turned to Chandra Shekhar when the Congress (I) indicated that it would support him for the prime ministership. As a result, Chandra Shekhar became the Charan Singh of the National Front. The Congress, however, used Chandra Shekhar in the same way it had used Charan Singh to topple the Janata Party. Chandra Shekhar's government was able to survive for only four months before it was forced to resign in March 1991. India's second major effort to build a centrist alternative to the Congress (I) Party had ended in failure.

The United Front: The Regionalization of the Party System

Following the collapse of the Janata Dal-led National Front government in 1990, opposition unity collapsed again, as it had in 1979, and the constituent units of the National Front fought the 1991 elections alone.[11] With the victory of the Congress (I) in the elections, the

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[11]Ibid., pp. 221–453.

National Front remained dormant and in disarray until the mid-1990s. Efforts to revive the National Front were sparked by the poor performance of the Congress (I) in a series of state assembly elections in 1995 and 1996 and the success of several key constituents of the National Front in Andhra, Karnataka, and Bihar. With a rising BJP and a Congress in decline, opposition leaders once again envisioned the creation of a centrist, third force as a formidable alternative to the Congress.

The initiative to build a secular, non-Congress, left-of-center third force was taken by N. T. Rama Rao, the TDP Chief Minister of Andhra, and was to include the Telugu Desam Party, the Janata Dal, the CPM-led Left Front in West Bengal, and other like-minded secular and regional parties. The strategy was to combine the social bases of centrist and Left Front parties among OBCs, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims with the regional support of state-based parties. The most significant obstacles to this strategy, however, were the absence of a strong national leader and the absence of agreement on a common program.

Notwithstanding the temporary blow to opposition unity efforts caused by a split in the TDP and the death of N. T. Rama Rao in January 1996, negotiations continued into the months preceding the 1996 Lok Sabha elections. A National Front-Left Front coalition was finally formed on the eve of the elections. The coalition, however, was a far cry from the somewhat more homogenous Janata Dal-led coalition of 1989. The key components of the new National Front-Left Front coalition were the Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party, CPI, CPM, Forward Block, and the Revolutionary Socialist Party. These parties in turn entered into electoral adjustments with a variety of regional parties.

The 1996 Lok Sabha elections produced one of the most indecisive results in postindependence India.[12] Although the BJP emerged as the largest single party with 161 seats, it fell far short of a majority. The Congress (I) came in second with 140 seats, its worst performance in its history, and the National Front-Left Front came in third with 110 seats. Even more significantly, the five most important national parties—the BJP, Congress (I), Janata Dal, CPM, and CPI— were able to win only 65 percent of the vote and 72 percent of the

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[12]Aditya Nigam, "India after the 1996 Elections: Nation, Locality and Representation"; and Sudha Pai, "Transformation of the Indian Party System: The 1996 Lok Sabha Elections," *Asian Survey* 36 (December 1996), pp. 1,157–69, 1,170–83.

seats, while regional parties won 26.5 percent of the vote and 26.6 percent of the seats.

Since the BJP had won the largest number of seats, the President of India called upon the party to form a government. The BJP, however, faced a solid bloc of secular opposition parties determined to prevent the formation of a Hindu nationalist government. As a result of this solid opposition, the BJP government lasted only 13 days and was forced to resign when it became clear that it could not hammer together a majority. During the interim, the National Front–Left Front initiated intense negotiations with secular and regional parties and succeeded in cobbling together an uneasy United Front coalition of 14 political parties to replace the BJP. Since the United Front government did not command a majority, it was dependent upon the good will of the Congress (I), which agreed to support the government from outside.

In a variety of ways the United Front government was doomed from the start. In the first place, the new coalition faced a prolonged leadership tussle. Initially the United Front turned to V. P. Singh, its spiritual godfather, who declined to become Prime Minister due to poor health. The United Front then turned to Jyoti Basu, the popular leader of the CPM and Chief Minister of West Bengal, who was forced to decline the prime ministership when his party decided not to join the government but to support it from the outside. The United Front was finally forced to turn to H. D. Devi Gowda, the relatively unknown Janata Dal Chief Minister of Karnataka. Devi Gowda was 63 years old, the son of a farmer, held a degree in Civil Engineering, and as a member of the Vokkaliga community, became the first low-caste Prime Minister since independence. Gowda, however, had no national political experience and lacked the leadership stature of V. P. Singh and Basu.

Second, the coalition was formed after the elections and was very different from either the Janata Party of 1977 or the Janata Dal–dominated National Front of 1989. It was neither a national, centrally controlled party like the Janata Party nor a coalition dominated by a large unified party like the National Front, but was an alliance of 14 small regional and left-of-center parties supported by the Congress (I). These parties were led by strong regional leaders and highlighted the growing regionalization of the Indian party system. Third, the 14-party United Front did not command a majority. The major components of the United Front were the Janata Dal with 43 seats, the Samajwadi Party with 17 seats, the CPM with 33 seats, the CPI with 12 seats, the Revolutionary Socialist Party

with 5 seats, the Forward Bloc with 3 seats, the Tamil Manila Congress with 20 seats, the DMK with 17 seats, the TDP with 16 seats, the AGP with 5 seats, the All-India Indira Congress (T) with 4 seats, the Karnataka Congress Party with 1 seat, and the Madhya Pradesh Vikas Congress with 2 seats for a total of only 178 seats.

A fourth problem faced by the United Front was the absence of a common program. The coalition had to hammer out a Common Minimum Program after it was formed and the result was a series of general platitudes. The program called for the preservation of national unity, social and economic equality, and a commitment to secularism and federalism. In practice, each member of the coalition had its own definition of each of these principles.

Because of repeated difficulties with the Congress (I), on which it was dependent, the United Front government lasted only a little over 18 months. Initially the close rapport between H. D. Devi Gowda and Congress President P. V. Narisimha Rao enabled the coalition to function effectively. However, with the demise of Rao and the rise of his successor Sitaram Kesri, friction began to develop between the United Front and the Congress (I). Kesri and Gowda were deeply suspicious of each other. Kesri believed that Gowda was conspiring to make a deal with his opponents within the Congress to split the party and that Gowda was attempting to discredit him and his party by embroiling Congress leaders in a variety of corruption cases. Gowda, in turn, was suspicious of Kesri, who he believed had stabbed Rao in the back and was anxious to topple him as well.

The first crisis faced by the United Front came in April 1997 when Kesri forced the resignation of Gowda. Kesri, however, had to settle for a compromise replacement when the United Front elected I. K. Gujral, a weak consensus candidate with no political base of his own, to replace Gowda. Gujral, nevertheless, was able to survive only until the end of the year when the Congress (I) withdrew its support a second time. The collapse of the United Front government came when the Jain Commission that had been appointed to investigate the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi issued a report accusing the DMK, a key constituent of the United Front, of playing a role in the assassination. Under pressure from Sonia Gandhi, Kesri had no choice but to insist on the DMK's resignation. When the United Front refused to yield again to what it considered to be Kesri's blackmail, the Congress (I) withdrew its support on November 28, 1997, and the United Front government collapsed.

Ironically, despite its problems, the United Front government had fared unexpectedly well. The United Front government was

the first in postindependence India to be dominated by backward castes, Dalits, and minorities and was the first government to include a backward–caste Prime Minister. In addition, the Front succeeded in continuing, however haltingly, the economic liberalization program begun by Rao. Finally, the foreign policy of the United Front, based on the Gujral Doctrine, improved relations with neighbors by offering unilateral concessions with mutual benefit, especially in the cases of Bangladesh and Nepal.

The United Front entered the 1998 Lok Sabha elections divided and demoralized. The Janata Dal, the dominant component, began to disintegrate even before the collapse of the government when, facing corruption charges, Laloo Prasad Yadav, the leader of its Bihar unit, withdrew and formed his own party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal. As the elections approached Ramkrishna Hedge revolted to form the Lok Shakti in Karnataka, and upon the death of his father, Biju Patnaik's son formed the Biju Janata Dal. As a result, a fragmented United Front was able to win only 97 seats and 21.8 percent of the votes in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections compared to 173 seats in 1996. The rump of the Janata Dal was able to win only six seats and 3.25 percent of the vote. As a result, the Left Front emerged as the dominant constituent of the United Front and the future of third force politics appeared bleak.[13]

THE RISE OF THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

The gradual decline of the Congress (I) and the failure of centrist, third force coalitions to provide an effective alternative created political space for the rapid rise of the newly formed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP was founded in April 1980 as a reincarnation of the old Bharatiya Jana Sangh, which had been incorporated into the Janata Party in 1977. Following the breakup of the Janata Party, a group of former Jana Sangh leaders endeavored to build a new, more moderate, right of center, Hindu nationalist party that would attract wider popular appeal. Like the Indian National Congress and Jana Sangh, the BJP combined the features of a political party and a movement. The new party remained closely allied with the larger Hindu

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[13]See Kohli, "Enduring Another Election" and "The Election Carnival," *Seminar*, 440 (April 1996).

nationalist movement and relied heavily on the militant RSS and its cadre for political and organizational support.

Politically, argues Christophe Jaffrelot, the Hindu nationalist movement in India represented by the Jana Sangh and the BJP has followed a dual strategy.[14] This dual strategy has oscillated between extended periods that emphasized militant Hindu nationalism and ethno-religious mobilization designed to ensure the loyalty of the party's core supporters and its RSS base, and more pragmatic periods that focused on political moderation and coalition building designed to enhance the party's electoral appeal. Following its creation in 1951, notes Jaffrelot, the Jana Sangh adopted a militant Hindu nationalist strategy that attempted to blend the country's religious and territorial identity by emphasizing the party's core ideology of Bharatiya, or Indian, culture, which Richard Fox called "Hindian."[15] Despite its "nonsectarian" claims, this ideology sought to promote national unity by "nationalizing all non-Hindus by inculcating in them the ideal of Bharatiya Culture"[16] and was designed to mobilize the party's Hindu base. The party's commitment to Hindu nationalism was also reflected in its refusal to recognize the partition of the subcontinent; its militantly anti–Pakistani rhetoric; its support of a powerful defense establishment with a nuclear capability; and its global foreign policy of "non-involvement." Unlike other major parties, the Jana Sangh supported the idea of a unitary state, with Hindi as the sole national language; demanded a law to protect cows; and insisted that the state actively promote traditional ayurvedic medicine. Perhaps the most controversial issue confronting the newly created party, however, was its close association and identity with the militant RSS. Indeed, Nehru had once described the Jana Sangh as the "illegitimate child" of the RSS.

The overwhelming popularity of Nehru and his repeated attacks on the Jana Sangh isolated the party at the extreme right of the Indian political spectrum and helped to limit its electoral appeal. Beginning in the 1960s, in a desperate effort to break out of its isolation, argues Jafferlot, the Jana Sangh decided to temper its militancy, soften its

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[14]Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); see also Yogendra K. Malik and V. B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1994); and Thomas Bloom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[15]Hansen, p. 85.

[16]Manifesto and Program of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1958, quoted in Donald E. Smith, *India as a Secular State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 471.

communal image and adopt a more moderate and politically pragmatic approach. In 1965 the Jana Sangh officially adopted the doctrine of "Integral Humanism" as its guiding principle. The concept of "Integral Humanism" was developed by Deendayal Upadhyaya, an RSS organizer, and drew heavily on Gandhian principles of swadeshi, sarvodaya (welfare for all), decentralization, and the morality of politics.[17] The concept of Integral Humanism was designed to expand the Jana Sangh's appeal, strengthen its traditional base of electoral support in North and Central India, and enhance the party's legitimacy by enabling it to participate as an acceptable partner in coalition governments with other parties. As a result of these changes in party doctrine, the Jana Sangh was welcomed by other opposition parties as an acceptable coalition partner in several states, it was able to secure intermittent control of the Delhi Municipal Council, and it was able to gain some degree of governing experience at the local level. It was this pragmatic strategy that also ultimately enabled the Jana Sangh to cooperate with the JP Movement, enter into a coalition with the Janata Party in the postemergency 1977 elections, and to merge with the Janata Party following the Congress defeat.

Despite this shift in strategy, however, the Jana Sangh failed to become a major political force in India. The overwhelming dominance of the Congress Party in Indian politics; the overpowering charismatic personality of Nehru, with his repeated attacks on Jana Sangh and the RSS; and the strong popular support for the Congress Party's left-of-center social, economic, and development policies continued to isolate the Jana Sangh in the Indian political system during most of its 26 years in existence. The Jana Sangh also suffered from a variety of internal problems that further weakened its popular appeal, including the party's close identity with the Hindi-speaking North, its limited religious and social base, its restrictive Brahmanic interpretation of Hinduism, its image as a party of North Indian Brahmins and banias (small petty traders), and its lack of a coherent economic policy.[18]

Following the breakup of the Janata Party in 1979, a group of former Jana Sangh leaders came together under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee to form the BJP. Under Vajpayee's leadership the BJP stressed its moderation, emphasized its Janata roots, and adopted a Gandhian-oriented set of principles called the five commitments. These five commitments were (1) nationalism and national integration; (2) democracy; (3) positive secularism; (4) Gandhian socialism;

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[17]Hansen, pp. 84–86.

[18]Graham, pp. 253–58.

and (5) value-based politics. By positive secularism, the BJP meant a common set of moral values distilled from Indian civilization. The most important new element in the new BJP program was the new party's commitment to Gandhian socialism.[19]

Although the BJP's moderate program was designed to attract a broader, more centrist base of electoral support, it alienated the more militant RSS whose cadre formed the core of the party's organizational strength. The RSS demonstrated its displeasure by withholding its support from the party in the 1983 assembly elections in Delhi and in Jammu and Kashmir. During the 1984 parliamentary elections, the RSS went even further in demonstrating its displeasure. The *Organizer,* an official organ of the RSS, publicly announced its support of Rajiv Gandhi for the prime ministership and some elements of the RSS actively worked on behalf of the Congress (I) in the elections. Due to the erosion of RSS support, the BJP suffered a massive defeat in the 1984 parliamentary elections. Although the BJP was able to win 7.4 percent of the popular vote (the most for any of the opposition parties), the party was able to win only two seats and even Vajpayee, went down to defeat. Congress inroads into the BJP's traditional base of support among urban, lower-middle class Hindu traders and civil servants, however, proved to be only temporary, and the BJP remained an important political force especially in North India.

The BJP's stunning defeat in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections forced the party back to its more militant roots. After considerable soul searching, the BJP made major changes in its leadership and program. In May 1986 it selected L. K. Advani, a party leader who was known for his close relations with the RSS, as its new president and reincorporated many of the more militant Jana Sangh ideological principles into its program including the promise to build a strong, modern, progressive, and enlightened country that was inspired by India's age-old culture and values.

The BJP's renewed emphasis on Hindu nationalism in the mid-1980s coincided with a series of dramatic events that threatened the stability and unity of the country and triggered an acute sense of insecurity and uneasiness among Indian Hindus. These events included the rise of Sikh separatism in the Punjab, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the movement for secession in Kashmir, the conversion of Hindu untouchables to Islam in various parts of the country, the Congress government's response to the *Shah Bono*

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[19]See Geeta Puri, "A Question of Identity," *Seminar,* 362 (October 1989), pp. 27–33.

case, and a growing sense of resentment over the disputed status of the Babri Masjid/Ram temple shrine at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. These events not only heightened communal tensions but also triggered a growing sense of anxiety within the majority Hindu community that created fertile ground for BJP appeals to Hindu nationalism and ethno-religious mobilization. In the words of Bruce Graham, "It would be wrong to conclude . . . that competing loyalties of caste, sect, dialect, locality and culture prevented Hindus from acting as a political community . . . The fact is that many Hindus, and particularly those in the northern states, did indeed see themselves as a political community, but they also saw the Congress party rather than any one of the Hindu nationalist parties as their principal defender."[20]

The status of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya provided an especially powerful symbolic political issue that the BJP could employ as part of its ethno-religious mobilization campaign to unify the Hindu community under the banner of Hindutva (Hinduness).[21] Hindus claimed that the 16th-century Babri Masjid had been constructed on a site that marked the birthplace of the god Rama (Ramjanmabhoomi) and wanted the shrine restored. Although both the Congress (I) and the BJP attempted to use the Ayodhya issue to garner Hindu support during the 1989 parliamentary elections and the 1990 state assembly election campaigns, the BJP's commitment to the cause of Ramjanmabhoomi proved to be much more convincing to many Hindu voters. In the 1989 parliamentary elections the Ayodhya issue helped the BJP to make a dramatic electoral recovery by winning 85 seats and 11.4 percent of the vote compared to only two seats and 7.4 percent of the vote in 1984. The BJP repeated this success in the February 1990 when the party won 556 seats out of a total of 1,616 seats at stake in several state assembly elections. Increased electoral support enabled the party to form BJP controlled governments in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh and to become a major coalition partner with the Janata Dal in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

By the time of the Tenth Lok Sabha elections in the summer of 1991, the BJP's efforts to use the Ramjanmabhoomi "Mandir" issue to galvanize Hindu support was suddenly threatened when V. P. Singh attempted to split the Hindu community along caste lines by announcing that he would implement a new job quota system for

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[20]Graham, p. 225.

[21]On the Ayodhya dispute see pp. 208–11.

Other Backward Castes (OBCs) recommended by the Mandal Commission. In late August 1990, in an effort to offset V. P. Singh's Mandal (caste) initiative on the political debate, L. K. Advani launched a 10,000-kilometer *rath yatra* (chariot pilgrimage) across India to the Babri Majid at Ayodhya. As thousands of Hindu militants joined the pilgrimage led by Advani and converged on Ayodhya to witness the promised beginning of construction of the new Ram temple on October 30, 1990, the procession was halted by the police and Advani was arrested. Attempts by the militants to assault the Babri Masjid, the proposed site of the temple, were also thwarted by the police.

Advani's *rath yatra*, the Ayodhya campaign, and the Mandal issue led to a rising tide of Hindu fundamentalism that came to dominate the 1991 parliamentary election campaign. To the shock and surprise of many politicians and commentators, the electoral popularity of the BJP soared in response to the party's emphasis on its Hindutva agenda. The BJP almost doubled its popular vote from 11.4 percent in 1989 to 21.0 percent in the 1991, and the party increased the number of seats it held in Parliament from 85 to 119. For the first time in post-independence India, a Hindu nationalist party had emerged as a major political force on the national scene and had come to challenge the old secular Nehruvian political consensus.

The issue of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya reached its climax on December 6, 1992, when some 200,000 Hindu militants converged on the mosque, stormed through the police barricades, and demolished the Muslim shrine. The police and paramilitary forces guarding the mosque offered no resistance. The destruction of the Babri Masjid touched off a political fire storm. Congress (I) Prime Minister Narasimha Rao denounced the action as "a betrayal of the nation" and attacked the BJP for exacerbating Hindu–Muslim tensions in a bid to "grab power, whipping up communal frenzy to undermine the secular fabric of the nation." As reports of the destruction of the mosque spread across the country, Indian Muslims retaliated by attacking Hindus, Hindu shrines, and Hindu temples in various parts of the country. Despite curfews, six days of rioting erupted across India and more than 1,200 people were killed in rioting and police firings—the vast majority Muslims. In Bombay, the riots were the worst since India became independent in 1947.

In the wake of the upheaval over the destruction of the Babri Masjid, the BJP Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh resigned; the state was placed under President's Rule; and Indian troops cleared the site of Hindu devotees, leaving behind only a temporary shrine to

Rama. L. K. Advani, Ashok Singhal, head of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and BJP President Murli Manohar Joshi were arrested for inciting the militants; the government banned the RSS, the VHP, and the Bajrang Dal for two years; and Advani felt compelled to resign as leader of the BJP in the Lok Sabha. Ashok Singhal, however, threatened that any government efforts to impede construction of the Ram temple would result in "a confrontation of unimaginable magnitude." The entire country became traumatized, the Indian government seemed almost paralyzed, and the Indian parliament was unable to convene as members screamed at each other in raging pandemonium. Although Prime Minister Narasimha Rao promised that the mosque would be rebuilt, he was clearly shaken by the events and was reported to have virtually ceded control to the powerful Cabinet minister Arjun Singh, long an advocate for a hard line against the BJP and the Hindu militants.

The unexpected defeat of the BJP in a series of state assembly elections across North India in November 1993 brought the party's seemingly unstoppable Ayodhya wave to a sudden halt and demonstrated the limits of ethno-religious mobilization. By November 1993 the appeal of Ayodhya seemed to have run its course, caste polarization eroded BJP support, and the party became weakened by internal conflict. As the issues of Mandir and Mandal receded, markets, liberalization, globalization, and economic reform came to play a larger role in the political debate.

Electoral defeat and a shift in the larger political environment once again forced the BJP to alter its course. In an effort to win back its supporters, broaden its electoral base, and break out of its isolation the BJP again adopted a more moderate approach, placed greater emphasis on policy issues, and focused on extending its alliance strategy in preparation for the 1996 parliamentary elections. Although the 1996 parliamentary elections ended in another hung Parliament, the BJP's shift in strategy enabled the party to win 20 percent of the popular vote and 161 seats to emerge as the largest single party in the Lok Sabha. Although the BJP's allies won an additional 26 seats and four percent of the vote, the alliance still fell well short of a majority. Following established tradition, the President of India called upon the BJP as the largest party in Parliament to form a government. The newly formed BJP government, however, lasted only 13 days. Unable to win support from any other parties in Parliament, the BJP found itself to be totally isolated and was forced to resign. The BJP's 13 day government was replaced by a United Front coalition of 14 parties that lasted 18 months.

Determined to avoid the isolation and humiliation that led to the fall of its 13-day government in 1996, the BJP entered into a major series of opportunistic alliances with over a dozen regional and caste based parties in preparation for the 1998 Lok Sabha elections.[22] Although the elections produced another fractured mandate and a hung Parliament, the BJP was able to win 25.5 percent of the popular vote and 179 seats to emerge once again as the largest single party in the Lok Sabha. Even with an additional 40 seats won by its electoral allies, however, the BJP still fell short of a majority. On March 10, 1998, following an intense period of maneuvering, uncertainty, and bargaining, the President of India agreed to ask the BJP to form a government. This time, however, the BJP leadership succeeded in cobbling together a coalition of 13 parties and a handful of independents that fell just short of a majority. The apparent deadlock was broken when the Andhra based Telugu Desam Party (TDP) broke with the United Front and agreed to abstain on the vote of confidence. Based on these slender guarantees, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in as Prime Minister on March 19, 1998. On March 28 the newly formed BJP government succeeded in winning a vote of confidence by a vote of 274 to 261 when the TDP decided to vote for the coalition rather than remaining neutral. In return for this support the BJP helped elect a member of the TDP as speaker of the Lok Sabha.

The resumption of the upswing in support for BJP in the 1998 elections was a result of the personal popularity of Vajpayee, a toned-down Hindutva program, a split in the anti–BJP vote between the Congress (I) and the United Front, and, most important of all, the success of the party's alliance strategy. The formation of a BJP government, however, was not cost-free. The party was confronted with the difficult task of holding its fractious coalition together and was forced to make substantial compromises in its program.

The National Agenda for Governance developed by the BJP and its coalition partners demonstrated how far the party leadership was prepared to compromise its doctrines in an effort to expand its base and strengthen its electoral appeal. The National Agenda made no mention of the three most distinctive features of the BJP manifesto. These included the commitment to repeal Article 370 of the Constitution, which gives special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir; the promise to construct a Ram temple in Ayodhya; and the pledge to

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[22]See Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "Hindu Nationalism and the BJP: Transforming Religion and Politics in India," in Rafiq Dossani and Henry S. Rowen eds., *Prospects for Peace in South Asia* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 185–214.

enact a uniform civil code that would be applicable to all religious groups. The manifesto, however, did not abandon the BJP commitment to swadeshi—economic self-reliance—nor the promise to reevaluate Indian nuclear policy and exercise the option to develop nuclear weapons. Most of all, the Agenda promised a stable, honest, transparent, and efficient government. The BJP reinforced its commitment to the National Agenda by talking about a "new BJP" that would govern in the spirit of consensus.

The BJP coalition was made up of a grab-bag of caste-and regionally based parties that included the virulently anti-Muslim Shiv Sena of Maharahstra; George Fernandes's "backward caste" Samata Party of Bihar; and the AIADMK of Tamil Nadu, the BJP's largest coalition partner. Even before Prime Minister Vajpayee formally took office, the difficulties of holding the new BJP-led government together were readily apparent as various parties pressed their claims for ministerial positions or, like Jayalalitha's AIADMK, sought to extort concessions from the BJP. With only a narrow margin of support in Parliament, the coalition was inherently vulnerable, held hostage to the potential that the withdrawal of even one partner could bring the government down. Jayalalitha proved to be the bane of the government, and after repeated threats the volatile Tamil leader withdrew the AIADMK from the coalition.

The fragile, inexperienced and divided BJP-led coalition government that came to power in March 1998 was confronted by an economy in turmoil. The economic problems facing the new government included the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, large fiscal deficits, inadequate infrastructure, slow economic growth, high unemployment, and a stalled process of economic reform. These problems became further compounded by the government's decision to conduct a series of nuclear tests in May 1998 that led to the imposition of economic sanctions by the United States and Western Europe. The new government's attempts to manage the economic crisis, noted one commentator, "looked foolish, vacillating and indecisive."[23]

Following a period of drift, lackluster performance, and a series of BJP defeats in a number of state assembly elections in November 1998, Vajpayee attempted to recover the initiative by moving to consolidate his hold over the party and government by reshuffling his cabinet and playing a more active role in economic management. Despite previous resistance from the RSS to their selection, Vajpayee

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[23] *The Far Eastern Economic Review,* August 23, 2001, p. 23.

appointed Pramod Mahajan and Jaswant Singh, two of his loyal supporters, to key cabinet posts and sought to diminish the influence of the RSS on economic policy. The Prime Minister, however, continued to encounter stiff resistance from his coalition partners and the RSS. The government was unable to pass a bill that would have opened the Indian insurance sector to foreign direct investment (FDI), enact the Women's Reservation Bill that was designed to reserve one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, or adopt an investment friendly budget designed to deal with the economic crisis. In a desperate effort to offset the impact of economic sanctions and reign in the government's fiscal deficit, Vajpayee's first budget submitted in June 1998 attempted to reduce tariffs, attract foreign investment, and increase petrol and fertilizer prices. The budget proposals met with such stiff resistance from within the governing coalition that the press labeled it the "rollback budget" as the government was forced to retreat on almost all fronts. The government, however, did succeed in passing a revised Patent Bill in March 1999 and a bill to create three new states. The Prime Minister also ruled out legislation that would ban religious conversions. Just as it appeared to be recovering some initiative, the BJP-led government collapsed following the withdrawal of AIADMK support. On April 17, 1999, the government was forced to resign when it lost a no confidence motion in the Lok Sabha by one vote, and India went to the polls again for the third time in three years.

The 1999 parliamentary elections marked a new stage in the development of multiparty coalition politics in India. The BJP, a national party, went to the polls as the leader of a 24 party National Democratic Alliance (NDA) based on a common program. The election became a personality battle between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi and was dominated by the May–July Kargil war between India and Pakistan and the arithmetic of caste. Despite a slight decline in BJP voter support from 25.5 percent in 1998 to 23.7 percent in 1999, due to its new alliance arrangements the BJP won 182 seats, an all-time high for the party. Since the BJP's allies succeeded in winning an additional 118 seats, the NDA emerged with a clear mandate and controlled a total of 300 seats in the new Parliament. The NDA's stunning victory was attributed to the popularity of Prime Minister Vajpayee, resentment over failed Congress (I) tactics in toppling the previous coalition government, the Kargil war, the BJP's soft Hindutva policies, a divided anti-BJP opposition, and the party's highly effective coalition strategy. The victory of the NDA in the 1999 elections was marked by a restoration of political stability as the BJP-led coalition

became the first non-Congress government to survive a full five year term in office.

The BJP-led NDA government attempted to follow a centrist path in both domestic and foreign policy. The diversity of the NDA's multiparty coalition and BJP's relations with the Sangh Parivar, however, generated considerable friction within the new government. The first half of the NDA's five-year term in office was dominated by the aftermath of the Kargil crisis, the danger of a possible nuclear war with Pakistan, a major earthquake in Gujarat in January 2000, a severe drought, a series of corruption scandals, and the February 2002 pogrom against Muslims in the BJP-governed state of Gujarat.

Following its reelection, the new NDA government declared that it would embark upon a "second wave of economic reform" designed to accelerate the country's rate of economic growth. One of its first initiatives was to re-introduce a series of economic reform proposals that had been blocked in 1998-99 due to resistance from within the coalition and opposition from the RSS swadeshi lobby. Given the broader electoral mandate of 1999, the NDA succeeded in passing an Insurance Bill that opened up the insurance sector to FDI, replacing the highly restrictive Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, creating new regulatory authorities for the securities and telecommunications industries, and attempting to move ahead on liberalization and privatization by creating new ministries for disinvestment and information technology. Despite the success of its initial efforts at reinvigorating the reform process, the BJP's attempt to accelerate the processes of liberalization, privatization of the public sector, labor reform, and globalization were repeatedly stymied by opposition from its coalition partners and the swadeshi-oriented RSS. As a result, the BJP's economic policies produced mixed results. The Indian economy fell short of its growth targets, privatization efforts lost their momentum, administrative prices remained in place, and labor law reform proved to be out of reach.

The difficulties faced by the NDA in reenergizing the Indian economy were reflected in the fate of the government's February 2001 budget. The reform proposals contained in the budget were almost immediately undermined by internal resistance and external crises including a major stock exchange scandal, Enron charges of contract violations involving FDI, the Tehelka corruption cases involving BJP and NDA leaders,[24] the global terrorism crisis sparked by the 9/11

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[24]In March 2001, *Tehelkasom*, an online newspaper, videotaped a sting operation that revealed politicians and former defense officials accepting bribes in exchange for unspecified promises of favorable treatment in securing military contracts.

attacks in the United States, and a major foreign policy crisis involving India's relations with Pakistan. Under NDA tutelage, the Indian economy continued to flounder as the process of economic reform slowed. From 1997–98 to 2001–02 the economy grew at the rate of 5.6 percent per year, well short of the government's goal of 6.5 percent. As a result, Vajpayee's government was criticized for being weak, divided, adrift, beset by scandals, and lurching from crisis to crisis.

The NDA's performance on the economic front was accompanied by a developing crisis within the BJP itself that threatened Vajpayee's leadership. Due to resistance from within the coalition, the government was forced to defer its attempt to privatize Indian Oil and Vajpayee's new Finance Minister's first budget became the second "rollback budget" submitted by the BJP. In late June Vajpayee was forced to accept the election of L. K. Advani as his Deputy Prime Minister, and a month later Vajpayee threatened to resign. The only bright spot for the BJP was the party's victory in the December 2002 Gujarat assembly elections.

A major economic and political turning point for the NDA, however, came toward the tail end of its five-year term in office. Following a year of devastating drought, the Indian economy was buoyed by a good monsoon and grew at an unprecedented rate of 8.5 percent, and in December 2003 the BJP scored a major victory in several key state assembly elections. While many economists attributed the country's remarkable economic performance to the "rain and pain" of a good monsoon and a decade of painful restructuring of the Indian economy, the BJP proclaimed a new era of "India Shining" that had transformed the "Hindu rate of growth" of 3.5 percent in the past into a "Hindutva growth rate" of 8.5 percent under BJP leadership. Vajpayee's popularity soared, and the Indian press began to herald him as second Nehru. The BJP became so confident of its reelection that it decided to hold an early election in 2004 to renew its mandate—only to go down to a surprise defeat.

The stunning defeat of the BJP in the 2004 elections brought the remarkable rise of the BJP to a sudden halt, and the party's setback was compared by many to the unexpected defeat suffered by the Congress under Indira Gandhi's leadership in 1977. The party turned in its worst performance in over a decade. In the 2004 elections the BJP was able to win only 22.2 percent of the vote and 138 seats compared to 23.7 percent of the vote and 183 seats in 1998. The BJP's allies suffered an even bigger defeat and were able to win only 13.7 percent of the vote and 51 seats compared to 17 percent of the vote and 118 seats in 1998. The defeat of the NDA was attributed primarily to the

anti–incumbency sentiments of the Indian electorate. Other factors that played a role in the defeat included overconfidence; poor alliance management; the party's urban orientation, which ignored the needs of rural India and the poor; and the NDA's economic reform policies.[25]

The BJP's six years in power proved to be far from smooth or effective. The party's attempt at expanding its electoral base by projecting a new, more moderate, centrist image was repeatedly undermined by the militant behavior of the RSS and the Sangh Parivar and the "Congress style" conduct of the BJP in power. The RSS and Sangh Parivar's behavior included demands that the government implement the party's swadeshi and Hindutva agenda, violent persecution of Christians in the tribal belt, repeated efforts by VHP militants to construct a Ramjanmabhoomi temple at the site of the old Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, and most of all by the pogrom against Muslims in the BJP controlled state of Gujarat in February 2002. The credibility of the BJP as a "party with a difference" was undermined by major corruption scandals, factionalism, indiscipline, and charges that the party had succumbed to the very Congress culture that it had repeatedly condemned in the past. This pattern of behavior had the effect of narrowing rather than expanding the BJP's base of support. Although the party was able to strengthen its traditional hold over the urban middle class, the electorate as a whole came to see the BJP as a pro–rich party that ignored the needs of rural India and the poor. The party's "India Shining" election slogan simply reinforced this image and proved to be an electoral disaster during the 2004 elections.

The BJP in Defeat

Following its major setback in the 2004 elections, the BJP wallowed in defeatism. The party was confronted by ideological confusion, an internal power struggle, grass roots indiscipline, and an organizational decline that rekindled a long simmering debate over strategy, ideology, leadership, and organizational structure. The RSS and the Sangh Parivar launched a scathing attack on the six years of BJP rule and charged the party with having become too dependent upon a cult of personality built around Vajpayee and Advani, abandoning the movement's core ideological beliefs, and alienating the party's base by failing to implement its Hindutva agenda. The BJP, they insisted, was not an ordinary political

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[25]For a comprehensive review of the 2004 election see *Economic and Politician Weekly,* "National Election Study 2004"; Vol XXXIX No. 51. (December 18-24, 2004) pp. 5373–5544.

party but a wider movement guided by the ideology of Hindu nation-alism and national resurgence. The party had been catapulted to power by the movement's ethno-religious mobilization and would triumph in the long run by building a majority pan-Hindu socio-political constitu-ency. While the party had enjoyed considerable autonomy during its years in power, the RSS was determined to reassert its control over the party and demanded that the BJP adopt a set of five principles as the basis of rebuilding its position. These principles included a decla-ration that Hindutva remained the party's ideological foundation, a more effective consultation process with the RSS, a collective leadership rather than a personality cult, ethical conduct of its leaders and members, and a program of enhanced training of its cadre.

The leadership of the BJP, however, resisted the RSS demands. The party considered Hindutva to be a long-term goal, saw the elec-toral success of the party as function of its coalition strategy, and insisted on maintaining its decision-making autonomy. Attempts at recycling the party's Hindutva agenda, party leaders insisted, would frighten large sectors of the electorate, alienate the party's coalition allies, and reduce the BJP's electoral appeal. Following the electoral defeat, the 81-year-old Vajpayee announced his withdrawal from active politics. L. K. Advani, who had taken over the party presidency in October 2004, now saw himself as a future Prime Minister in waiting and moved quickly to replace Vajpayee within the party by attempting to move to the center. Although he had traditionally been seen as an RSS man, Advani's relations with the organization had become strained due to his inaction on the issue of Ayodhya while in power, his failure to consult the RSS on the issue of replacing Venakiah Naidu as BJP president, and his attempt at softening his Hindutva image. Relations became even more strained following the BJP's defeat at the polls and the RSS' demand that Vajpayee and Advani step aside in favor of the next generation of younger leaders. Although Advani resisted the RSS' demands that he step aside, he was ultimately forced to succumb following a blistering attack launched by the RSS in response to a series of remarks that he made during a visit to Pakistan in April 2005. Although there was little that was really new in Advani's speech, he was excoriated by the RSS for his praise of Mohamad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, his assertion that partition was "unal-terable," and his description of the demolition of the Babri Masjid as "the saddest day of my life.[26] Although Advani was forced to resign

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[26]*India Today* (New Delhi), July 4, 2005, pp. 20–21.

as President of the BJP in December 2005, he remained the leader of the BJP in Parliament and saw himself as Vajpayee's successor.

Despite their differences, the BJP, the RSS, and the Sangh Parivar all seemed to agree that the movement must return to a strategy of ethno-religious mobilization. They were at odds, however, over the timing and message they wanted to convey. In an effort to strengthen its constituent units in the Sangh Parivar, the RSS developed a plan for a series of nationwide yatras aimed at projecting its Hindutva message and strengthening the organizational base of the movement. At the same time, in his effort to strengthen his leadership position in the party, Advani jumped the gun and decided to launch his own "national integration yatra" that was later renamed the "National Security Yatra." Advani's actions had the effect of reviving the struggle for supremacy between the party and the RSS. While the RSS and the VHP had also planned to launch a Hindutva-oriented mass campaign against the UPA, they insisted that Advani had acted in undue haste. The time for launching a mass movement, they insisted, was "not opportune."

Although the defeat of the BJP in the 2004 elections has not halted the march of Hindutva, it is clear that the movement has suffered a major setback. While Ayodhya initially provided a powerful unifying symbol, the unity it produced proved to be temporary and disintegrated following the destruction of the Babri Masjid. Given the diversity of Hinduism and Hindu society, the BJP faces a fundamental structural challenge. It simply does not command an electoral majority, and at the peak of its popularity in 1999 was able to win only 25 percent of the popular vote. The fundamental question facing the movement, argue Adeney and Saez, is can the RSS-defined Hindutva agenda win an electoral majority or will its existing message have to be reshaped in a way that will attract a larger following. In order for the BJP to succeed, insist Adeney and Saez, it will have to downplay its focus on religion and develop a Hindu-based social message similar to the successful model developed by the Christian Democratic Movement in post-war Europe. The new message of Hindu democracy, they suggest, might be labeled "Hindu-Lite."[27]

The BJP remains divided between its militant RSS core and its more moderate leadership associated with Vajpayee. In the past, Advani, with ties to each, tried to bridge the gap between the two

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[27]See Meghnad Desai, "Hindutva's March Halted? Choices for the BJP after 2004 Defeat," in Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 254–64.

wings and act as a unifier. However, in his effort to replace Vajpayee, Advani has attempted to move to the center and has incurred the wrath of the RSS and the Sangh Parivar. In addition to leadership problems, the BJP is structurally divided, organizationally weak, and rests on a rather narrow support base. While the RSS was prepared to remain in the background during the BJP's six years in power, it has attempted to reassert its supremacy since the BJP's defeat in the 2004 elections. Party leaders, however, have resisted attempts at undermining the autonomy of the party and have accused the RSS of interfering in the party decision making. In addition to this structural clash, the BJP also faces a series of major organizational problems. The party remains weak in the South and West; it has only limited support among OBCs, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims; and it is totally dependent on RSS cadre at election time. Given its organizational weaknesses, the BJP leadership realizes that it must rely on its alliance with regional and caste parties in order to achieve electoral success. This strategy, however, generates a variety of internal tensions. A policy of pragmatism and caste appeals is opposed by the RSS and its core supporters, who favor a more militant, long-term, Hindutva-based agenda designed to build a solid Hindu base. BJP leaders, however, see excessive militancy as a threat to its centrist appeal, its alliance strategy, and its chances of winning an electoral majority. Like other parties, the BJP has also been confronted by the problems brought about by being in power. BJP governments in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, for example, have been criticized for administrative ineptitude, indiscipline, factionalism, and corruption, and during its six years in power at the Center, the party faced many of the same problems.

INDIA'S DIVIDED COMMUNISTS

Since its inception in 1928, the Communist Party of India (CPI) has been divided in its social character, base of support, and ideological stance. These divisions reflect its origins in the regional organizations of the Workers' and Peasants' Party. In its early years the CPI, closely tied to the Communist Party of Great Britain, was largely under Comintern control and followed Moscow directives with dutiful twists and turns. During the 1930s the party adopted a tactic of "the united front from above" in cooperation with the nationalist movement. Entering the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), Communists soon secured leadership in the Socialist organization, particularly in the South, where they

gained effective control. Expelled in 1939, they took much of the CSP membership in the South with them. The final break with the Congress came with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and the CPI's call for cooperation with the British in what was deemed an anti–imperialist war. The Congress chose noncooperation, and as Congress leaders languished in jail, the CPI infiltrated student, peasant, and labor organizations, expanding its membership from 5,000 in 1942 to 53,000 by 1946. Although the CPI effectively gained control of a number of mass organizations, its participation in the war effort, its continued attack on Gandhi, and its support of the Muslim League demand for Pakistan tainted the party as antinational and minimized its influence.

Closed out from above, the CPI adopted a tactic of "the united front from below" in alliance with workers and peasants against the Congress leadership. In 1948 P. C. Joshi was replaced as General Secretary by B. T. Ranadive, with the advancement of a more militant "left" line. Under his leadership the CPI embarked on a course of revolution—with strikes, sabotage, and urban violence. Following the Russian model, Ranadive emphasized the working class as the instrument of revolution and discounted the peasant uprising in the Telengana region of Hyderabad. The Andhra Communists, however, pushed for the adoption of a Maoist line of revolution from the countryside and obtained a short–term victory for the tactic of rural insurrection with the election of Rajeshwar Rao as General Secretary in 1950. The party became increasingly isolated, party membership declined, and in various states the CPI was outlawed.

During this period Nehru was denounced as a "running dog of imperialism" and the Congress, in both its foreign and its domestic policy, as the reactionary captive of capitalist and landlord elements. In the early 1950s, however, the attitude of the Soviet Union toward the Nehru government began to change. The CPI was officially advised to abandon its "adventurist" tactics. The policy shift was welcomed by those within the party, notably P. C. Joshi, S. A. Dange, and Ajoy Ghosh, who favored participation in the forthcoming general elections. In 1951 the revisionist line won out with the selection of Ajoy Ghosh as General Secretary of the party. Ghosh, from a centrist position, led the party toward "constitutional communism." The CPI sanctioned Indian foreign policy and extended its full support to all "progressive" policies and measures of the government.[28] Its willingness to engage in parliamentary politics and to seek alliances with

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[28]The evolution of this strategy is detailed in Victor M. Fic, *Peaceful Transition to Communism in India* (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1969).

parties of the left in a democratic front seemed vindicated by the success of the Kerala Communists in 1957, and the formation of the first democratically elected Communist government under E. M. S. Namboodiripad. The Amritsar thesis, drafted by the party conference in 1958, set forth the nationalist credentials of the CPI:

> The Communist Party of India strives to achieve full Democracy and Socialism by peaceful means. It considers that by developing a powerful mass movement, by winning a majority in Parliament, and by backing it with mass sanctions, the working class and its allies can overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and insure that Parliament becomes an instrument of people's will for effecting fundamental changes in the economic, social, and state structure.[29]

The Amritsar thesis only papered over fundamental tensions within the party between the right and left, between those favoring cooperation with the Congress and the "national bourgeoisie" and those advocating revolutionary struggle for the defeat of the Congress. Its relationship to the Congress in strategy and tactics posed a dilemma for the CPI. It was obliged, on the one hand, to fulfill its ideological commitment to the international Communist movement but, on the other, sought to retain a nationalist identity.[30]

The internal balance of the CPI was soon threatened. In Kerala, sparked by the Education Bill, widespread agitation was launched against the Communist government, bringing central intervention and the proclamation of President's Rule. The left saw it as patent that the Congress would never allow serious socialist reform, but the fate of the Kerala government only served to define more clearly the polarities emerging on the Sino-Indian question. The Tibet uprising in 1959 and the CPI's support for Chinese actions had already brought popular reaction against the party in India. The border clashes brought internal conflict into the open. Headed by S. A. Dange, a leading exponent of the right, or nationalist, faction, the national council of the CPI recognized Indian claims to all territories below the McMahon line, the border demarcation. The left regarded this as a betrayal of international proletarian unity. The

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[29]Constitution of the Communist Party of India, adopted at the Extraordinary Party Congress, Amritsar, April 1958 (New Delhi: Communist Party of India, 1958), p. 4.

[30]Ralph Retzlaff, "Revisionism and Dogmatism in the Communist Party of India," in Robert A. Scalapino, ed., *The Communist Revolution in Asia* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 309.

positions, set in the context of increasing Sino-Soviet conflict, placed the left in what was regarded as the pro-Chinese camp.

In early 1962 as conflict deepened within the CPI, Ajoy Ghosh, the balancer, died. The factional settlement—election of Dange to the newly created post of Chairman, with Namboodiripad, the centrist, as General Secretary—proved fragile. In the wake of the Chinese invasion of Indian territory, as criticism of the CPI mounted, the national council resolved to condemn the Chinese action as "aggression" and to call upon the Indian people to "unite in defense of the motherland." In protest, the leftists resigned from the party secretariat, and as the situation deteriorated, Namboodiripad submitted his resignation as General Secretary of the party and as editor of *New Age,* the official party publication. In response to the widespread arrests of leftist Communist cadres, the CPI sought to reorganize state party units under rightist control. Their actions served only to stimulate the creation of parallel left structures outside the disciplinary organization of the CPI.

At the national council meeting in 1964 the left attempted, without success, to oust party Chairman Dange. They came armed with a letter allegedly written by Dange in 1924 that stated his offer to cooperate with the British in exchange for his release from jail. Denouncing the letter as a forgery, the council refused to consider the charges. The left and center, led by Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu, staged a walkout and appealed to the party to repudiate Dange and the "reformist" line. The split became final when all signatories to the appeal were suspended from the party. The left, organized as the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), claimed to be the legitimate communist party of India. Although there was little real evidence to link the CPM with China, the Marxists were viewed as pro–Peking, and in 1965 leading CPM members were arrested throughout India and vaguely charged with promoting "an internal revolution to synchronize with a fresh Chinese attack."[31]

The CPM favored a tactic of united front from below, an alliance with peasants and workers, to defeat the Congress, which it regarded as a party of the bourgeoisie and landlord classes, dominated by the big bourgeoisie. Elections were to be used as a means to mobilize the masses; the Constitution was to be used as "an instrument of struggle."[32]

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[31]Home Minister Nanda, quoted in the *Hindu Weekly Review,* 11 January 1965, p. 11.

[32]E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *The Republican Constitution in the Struggle for Socialism, R. R. Kale Memorial Lecture* (Poona: Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1968), p. 1.

The Marxists sought to "break the Constitution from within."[33] The CPM's electoral strategy opened the party to internal conflict, however, as extremists, arguing from an avowedly Maoist position, opposed participation in elections and government in favor of armed struggle from the countryside.

In 1967 the Naxalbari uprising took place in northern Bengal. Those supporting the rebellion, the Naxalites, found general favor from the Marxist organization in Andhra Pradesh and from extremist factions within the CPM in various states. The various Naxalite factions came together in 1969 in the formation of a third communist party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [CPI (M-L)], which was Maoist and dedicated to revolution. Under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar, the CPI (M-L) took the lead in calling for immediate armed struggle, liberation of the countryside, and encirclement of the cities following the Maoist formula. Naxalite solidarity soon foundered on Mazumdar's tactic of urban terrorism and annihilation of class enemies. Representing another "shade of Maoism," Nagi Reddy's Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee supported armed struggle, but one based on an agrarian program and mass peasant involvement.[34] In both Bengal and Andhra, police action crushed the uprisings, and the Naxalite leaders were jailed.

The regular CPI, closely associated with trade unions, retained control of the official party organs after the 1965 split and identified itself with Moscow. It sought to advance the cause of a "national democratic front" with progressive elements of the nationalist bourgeoisie in order to "complete the anti–imperialist, anti–feudal, democratic revolution."[35] Following the Congress split in 1969, the CPI gave strong, if cautious, support to Indira Gandhi. The party defended the imposition of the 1975–77 emergency and stood with Mrs. Gandhi—despite Sanjay's attacks on the CPI—through the 1977 elections. In the elections the central committee of the CPI announced qualified support for the Congress. At the same time, however, it permitted state party units to decide whether to side with the government or the Janata opposition. In West Bengal the CPI supported Congress; in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar it backed Janata.[36]

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[33]Joint statement of E. M. S. Namboodiripad and A. K. Gopalan, quoted in the *Hindu*, 8 July 1969.

[34]See Mohan Ram, *Maoism in India* (Delhi: Vikas, 1971), pp. 137–69. See also Mohan Ram, *Indian Communism: The Split within a Split* (Delhi: Vikas, 1969); and Marcus F. Franda, "India's Third Communist Party," *Asian Survey,* 9 (November 1969), pp. 797–817.

[35]"Program of the Communist Party of India," *New Age*, 10 January 1965, p. 10.

[36]Weiner, *India at the Polls*, 1977, p. 53.

Although the Communist Party has had an all–India organization at least theoretically subject to the discipline of "democratic centralism," its structure has been essentially regional in orientation. Neither communist party has been able to establish a firm base in the Hindi heartland. This may be related, in part, to the Communists' devotion to the Soviet treatment of the "nationalities problem," which in India stresses the development of regional identity. Tactics have been determined more by the local situation than by directive from the top.

The Communist movement in India is divided and regionally concentrated. Beyond the two major parties, the CPM and CPI, there is a pro–Congress CPI splinter, the All–India Communist Party (the Dange group) of no consequence, and 40 or more tiny Naxalite parties and factions once associated with the CPI (M–L). The Communists have been unable to break out of their regional bases of strength in West Bengal (and, by Bengali ethnic extension, Tripura) and Kerala; they have bogged down in Bihar; and they have lost support in Andhra and the Punjab. Communist trade unions in Bombay have also declined in influence. Overall, communism in India is stagnant, and there is no state where support for either the CPM or CPI is growing.

In the parliamentary elections, the CPI gradually increased its support from 3.30 percent in 1952 to 9.96 percent in 1962. The 1964 split divided support almost evenly, but with time the CPM gained at the expense of the CPI. In 1971 the CPI and CPM secured 4.73 and 5.12 percent, respectively. Both parties declined in their share of the 1977 vote. The CPI, discredited by its support for the 1975–77 emergency, fell to 2.8 percent. The CPM, allied with the Janata Party, secured only 4.3 percent. In 1980 the CPI slipped to 2.6 percent of the vote, but the CPM, largely on its strength in West Bengal, rebounded to 6.1 percent. In subsequent elections in the 1980s and early 1990s electoral support for the two parties held steady but then began to decline. Support for the CPI dropped from 2.5 percent in 1991 to 2.0 percent in 1996 and 1.75 percent in 1998, while the number of seats held by the party dropped from 14 in 1991 to nine in 1998. The CPM has also seen it support erode from a high of 6.7 percent in 1991 to 5.2 percent in 1998 and the number of seats held by the party has declined from 49 in 1991 to 41 in 1998. In the 1999 elections the Left Front won 8 percent of the vote and 43 seats. In the 2004 elections, however, the Left Front won 8 percent of the popular vote and 61 seats and agreed to support the new Congress led UPA government. The CPM won

5.69 percent of the vote and 44 seats, but its primary strength remained confined to West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura.

The CPM has been the ruling party of West Bengal since 1977. With an absolute majority of seats in the state assembly, CPM Chief Minister Jyoti Basu commanded great popularity, though his reputation for "clean" government was tarnished in his last years. The CPM governs at the head of a Left Front coalition that includes the CPI and a variety of parties of the Bengali left, such as the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc. In Kerala, the CPM—now in opposition after its 1991 defeat—has been in and out of office since 1957 (when the party was united), but it has stagnated, unable to expand its base of support. Beyond this concentration of strength, its overall weakness nationally has transformed the CPM into what is, in effect, a regional party—and, increasingly, a Bengali party.[37]

Politics in India is not highly polarized in class terms, and even the two communist parties draw support from a diverse social base. Although they favor more radical policies than those pursued by the Center, each has been restrained in its own policies by its participation in electoral politics and the responsibility of government. The parties have become more reformist than revolutionary, and it is for this reason that the more radical elements of the CPM advocate withdrawal from the electoral arena. Some attrition occurs from the CPM to Naxalite factions, but little prospect exists that the party will trade political power—even if regional—for the revolutionary underground.

The CPM leadership is aging, and its revolutionary fervor has been leavened by electoral politics and the responsibility of government. Despite its pragmatic approach to governing West Bengal, however, the party has sought to retain an ideological purity that over the years placed it among the most ossified in the communist world. Initially independent of Moscow, the CPM in the early 1980s moved closer to the Soviet Union, facilitating closer cooperation with the CPI, but with the advent of perestroika, the CPM assumed a sharply critical stance. The party attacked Gorbachev for the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe; denounced Soviet support for the war against Iraq; and, in August 1991, celebrated the hardliners' putsch

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[37]Jyoti Basu served as Chief Minister of West Bengal from 1977 to 2000, retiring as India's longest serving Chief Minister. For analyses of the Communist movement in Kerala and West Bengal, see the chapters by Hardgrave and Franda in Paul R. Brass and Marcus F. Franda, eds., *Radical Politics in South Asia* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1973); Franda, *Radical Politics in West Bengal* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press , 1971); and T. J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala: A Study in Political Adaptation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

against Gorbachev, only to be further isolated with the coup's failure and the rise of Boris Yeltsin. At its 14th Congress in 1992, surrounded by portraits of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, the CPM reaffirmed its faith in Marxism–Leninism, even as younger party members were beginning to question the leadership.

The CPI has a more evenly distributed national support than the CPM, but it is weak everywhere. Before the collapse of world communism, the CPI was officially recognized by Moscow, but while it gave formal support to glasnost and perestroika, the CPI looked with increasing unease on the events in the Soviet Union. With the apparent ouster of Gorbachev in the attempted coup, the CPI joined the CPM in celebration.

Isolated internationally, except for their fraternal ties to China, the CPM and CPI are still a vocal, if muted, force in Indian politics. At the national level, in the 1989, 1991, and 1996 elections, they allied with the National Front against the Congress (I), and, as the Left Front, they stood with the Janata Dal and scattered socialists in Parliament in opposition to the policies of economic liberalization pursued by the government of Narasimha Rao. During the United Front government of 1996, the CPI joined the United Front Cabinet while the CPM supported it from outside. Both the 16th Party Congress of the CPM in November 1998 and the 17th Party Congress of the CPI in September 1999 called for a program of mass struggle, a fight against communalism, and the need to reforge a third force in Indian politics. As of the end of 1997, the CPI claimed a membership of 560,723 and the CPM a membership of 717,525.

In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections the CPI and CPM won 61 seats to become a significant force in national politics. Refusing to repeat its "historic blunder" of 1996 when it rejected the prime ministership, the CPM for the first time in its history agreed to support a Congress (I)–led UPA government. Although the communist left refused to join the government or accept any cabinet posts, it did agree to support the UPA government from outside. Because its 61 votes were critical to the survival of the UPA, the left has been able to exercise a veto power over government policies. The party's leverage over the UPA was further strengthened by its victories in the May 2006 assembly elections in West Bengal and Kerala.[38]

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[38]See Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Review Report of Lok Sabha Elections*, 2004.

The communist movement in India has lost a good deal of its revolutionary radicalism and has become increasingly reformist. The dilution of its ideology has reduced the level of commitment of its cadre and has led to a stagnation and decline in its electoral support. The left in India has become increasingly confused by international developments; the rising importance of cultural nationalism; the growth of communalism; the emergence of popular support for the BJP; and the growing impact of the forces of liberalization, privatization, and globalization. It has proven unable to move beyond its traditional base of support and unable to project a transformational agenda that might win new supporters.

THE REGIONALIZATION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

The number and fortunes of India's numerous regional parties have fluctuated considerably over the past six decades. For the most part, regional parties have been important as a means of expressing local grievances. However, in the past, regional sentiments have not always been enduring, and the electoral performance of regional parties has been erratic. Most are single-issue parties, ephemeral, and transient. They tend to emerge as expressions of grievances due to some social or economic disparity or emerging new identity and tend to disappear once their program is accomplished or their leader has died. Only a few have persisted and taken deep roots. The past pattern of regional party development, however, began to change in reaction to the overcentralization of power under Indira and Rajiv Gandhi and the rise of caste and communal identities. As seen in Table 7.1, India has witnessed an explosion of regional parties, especially in the 1990s. The number of regional parties has increased from a low of 12 in 1957 to a high of 45 in 2004, and regional party leaders have come to play an increasingly important role at both the state and national levels.

The oldest and most enduring regional parties have been the DMK and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu; the Akali Dal in the Punjab; and the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir. More recently, the 1980s saw the emergence of the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh; the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam; the BSP, a Dalit party in North India; and a variety of parties representing the OBCs. The explosion of regional parties began in the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s as a result of the breakup of the Janata Dal, the increasing fragmentation

TABLE 7.1 **Number of Recognized Parties in the General Elections 1952–98**

Election Year	Total	National Parties	State Parties	Registered Parties
1952	74	14	-	-
1957	16	4	-	-
1962*	16	—	-	-
1967*	21	—	-	-
1971	25	8	-	-
1977	23	5	-	-
1980	25	6	19	11
1984	26	7	17	9
1989	28	8	20	89
1991	36	8	13	190
1996	50	8	30	171
1998	47	7	30	139
1999	47	7	40	122
2004	51	6	45	-

*There were no national parties in 1962 and 1967 as parties were given recognition only on a state by state basis.

SOURCE: Butler, David, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (Delhi: Books and Things, 1995), p. 24, Press and Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, *General Elections 1998 Reference Handbook Vol. I*, December 1997, and Douglas V. Verney," How Has the Proliferation of Parties Affected the Indian Federation: A Comparative Approach," in Zoya Hasan, E. Sridharan and R. Sudarshan (eds.), *India's Living Constitution: Ideas, Practices, Controversies* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), p. 142.

of the Congress (I), and the rise of a variety of small regional splinter parties, especially in the northeast. The disintegration of the Janata Dal began in 1991 when Chandra Shekhar founded the Janata Dal (S). The Janata Dal (S) split in 1992 when Mulayam Singh Yadav, an OBC leader in Uttar Pradesh, formed the Samajwadi (Socialist) Party which was later renamed the Samajwadi Party. In early 1994 George Fernandes, the veteran socialist trade union leader, split away from the Janata Dal to form the Samata ("equality") Party in Bihar and U.P. Finally, with the collapse of the United Front, the Janata Dal all but disintegrated when Laloo Prasad Yadav broke away to form the Rashtriya Janata Dal, an OBC party in Bihar; Ramkrishna Hedge formed the Lok Shakti in Karnataka; and Biju Patnaik's son formed the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa following his father's death.

A similar process of fragmentation has plagued even the Congress (I). The process of fragmentation began following the historic split in the party in 1969 and has continued due to faction revolts against the centralized leadership of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv, P. V. Narasimha Rao, and the foreign-born Sonia Gandhi. The fragmentation process has been especially acute since the 1990s. In May 1995 a dissident faction created the All-India Indira Congress (T) and elected Narain Dutt Tiwari, an old Congress (I) leader from U.P. as its president. Prior to the general elections of 1996, the Congress (I) faced an even more devastating split when in April 1996 a group of Tamil Nadu Congress MPs objected to Rao's decision to form an alliance with the AIADMK and were expelled. Under the leadership of G. K. Moopanar they formed the Tamil Manila Congress. Defectors in other states also founded local state parties including the Karnataka Congress Party and the Madhya Pradesh Vikas Congress. The defections of 1996 were followed by additional defections in 1998. The most important was the formation of the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal by Mamata Banerjee. The prospect of Sonia Gandhi becoming the first foreign-born Prime Minister of India led to additional revolts in 1999 when Sharad Paswar, P. A. Sangma, and Tariq Anwar were expelled from the Congress for objecting to her continued leadership of the party and formed the Nationalist Congress Party.

The fragmentation of major national parties like the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal has been accompanied by similar developments among India's regional parties including the DMK, TDP, Lok Dal, and especially the large number of tribal parties in the northeast.

The DMK and AIADMK

Rooted in Tamil nationalism going back to the turn of the 19th century, the DMK and its offshoot, the AIADMK, have dominated politics in Tamil Nadu since first taking power in 1967. The two parties are heirs of the Dravidian movement, in direct lineage from E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker's "self-respect movement" that aimed to purge South India of Brahmin tyranny and of his Dravida Kazhagam (DK), or Dravidian Federation, founded in 1944 that called for the creation of a separate and independent state of Dravidasthan.

In reaction to the elitist character of the DK, C. N. Annadurai, a journalist and film writer, led a breakaway faction in 1949 to form the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Dravidian Progressive Federation. Whereas the DK, continuing as a reform movement, had never contested elections, the DMK combined the techniques of

agitation with electoral activity. The party, although still waving the banner of Dravidasthan, became increasingly oriented toward pragmatic economic issues. During the Chinese invasion, the DMK rallied to the national cause, and on adoption of the antisecessionist amendment to the Constitution in 1963, the party formally dropped its demand for an independent Tamil Nadu. Although the DMK failed to gain a foothold outside of Tamil Nadu, the party expanded its social base within the state, attracting non-Brahmin and Brahmin alike with appeals to Tamil sentiment in the demands for greater state autonomy and less northern domination.[39]

With each election, the DMK extended its base of strength from the urban centers deeper into rural areas. The DMK and its army of student volunteers responded to the imposition of Hindi on an unwilling South with demonstrations against the state Congress government. A number of Tamil film writers, directors, and actors added their glamour to the rising party, and, in a symbiotic relationship with the party, the swashbuckling hero M. G. Ramachandran (M. G. R.), "idol of the masses," rose to become the most popular film star in South India.[40]

In 1967 the DMK crushed the Congress Party in a landslide victory. As it gained increased support, the DMK transformed from a secessionist movement, nurtured by vague dreams of a glorious past and an impossible future, to a party of increasing political maturity and parliamentary discipline.[41] But in 1969 Annadurai, "Anna," founder and leader of the DMK, died. The leadership of the party and government was taken by M. Karunanidhi, who, like his predecessor, was a film writer and director. M. G. R. soon challenged Karunanidhi, and in 1972 the party split, with M. G. R. forming a new party, the All-India Anna DMK, which pledged to return

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[39]See Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., *The Dravidian Movement* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965), reprinted in Hardgrave, *Essays in the Political Sociology of South India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1993), pp. 1–80; and Hardgrave, "The Politics of Tamil Nationalism," *Pacific Affairs*, 37 (Winter 1964–65), pp. 396–411. For the DK, see Mohan Ram, "Ramaswami Naicker and the Dravidian Movement," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 9 Annual Number (February 1974), pp. 217–24.

[40]Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "Politics and the Film in Tamil Nadu: The Stars and the DMK," *Asian Survey*, 13 (March 1973), pp. 288–305; and Hardgrave, "When Stars Displace the Gods: The Folk Culture of Cinema in Tamil Nadu," *Essays in the Political Sociology of South India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1993), pp. 92–124.

[41]For an analysis of DMK ideology and the party's rise to power, see Marguerite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

the party to the principles of Annadurai.[42] The 1977 assembly elections brought the AIADMK to power in Tamil Nadu, with film star M. G. R. serving as Chief Minister until his death in 1987. On the death of M. G. R., his wife Janaki, a retired actress, succeeded to the leadership of the party and the state, but she was immediately challenged by J. Jayalalitha, AIADMK propaganda secretary and M. G. R.'s romantic heroine in scores of films.[43] The party split, and against a divided AIADMK, the DMK, under the leadership of film director M. Karunanidhi, returned to power in state assembly elections in January 1989. Little more than one year later, the government was dismissed and President's Rule imposed on Tamil Nadu—ostensibly for its failure to control the activities of Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas operating within the state. The action, however, was probably taken by Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar at the behest of Rajiv Gandhi in a move against the National Front.

Both the DMK and the AIADMK have been, at one time or another, allied at the national level with the Congress Party. M. G. R. had secured an alliance with the Congress (I), and this was sustained by Jayalalitha as leader of a reunited AIADMK. The DMK was a part of the National Front. Elections for the Tamil Nadu assembly were held in conjunction with the 1991 parliamentary elections, and the AIADMK—supported by the Congress (I) and the sympathy wave generated by the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi—swept to a dramatic victory, with Jayalalitha as Chief Minister of the new AIADMK government. Jayalalitha's government came under intense attack in 1995 when she was accused of allocating huge amounts of state resources to finance her foster son's wedding. Her government was defeated in the 1996 state and national elections by the DMK. In December 1996, Jayalalitha was arrested on charges of corruption. Searches of her houses in Chinnai and Hyderabad revealed an estimated $16.5 million of personal property and assets, including 10,000 saris and 250 pairs of imported shoes. The press in India labeled her the "booty queen." Charges were also filed against many of her ministers. Despite these disclosures, the AIADMK won a stunning victory in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections and, in a game of political extortion, Jayalalitha held the BJP government—dependent for its survival on the AIADMK's 18 parliamentary seats—hostage to various

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[42]K. Ramaswamy Sastry, "A Chronicle of the DMK Split," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30 March 1974, pp. 527–31.

[43]These bizarre events are recounted in *India Today*, January 15, 1988, pp. 6–14, and February 15, 1988, pp. 20–22.

demands as a condition for her support. In April 1999, the AIADMK withdrew from the coalition, denying the BJP its requisite majority in the Lok Sabha.

Despite differences in outlook and social base, the role of the AIADMK in bringing down the BJP-led government prompted the BJP to ally with the DMK in the 1999 parliamentary elections. The DMK proved to be a willing partner in the alliance out of a sense of gratitude for the BJP's refusal to yield to Jayalalitha's demand that the central government declare President's Rule in the state and in the hope of winning back some of its old supporters. Because the BJP and the DMK drew from the same upper castes and OBC base, the alliance was able to win only a marginal victory in the state. The DMK–BJP alliance won 16 seats in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections while the AIADMK won 10, the PMK won 5 and the MDMK won 4.

In the 2004 elections the DMK and AIADMK switched sides. The DMK allied with the Congress (I) and the AIADMK allied with the BJP-led NDA. While the NDA attacked Sonia Gandhi and stressed Vajpayee's experience, the DMK alliance attacked Jayalalitha. Because over the years Jayalalitha had succeeded in alienating almost every sector of Tamil Nadu society, the AIADMK and the BJP suffered a massive defeat and were unable to win a single seat.

The transformation of national politics has also led to the transformation of Tamil Nadu politics. Until recently local parties preferred to align with the Congress (I) but shifted their support in the wake of the rise of the BJP. In many ways Tamil politics tend to be somewhat unique. Populism, ethnicity, and caste are the major forces shaping state politics, and national parties like the Congress (I) and the BJP play only a minor role and remain totally dependent on local allies. At the same time, however, the weakening links between Dravidian parties and Tamil society and the rise of the BJP have made voter alignments in Tamil Nadu more fluid and the politics of the state more volatile.

The Akali Dal

The Akali Dal is both regional and communal. It is confined to the Punjab and is open only to Sikhs, of whom it claims to be the sole representative. The Akali Dal was first organized as a reform group to bring the gurdwaras (temples) under the control of the orthodox Sikh community. Following a policy of direct action, the Akalis succeeded, in 1925, in bringing the gurdwaras under the authority of a committee elected by universal adult franchise within the community. Control of the committee, with jurisdiction over hundreds of gurdwaras and their

endowments and with great patronage powers, considerably strength-
ened the position of the Akali Dal in the Punjab. Master Tara Singh,
leader of the dominant Akali faction until 1965, declared the necessity
of a Sikh state to protect the gurdwaras and defend the Sikh religion.
At the time of partition, the Akalis sought an independent Sikhistan,
but in the agitation of the 1950s for linguistic states, the Akali demand
was translated to that of a Punjabi–speaking state of Punjabi Suba.
That goal, after prolonged agitation, was finally achieved in 1966.[44]

For all its influence, however, the Akali Dal has never had wide
electoral appeal, even among the Sikhs. The Sikh community in the
Punjab is far from homogenous and Sikh political parties have tradi-
tionally been highly factionalized. Thus, the Akali Dal is always
searching for allies. Having achieved its Punjabi Suba, the Akalis
received only 25 percent of the vote in the 1967 elections, but in a
united front with the Congress dissidents, the Jana Sangh, and the
Communists, the Akali Dal led the formation of a coalition govern-
ment. In 1971, as a result of Akali defections to Congress, however,
the Punjab government fell, and President's Rule was imposed. It
was not until 1977 that the Akalis again gained power, this time
with the support of the CPM and the Janata Party. With Indira Gan-
dhi's return to power in 1980, the Prime Minister called for dismissal
of the governments in those states under opposition rule where Con-
gress had won a majority of the parliamentary seats. Fresh elections
brought the Congress Party to power in the Punjab and set the
stage for the series of events that brought the state to crisis.

The Akalis sought to recoup their strength through the movement
for greater Punjabi autonomy, only to be overwhelmed by the rise of
Sikh militancy. The 1985 Punjab accord provided the basis for elec-
tions and the formation of a new Akali Dal government, but its dis-
missal in 1987 returned the Punjab to President's Rule.

At the height of Sikh militancy, the Akali Dal became divided into
five major factions and numerous splinter groups.[45] The party seemed
to have lost the capacity to speak for the Sikh community with a
united voice. Gradually, however, a group led by Simranjit Singh
Mann gained strength and was able to win six of thirteen Lok
Sabha seats in the 1989 elections. An Akali boycott of the 1992
state assembly elections restored a popularly elected government in

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[44]For the early history of the Akali Dal, see Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab*
(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).

[45]See pp. 172–81 for a detailed account of the crisis that has engulfed the Punjab over the
past decade.

the Punjab led by the Congress (I). Due to the boycott the election turnout was less than 22 percent, but the Congress (I) victory did enable the restoration of a political process in the state. Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of the Punjab from 1970 to 1971 and again from 1977 to 1980, reemerged as a moderate Akali leader and began to build an effective political alliance in the state. In the 1996 Lok Sabha elections he allied with the BSP and the BJP to win eight seats and 28.7 percent of the vote compared to only 3.8 percent for the Mann group. Under Badal the Akali Dal demanded a "broad-based confederation" rather than the separate Sikh nation demanded by the militants. In alliance with the BJP, the Badal group won a landslide victory in the 1997 state assembly elections and 8 of 13 seats in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, establishing Badal's temporary preeminent position in Punjabi politics.

The Akali–BJP alliance, however, proved to be quite vulnerable. In both the 1999 Lok Sabha elections and the 2002 state assembly elections, the Congress (I) and its allies succeeded in defeating the Akali–BJP coalition. In 1999 a resurgent Congress (I) won eight of thirteen seats in the Punjab compared to only three for the Akali–BJP alliance. This pattern was repeated in the 2002 assembly elections when the Congress (I) in alliance with the CPI won 64 seats and the Akali–BJP coalition was able to win only 44 seats.

The Lok Sabha elections of 2004, however, reversed the earlier pattern. The Akali-BJP alliance swept the polls winning 11 of the Punjab's 13 seats. The Akali–BJP victory was primarily due to poor governance by the Congress (I), corruption, Sonia's foreign origins, the popularity of NDA rule in the Punjab, and Sikh party unity. The Punjab's conflicting religious, ethnic, and caste identities, however, continue to make the state's politics highly volatile.

The National Conference

The preeminent party in Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, has long been the National Conference (NC). In 1982 the leadership of the party and the government passed from Sheikh Abdullah, "the Lion of Kashmir," who had dominated the affairs of the state for 50 years, to his son Farooq Abdullah. Virtually from the time Farooq took office, Indira Gandhi began machinations to oust the government, and she finally did so in 1984 by engineering a split in the NC that brought a pro-Congress NC faction to power. In assembly elections in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi sought to extend Congress (I) influence in the state through an alliance with Farooq, but the

elections that returned the NC to power were marked by fraud; Kashmiris viewed the new government as illegitimate and Farooq as little more than a puppet of the Center. Deepened political alienation of Kashmir's Muslims soon erupted in violence and the movement for secession that has brought the state to civil war. In January 1990, the Center imposed President's Rule, dismissing the corrupt and inept Farooq government.[46] The rise of Muslim separatism in Kashmir led to an increasingly bloody insurgency and no elections were held until May 1996 when Kashmir elected six representatives to the Lok Sabha. Despite allegations of coercion by Indian security forces, the elections were seen as a success and led to a decision to hold state assembly elections in September 1997. The NC led by Farooq Abdullah won a massive victory and local government was restored in Kashmir for the first time since 1990. The National Conference also won the 1998 Lok Sabha elections for the state's seats in Parliament but abstained on the vote of confidence that installed the BJP government.

The Lok Sabha elections of 1996, 1998, and 1999 provided hope for a return of electoral politics to the war-torn province. An especially critical turning point in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir took place in 2002, however, as a result of the state assembly elections, which transformed the politics of the state from a one-party dominant system to a new era of coalition politics. These elections saw the defeat of the long dominant National Conference by the newly formed People's Democratic Party (PDP), a largely breakaway Congress (I) group led by Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. The assembly elections restored the credibility of the electoral process in the state and opened new political space for pluralistic competition. This new pattern of competition was reflected in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, which saw the Congress (I) and the National Conference win two seats each and the PDP win one seat.

Separatism and electoral politics now compete with each other for attention in the war-torn state of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmaris, however, realize that elections alone cannot resolve the conflict. Peace with honor, they note, can only be achieved by direct negotiations between India, Kashmiri separatists, and the Government of Pakistan.

The Telugu Desam

Formed in 1982 by film star N. T. Rama Rao (N. T. R.), the party, in an assertion of "Telugu pride," defeated the Congress in the January

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[46]The Kashmir crisis is examined on pp. 181–7.

1983 Andhra elections.[47] The party is populist in orientation, but its raison d'être is the issue of greater state autonomy. Within a few months of taking office, Rama Rao, grooming himself for a more national role, took center stage in hosting a conference of leaders of 14 opposition parties, a step toward opposition unity, out of which came a call for the redress of the federal balance and devolution of power to the states.

Within the state Rama Rao's popularity began to wane, but in 1984 he gained a new lease on his political life when the Center made a clumsy attempt to depose him. The attempted "coup" staged by Indira Gandhi brought a volley of opposition protest and the national press, even those papers normally pro-Congress were virtually unanimous in their condemnation of the "wholly illegal and unjustifiable" intervention by the Center in the affairs of a state. Restored to power with renewed strength, Rama Rao, clad in the saffron robes associated with his film roles as Hindu deities, led his Telugu Desam to victory with a two-thirds majority in the Andhra assembly elections of 1985.

Rama Rao continued his efforts to forge opposition unity and was instrumental in 1988 in forming the National Front, becoming its Chairman. At home, however, Rama Rao's autocratic style as Chief Minister was wearing thin. The 1989 elections brought the National Front to power at the Center, but in the Andhra assembly elections, the Telugu Desam fell to the Congress (I). In the 1991 parliamentary elections, the Telugu Desam won 13 of the state's 42 Lok Sabha seats, but in March 1992, in a test of support for the Congress (I) government of Narasimha Rao, a native of Andhra Pradesh, nine members of the Telugu Desam broke ranks with the opposition to vote for Rao.

Although the Telugu Desam regained power in Andhra in the state assembly elections of 1994, a rift developed within the party over the place of Lakshmi Parvathi, N. T. R.'s wife and biographer, who he had married in August 1993 and who began to play an active role in party affairs. The issue led to a split in the party when Chandrababu Naidu, N. T. R.'s son-in-law, toppled him from power in August 1995. On N. T. R.'s death in January 1996, the leadership of his faction was taken over by his wife. As Chief Minister and leader of the dominant faction of the TDP, Naidu's TDP won 16 seats in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections and he played a major role in cobbling together the United Front government. Following the 1998 elections in which the TDP-Naidu won 12 seats, Naidu split with the United

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[47]See N. Innaiah, *Saffron Star over Andhra Pradash: Genesis, Growth and Critical Analysis of Telugu Desam Party* (Hyderabad: Book Links, 1984).

Front and provided the critical votes that enabled the BJP to win its vote of confidence and form a government.

The spectacular performance of the TDP in the Lok Sabha and state assembly elections of 1999 reflected the impact of the regionalization of politics in India as well as the rise of the BJP. The TDP, which had traditionally aligned itself with the left in Andhra politics, shifted tactics and entered into alliance with the BJP. The TDP-BJP alliance marginalized the smaller parties in the state and created a solid non-Congress (I) voting bloc which succeeded in winning a stunning victory in both polls. In the 1999 Lok Sabha elections the TDP won 29 of the state's 42 seats, the BJP won 7 and the Congress (I) only 5. In the assembly elections the TDP won 179 of 294 seats compared to 12 seats for the BJP and 91 seats for the Congress (I). Unlike the populist N. T. R. who vigorously opposed the 1991 economic reforms, Naidu proclaimed himself to be the new CEO of Andhra, embraced the reforms, and promised to create a "Golden Andhra" by 2020. Naidu was heralded by the press, the World Bank, and foreign investors as a new style politician and a welcome breath of fresh air, as his party came to dominate state politics.

By the time of the 2004 elections, Naidu had become the longest serving Chief Minister in India and made the election a referendum of his leadership. He campaigned on his record of economic performance and development, peace and order, and on the unity of the Telugu-speaking people. Despite his popularity and the apparent success of his economic policies, the TDP went down to a stunning defeat and was able to win only 5 of the states 42 seats in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. While many saw Naidu's defeat as a sign of growing popular opposition to economic reforms in India, most analysts attributed his defeat to the highly successful Congress (I) coalition strategy in the state. The Congress (I) had cobbled together a coalition composed of the state's traditionally strong leftist parties and the Telengana Rashtra Samiti (TRS), a newly formed TDP splinter group that demanded the creation of a separate state of Telengana. The coalition attacked the TDP's economic reform policies as pro-rich and anti-farmer. Due to its successful coalition strategy the Congress (I) was able to win 29 seats, the TRS won 5 seats, and the CPI/CPM won 2 seats.

The Asom Gana Parishad

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in Assam, was formed prior to the 1985 state assembly elections by various groups involved in the

student-led anti-immigrant movement. The party came to power on a program calling for the protection of Assamese language and culture, but its tenure in office was tarnished by misrule, corruption, and a breakdown of law and order due to Bodo tribal agitation and the insurgency of the United Liberation Front of Asom. Due to the level of local unrest, the central government was forced to dismiss the AGP government in 1990 and impose President's Rule. On the eve of the 1991 state assembly elections, however, the AGP—a constituent of the National Front—split and suffered a major defeat at the polls. AGP's statewide support declined from 33 percent in the previous election to 18 percent in 1991, and the Congress (I) returned to power in the state. A reunited AGP-led alliance, however, defeated the Congress in the 1996 state assembly elections and won five seats in the Lok Sabha to become a member of the United Front government in June 1996. In the 1998 Lok Sabha elections the AGP once again went down to defeat and did not win a single seat. A year later the voters of Assam rejected the AGP for the third time in a row in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. These election defeats reflected continuing popular disillusionment with the failure of the AGP to deliver on its campaign promises and enabled the Congress (I) to consolidate its gains. At the same time, erosion of support for the AGP also enabled the BJP to emerge as an important force in the Assamese politics due to the Kargil war and its strong stand against illegal migrants.

The emergence of the BJP as an important force in Assam politics transformed the 2004 elections into a three-way contest among the Congress (I), the AGP, and the BJP. Each party represented a key Assamese constituency and as in the past, the election campaign focused on the issue of illegal migrants. The Congress (I) drew its support primarily from the state's minority population. The AGP represented the indigenous Assamese community and the BJP was supported by the state's upper caste Hindus. The emergence of the BJP as a political force in the Assam and its appeals to Hindu nationalism split the anti-Congress (I) vote and transcended the AGP's narrower appeals to Assamese nationalism. The election results reflected sagging support for the AGP, strong support for the Congress (I), and a rising level of support for the BJP. The Congress (I) won nine seats and 35 percent of the vote, the BJP won three seats and 31 percent of the vote, and the AGP won only two seats and 20 percent of the vote. The election results demonstrate the problems a party like AGP confronts in attempting to appeal to Assamese nationalism in a pluralistic, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic state.

Bahujan Samaj Party

The BSP (literally "party of society's majority") was founded in 1984 by Kanshi Ram, a former government employee and follower of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, to espouse the cause of the Scheduled Castes, backward castes, and Muslims. Its aim was to bring about a revolution in the socioeconomic plight of Dalits (oppressed). The party began making its presence felt in the late 1980s but scored its first big success in the 1993 state elections in Uttar Pradesh when it won 67 seats and 12 percent of the vote and formed a coalition government with the Samajwadi Party. This Dalit and backward caste alliance, however, disintegrated in June 1995 and the BSP formed its own government with the support of the BJP. The BSP government, however, lasted only a few months and the state was placed under President's Rule. The BSP won 10 seats in the Lok Sabha elections of April–May 1996 and 67 seats in the October 1996 state assembly elections. Since the state elections resulted in a hung assembly, Uttar Pradesh was again placed under President's Rule. In March 1997 the BSP and the BJP entered into a unique coalition arrangement whereby the cabinet would be based on equal representation of each party and the chief ministership would rotate between the two parties. Leadership for the first six months was to be provided by Mayawati, the 42-year-old leader of the BSP in Uttar Pradesh and close confidant of Kanshi Ram. Two weeks before relinquishing control, however, the BSP balked. The BJP then cobbled together a majority by splitting the Congress (I), the Janata Dal, and the BSP in Uttar Pradesh to form a majority. The BSP was able to win only five seats in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections and 4.68 percent of the vote. In addition to Uttar Pradesh, the BSP also has some support in the Punjab and Madhya Pradesh.[48]

Unlike other largely state-based parties, the BSP sees itself as the all-India voice of the Dalit community and has attempted to broaden its appeal and extend its geographic scope. Because of its increasing electoral strength, the BSP was recognized as a national party by the Election Commission in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. The party ran 435 candidates in 25 states and union territories and won 19 seats and 5.35 percent of the popular vote.

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[48]Farhat Parveen, "The Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party," *Regional Studies*, 13 (Autumn 1995), pp. 58–80, and Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

The Samajwadi Party

Like the BSP, the Samajwadi Party (SP), one of a group of parties representing Other Backward Castes, sees itself as a national party. The party was founded in November 1992 by Mulayam Singh Yadav, a wrestler turned politician. Singh was rural bred, attended village schools, and received a higher education at a district college in U.P. He began his political career as a supporter of Ram Manohar Lohia's socialist party, then joined Charan Singh's peasant party, and finally became a member of the Janata movement.

The Samajwadi Party started as a caste-based party representing the Yadav community, a middle peasant caste in U.P. Using the Yadav community as his base, Singh sought to shed his caste-based identity by adopting a program of socialism and welfare populism and attempted to mobilize a broad base coalition of OBCs, Dalits, and Muslims. Singh had won the support of Muslims when, as Chief Minister of U.P., he saved the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya from demolition by Hindu militants. Despite efforts to mobilize Dalits, however, Singh found his ambitions held in check by the rise of the BSP. As a result, the SP has become a party of Yadavs and Muslims. The electoral support for the SP in U.P. peaked in 1996 when the party won 29 percent of the vote. Since then, party support has stalemated. In the 2002 state assembly elections the SP received only 26 percent of the vote.

In an attempt to extend its reach beyond its base in U.P., the SP fielded 237 candidates in 23 of the country's 35 states and union territories in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. Although the party won 26.7 percent of the vote and 36 seats in the 2004, 35 of the seats were located in U.P. and the other one in Uttaranchal, which had formerly been part of U.P.[49]

PERSPECTIVE ON POLITICS

Since independence, the Indian party system has been shaped by the decline of the once-dominant Congress Party; the inability of an increasingly fragmented opposition to forge a centrist third force alternative; the rise of the Hindu Nationalist BJP; and the growing regionalization of parties. Although the fragmented opposition was able to defeat the Congress in 1977, 1989, and 1996, neither the right-of-center Janata Party

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[49]See D. Shafiuzzaman, *The Samajwadi Party: A Study Of Its Social Base, Ideology and Program* (New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 2003).

nor the left-of-center Janata Dal was able to hold its diverse third force coalition together for very long or provide effective government. The rise of the BJP in the 1990s, its success in cobbling together a diverse coalition of caste and regional parties that ruled for six years from 1998 to 2004, and the formation of the Congress-led UPA government in 2004 may indicate that the Indian party system is entering a new era of "bi-nodal" coalition politics organized around the two largest national parties: the BJP and the Congress (I). The rise of Hindu fundamentalism, growing concern over Indian unity, the crisis of the communist left brought on by the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the reemergence of the Nehru dynasty will continue to shape the development of the party system for the foreseeable future as the Indian party system enters a new period of fluidity.

RECOMMENDED READING

Adeney, Katharine, and Lawrence Saez, eds., *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*. London: Routledge, 2005. An excellent collection of essays examining the emergence of the BJP and the constraints imposed on the party by coalition politics.

*Chandra, Kanchan, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 (Foundation Books, Delhi). A Study of how ethnic parties succeed and why people vote the way they do for ethnic parties.

*Corbridge, Stuart, and John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberation, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004. The book examines the history of modern India and the transformation of its political economy and identity.

Ghosh, Partha S., *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2000. The study traces the growth of Hindu Nationalism from the late 19th century to the present and attempts to assess political future of Hindu nationalism and the BJP.

*Hansen, Thomas B., *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Hansen, Thomas B., and Christophe Jaffrelot, eds., *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998. Essays examine the history, strategies, and dilemmas of the BJP.

*Jaffrelot, Christophe, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. A comprehensive study of Hindu nationalism and the rise of the BJP.

_____, *India's Silent Revolution; The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. A major study of the transformation of caste politics and its impact on the Indian political system.

Malik, Yogendra K., and V. B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994. A useful survey of the origins, leadership, organization, and electoral performance of the BJP.

Mallick, Ross, *Indian Communism: Opposition, Collaboration and Institutionalization*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. An excellent history of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Pai, Sudha*, Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*. New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2002. A study of the origins and development of the BSP.

Shafiuzzaman, Dr., *The Samajwadi Party: A Study of Its Social Base, Ideology and Programme*. New Delhi: Sage Publications Corporation, 2003. A brief history of the origins and development of the Samajwadi Party.

*Thakurta, Paranjoy Guha, and Shankar Raghuraman, *Time of Coalitions: Divided We Stand*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004. An excellent study of the decline of the Congress, the rise of the BJP, the regional fragmentation of the party system, the role of the left, and the future of coalition politics in India.

*Available in paperback edition.

8

Elections and Political Behavior

INDIA'S SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF 14 NATIONAL elections since 1947 has confounded both the prophets of doom who see each Indian election as its last and the theorists of political development who see elections as a luxury that the developing world cannot afford. Despite massive illiteracy and poverty, India has succeeded in developing both effective administrative machinery and popular enthusiasm that have enabled it to conduct the largest elections in the world based on mass franchise. In the past 60 years, elections have grown in size, the electorate has shown increased sophistication and awareness, and mass political mobilization has contributed to the integration of Indian diversities in the larger whole.

THE CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

The Indian elections are a phenomenal undertaking and are managed by an independent, constitutionally protected Election Commission.[1] The election in 2004 for the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, was the largest ever conducted in world history. In the 60 years since independence, the size of the Indian electorate had almost quadrupled from 173 million in 1952 to 675 million in 2004; the number of political parties had mushroomed to 6 recognized national parties, 47 state parties, and 702 Registered Unrecognized Parties; and a total of 5,398 candidates contested for the 543 elected seats in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

India has had a long tradition of elections that began under British rule. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 provided for limited franchise based on property qualifications, with the specific criteria varying among the provinces. The total electorate for the various provincial legislative councils was about 5.35 million. Easing the franchise qualifications, the Government of India Act of 1935 extended suffrage to include some 30 million people. Elections were held under the Act in 1937 and again on the eve of independence in 1945–46.

Following independence, the new Indian Constitution abolished all property qualifications and established universal adult suffrage in what Rajendra Prasad called "an act of faith." The Sixty-first Amendment, passed in 1988, extended the franchise further by lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. From the members of the Election Commission down to individual polling officers, some 4 million civilian officials, along with 2 million police, paramilitary, and military forces, are involved in conducting parliamentary elections. During the 2004 elections, these officials monitored 700,121 polling stations, and the administrative costs of conducting the elections alone amounted to

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[1]The Election Commission of India is composed of a Chief Election Commissioner and two other commissioners. The commissioners enjoy equal powers and in cases of a difference of opinion the issue is decided by majority vote. Commissioners serve a term of six years and cannot be removed except by a procedure similar to the removal of Supreme Court judges. The commission is insulated from executive interference and is responsible for the preparation of the electoral rolls and the conduct of elections. Since the 1990s the Election Commission has introduced a variety of procedural changes designed to improve the electoral process including the introductions of a code of conduct. See M. L. Ahuja, *General Elections in India: Electoral Politics, Electoral Reforms and Political Parties* (New Delhi: Icon Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2005), pp. 16–29. On the mechanics of elections, see N. S. Gehlot, *Elections and Electoral Administration in India* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep, 1992); and M. S. Gill, "India: Running the World's Biggest Elections," *Journal of Democracy,* 9 (January 1998), pp. 164–68.

some Rs. 13 billion (about $30 million). The size of the electorate and convenience are major considerations in determining the number and location of the polling stations. Each polling station has about 1,000 voters and polls are spaced so that ordinarily no person should have to travel more than two kilometers (1.24 miles) to vote. The sheer magnitude of the elections has made extended voting periods necessary. The first general elections were held in the winter of 1951–52 over a four-month period. The time was reduced to a span of 19 days in 1957. The 2004 elections were conducted in four phases on April 20 and 26 and May 5 and 10. The phasing of the elections was designed to enable the Election Commission to deploy paramilitary forces more effectively in an effort to provide security, deter violence, and inhibit malpractices.

Voter registration is the responsibility of the Election Commission rather than the individual voter. Voter rolls are prepared on the basis of a house–to–house canvass. The lists are then made public so that each person may check whether his or her name has been included. In an effort to reduce fraud and further improve the voting process, the Election Commission in August 1993 decided to introduce photo identity cards to voters. By the 2004 elections more than 400 million photo identity cards had been distributed. Those without identity cards are required to use some other form of identification in order to vote. Voters line up at the station and a polling officer checks each voter's identity against his or her name on the electoral roll. The voter is then marked on the finger with indelible ink. The whole procedure is scrutinized by polling agents representing each candidate. Their presence and assistance also serve to identify voters and prevent impersonations. Agents for each candidate are also entitled to be present at the ballot counting. This takes place under police protection at a central location.

In the first two general elections, each voter was given ballot papers for assembly and parliamentary seats. A ballot box existed for each candidate in each contest, and the voter placed the paper in the box marked by the symbol of the candidate he or she supported. (Some voters reportedly worshiped the ballot box after casting their votes.) The system was confusing and involved a vast number of ballot boxes. A new procedure that provided for marked ballots and a single box in public view was adopted in 1962. In 1998 the Election Commission began to introduce Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) instead of paper ballots. These machines proved to be widely accepted, reduced malpractices, and were used for the first time throughout the country in the 2004 elections. The introduction of EVMs enabled the Election Commission

to increase the maximum number of voters per polling station from 1,200 to 1,500 and reduce the number of polling booths from 900,000 in 1998 to 774,651 in 1999 and then to 700,121 in 2004.

The States Reorganization Act passed in 1956 provided for the establishment of the Delimitation Commission, consisting of the chief election commissioner and two active or retired judges of the Supreme Court or a state High Court. Their responsibility is to delimit the constituencies for each election. These have varied somewhat with each election, but with the exception of the major changes caused by States Reorganization, sufficient continuity has existed to permit comparative analysis. Under Article 82 of the Indian Constitution, redistricting was to take place following each decennial census. In an effort to encourage family planning and protect states with the most successful family planning programs, the Parliament in 1976 passed the Forty-second Amendment to the Constitution, which suspended reapportionment until after the 2001 census had been published. In August 2001, however, the Parliament passed the Ninety-first Amendment that extended the freeze on reapportionment until 2026.[2]

Of the 545 members of the Lok Sabha, 443 are directly elected from general seats, 79 are reserved for Scheduled Castes, 41 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes, and two are nominated by the President to represent the Anglo-Indian community. Within each parliamentary constituency are a number of state assembly constituencies, typically seven, varying in size from state to state. In 1999 there were a total of 4,072 members of the state and Union Territory legislative assemblies.

VOTER TURNOUT AND PARTICIPATION

Despite extensive poverty and low rates of literacy, political consciousness in India is remarkably high and the level of political participation has increased considerably since the introduction of mass franchise in 1952. There has also been a dramatic change in the social composition

[2]See Norio Kondo, *Indian Parliamentary Elections after Independence: Social Changes and Electoral Participation* (Chiba, Japan: Institute of Developing Economies, 2003), pp. 29–30; and E. Sridharan, "The Origins of the Electoral System: Rules, Representation and Power-Sharing in India's Democracy," in Zoya Hasan, E. Sridharan, and R. Sudarshan, eds., *India's Living Constitution: Ideas, Practices, Controversies* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), p. 351.

of voters marked by a democratic upsurge of socially marginalized sectors of society that Jafferlot has called "India's Silent Revolution." This democratic upsurge, which began in the late 1980s, was sparked by increased caste and community mobilization, the emergence of a highly competitive multiparty system, and the mushroom growth of local and state political parties. The modest drop in voter turnout in the 2004 elections, some analysts have argued, marked the decline and domestication of the 1990s democratic upsurge.[3]

As seen in Table 8.1, voter turnout in India since the introduction of universal mass franchise in 1952 has averaged about 57.1 percent with a low of 45.7 percent in 1952 and a high of 64.1 percent in 1984 following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. At the same time, population growth has increased the number of total votes polled from 79 million in 1952 to almost 400 million in 2004. Since 1989, voter turnout has averaged about 60 percent. The sharp drop in voter turnout in 1991 has been attributed to the lowering of the voting age to 18 and a series of unusual exigencies. The 1991 elections were the first to be scheduled in the hot summer months; they were held in an atmosphere of political violence marked by the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi; and the elections had to be suspended for a brief period following the assassination, which extended them into the monsoon season.[4]

The reconfiguration of the party system and domestication of the democratic upsurge of the 1990s may mark a new phase in Indian political development. Unlike the elections of the 1990s, analysts have noted, the 2004 elections produced no new divisive issues, no massive corruption scandals, and no fresh political leadership in a campaign dominated by the personalities of Sonia Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The surprise defeat of the NDA was attributed primarily to a strong anti–incumbency popular mood, an overconfident BJP, a voter backlash against the NDA's "India Shining" campaign that touted an urban economic prosperity that had bypassed the rural and urban poor, and an unprecedented shift in the anti–coalition policy of the Congress Party, which resulted in the creation of a pre-election coalition with a group of state parties that proved to be decisive.[5]

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[3]Yogendra Yadav, "The Elusive Mandate of 2004," *Political and Economic Weekly,* XXXIX No. 51 (December 18–24, 2004), pp. 5383–5398.

[4]Arthur G. Rubinoff, "Participation in India's Tenth General Elections," in Harold A. Gould and Sumit Ganguly, eds., *India Votes: Alliance Politics and Minority Governments in the Ninth and Tenth General Elections* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 241–42.

[5]Yadav, pp. 5383–5398.

T A B L E 8.1   Election Data, Indian Parliamentary Elections, 1952–2004

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	542[a]	4,629	434,442	363.9	207.4	57.0
1984	542	5,493	479,214	400.1	256.5	64.1
1989	543[b]	6,158	579,810	498.1	308.8	62.0
1991	543	8780	594,797	511.5	285.8	55.9
1996	543	13,952	767,462	592.6	343.3	57.9
1998	543	4750	900,000	605.3	375.0	62.0
1999	543	4648	774,651	619.5	371.7	60.0
2004	543	5435	700,121	671.5	388.3	57.8

[a] Elections were not held in 13 constituencies: 12 in Assam and 1 in Meghalaya.

[b] Elections were not held in Assam (14 seats). Includes results for four seats that were countermanded.

*Turnout is computed as the total votes polled (valid plus invalid) as a percentage of the electorate in contested seats (the electorate in uncontested seats is omitted). All turnout figures must have a margin of error. The electoral register can never be fully up to date and every register has its mistakes—both in duplicate names and in omissions. The accuracy of Indian electoral registers is reasonably high, but must vary considerably between different regions and localities. It should also be remembered that a small proportion of people who actually go to the polls fail to record a valid vote, usually by inadvertence but occasionally deliberately.

SOURCE: David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (New Delhi: Books and Things, 1995), p. 67; Arun Kumar, *The Turning Point: 1996 Poll Story* (New Delhi: Press Trust of India, 1997), p. 3; Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, *India 2005: A Reference Annual* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 2005), p. 53, M. L. Ahuja, *General Elections in India: Electoral Politics, Electoral Reforms and Political Parties* (New Delhi: Icon Publications, Pvt. Ltd. 2005), pp. 83–85; "Political Parties and Elections in Indian States: 1990–1993: Statistical Supplement, *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy,* Vol. XV, Nos, 1 & 2, January–June 2003, and *Economic and Political Weekly,* "National Election Study 2004," Vol. XXXIX, No. 51 (December 18–24, 2004) pp. 5373–5544. Slight variations exist among sources for votes polled. The figures above represent percent turnout of electorate as listed.

Voter turnout in India, as elsewhere, is not uniform and tends to be affected by a variety of demographic and socioeconomic factors that include region, residence, gender, caste, class, and community. Regionally, voter participation in India tends to be much higher in more politicized states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Tripura. Kerala, with the highest literacy rate in the country, has traditionally had a very large voter turnout, as has the highly politicized state of West Bengal. By contrast, voter turnout in the tribal belt and in India's less developed states in the North tends to be much lower.

Unlike developed democracies, voter turnout in rural areas and among poor and marginalized sectors of Indian society tends to be somewhat higher than among the urbanized, upper caste, and richer social groups. Although the urban-rural gap has begun to narrow in recent elections, voter turnout among Dalits, tribals, OBCs, the poor, and the underprivileged continues to outpace the turnout of upper-caste Hindus and the rich. Despite some increase, voter turnout among Muslims, however, continues to remain much lower in most states than among Hindus. Despite the higher turnout of Dalits, tribals, and the poor, social deprivation remains a major obstacle to other forms of participation and continues to relegate these groups to the periphery of Indian politics. Politics in India remains dominated by the more privileged and educated sectors of society.

Gender participation has also been an important factor in Indian elections. During the first general elections many women refused to give their proper names and, therefore, were not even registered. Since then, however, female participation has increased dramatically from a low of 38.8 percent in 1957 to a high of 58.6 percent in 1984. In the 2004 elections female turnout declined somewhat from an average of 57.9 in the 1990s to 53.5 percent. Although the male-female turnout gap has begun to narrow, the gender gap remains at about eight percent. At the same time, where once women followed the lead of male family members in making voting decisions, impressionistic evidence, supported by survey data, suggests they are playing an increasingly independent role.[6]

While women today vote in increasing numbers, their involvement in politics remains largely separate from men. Women may be enlisted in making banners and posters, and they are mobilized by

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[6]See Usha Thakhar, "The Women's Vote," in Subrata Kumar Mitra and James Chiriyankandath, eds., *Electoral Politics in India: A Changing Landscape* (New Delhi: Segment Books, 1992), pp. 199–211.

the women's auxiliary organizations of the various parties to canvass votes—among women. They rarely attend the processions and rallies, and, when they do, it is in a special reserved section. Their role, as it has been since the 1930s, is primarily "behind the scenes"—separate, in what Wendy Singer has called "a kind of political purdah."[7]

Women, of course, played a prominent part in the nationalist movement, and the Congress encouraged them to enter politics by reserving a percentage of its tickets for them, but the numbers have remained small. Generally parties are reluctant to nominate women, and women represent only 10 percent of the total candidates nominated by parties. In 2004, for example, of the 355 woman candidates that contested the elections, only 44 were elected, and women continue to occupy only eight percent of the seats in the Lok Sabha.[8] While their numbers are comparatively few, however, women have served in top government positions as ministers, chief ministers, and governors. In addition, Indira Gandhi served as Prime Minister for a numbers of years and Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv's widow, is the President of the Congress Party and the most powerful woman in India today. Since 1996, successive governments have promised a constitutional amendment that would provide for 33 percent reservation for women in state assemblies and Parliament. These efforts have failed, however, due to demands for special reservations for OBCs and minorities within the quota.[9]

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Mobilizing Voters

With each election, Indian political campaigns have become more expensive and intense, a mixture of festival and struggle, penetrating even the most isolated villages. Each candidate, backed by party funds and contributions, builds a team of party volunteers and paid election workers for the campaign. Insofar as possible, local offices are set up throughout the constituency, and transportation, by jeep whenever possible, is arranged. Weeks before the election, posters, painted slogans, and

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[7]Wendy Singer, "Women's Politics and Land Control in an Indian Election: Lasting Influences of the Freedom Movement in North Bihar," in Harold A. Gould and Sumit Ganguly, pp. 180–207.

[8]Rajeshwari Deshpande, "How Gendered Was Women's Participation in Elections 2004?," *Political and Economic Weekly*, XXXIX No. 51 (December 18–24, 2004), pp. 5431–5436.

[9]*India Today* (New Delhi), July 27, 1998, pp. 12–18.

party symbols appear everywhere, competing for available wall space. Great, larger-than-life cutouts of party leaders are especially favored in Tamil Nadu. A flood of printed handouts ensues, and children parade through the streets with badges and party flags. Neighborhood party strongholds in villages and in cities prominently display flags, often vying with each other to raise the party flag highest. Vans, jeeps, scooters, and horse-drawn tongas, or carts, bedecked with party flags and the ubiquitous symbol, carry loudspeakers that saturate the air with a jumble of amplified slogans. More than in the past, the 2004 campaign reflected the impact of modern technology as parties employed audio-visual, cyber, print, and telecommunications systems as never before. Both the Congress and the BJP, for example, produced audio-visual videos and cassettes that recast popular Hindi songs using political rhetoric and preformed by professional singers.

Each of the parties has an exclusive symbol by which it is identified. Because of widespread illiteracy and because the symbol, not the name of the party, appears on the ballot next to the name of the candidate, emphasis on symbols is a major part of the campaign.[10] The symbol is the critical link in the mind of the voter between the candidate and the party. Figure 8.1 shows the official symbols for the major recognized national parties as allotted by the Election Commission for the 2004 parliamentary elections. The symbols are supposed to be neutral, but each party strives to attach to them positive or negative connotations. The Congress (I) symbol, for example, is the hand, first used in the 1980 elections, and was well chosen for within Hinduism it traditionally represents reassurance and protection. In 1984 it was projected as "the healing hand" of Rajiv Gandhi. In 2004 the Congress hand was projected as representing the hand of the common man as part of the party's electoral slogan "*aam admi bachao*" (Save the Common Man). The BJP's lotus symbol carries rich religious symbolism and special association with the Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.

News programs on Doordarshan, the government-run television channel, and All-India Radio (AIR) tend to focus on the Prime Minister—so much so that during the 1975–77 emergency, AIR came to be called "All-Indira Radio." With an expanding audience for television, Rajiv Gandhi became India's first "TV Prime Minister," but

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[10]B. D. Graham, "Electoral Symbols and Party Identification in Indian Politics," in Peter Lyon and James Manor, eds., *Transfer and Transformation: Political Institutions in the New Commonwealth* (Leicester, U.K.: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp. 71–86.

[11]Lloyd I. Rudolph, "The Media and Cultural Politics," in Mitra and Chiriyankandath, eds., *Electoral Politics in India*, pp. 86–87.

Bharatiya Janata Party	Communist Party of India	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
Congress (I)	Nationalist Congress Party	Bahujan Samaj Party
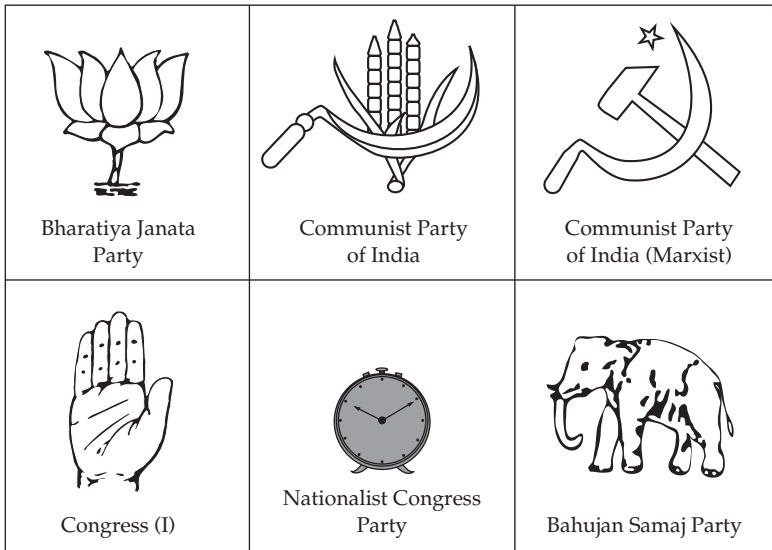
FIGURE 8.1 Symbols of the Major Political Parties

overexposure on what was mockingly called "Rajivdarshan" weakened him in popular standing.[11] Doordarshan and AIR carry no political advertising, but since 1977, the state-owned media have allotted time to the major political parties during elections, and since 1984 television has given increasing coverage to election campaigns.

In the early campaigns few political advertisements appeared in either the English-language or vernacular press, but from 1977 their number has increased dramatically. In 1984, reflecting the party's richly financed campaign and its first use of a professional advertising agency, the Congress (I) waged a newspaper blitz that was joined by private business advertising endorsements for the ruling party. Beyond the ads, the *Times of India,* the *Hindustan Times,* and the *Hindu* generally gave their editorial support to the Congress, whereas the *Indian Express* favored the opposition. Whatever their editorial preference, however, the major newspapers cover the elections objectively, with "op-ed" space for opposing views. Newspaper coverage of the elections is detailed and comprehensive, and the leading news magazines, *India Today, Outlook,* and *Frontline,* surpass any comparable magazines in the United States in the sophistication of their analyses.

Parties often organize mass processions with decorated floats, elephants, and a throng of party cadres as a means of publicizing their campaign. Torchlight parades evoke memories of early American

political campaigns. Parties also make use of traditional folk dramas, particularly for satirical purposes. Some parties, such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu and the Telugu Desam in Andhra, have successfully used motion pictures to advance their cause. In the 1989 elections, political parties used audio cassettes to bring voice messages and campaign songs to the voters, and in 1991 "video raths" ("video chariots," vans equipped to set up large-screen video presentations, mainly for rural voters) made their entry. Used most extensively by the BJP, videos were tailored to particular linguistic regions to project the party's message and the images of its leaders.

Mass public meetings bring a mixture of politics and entertainment, blending spellbinding orations with renditions of popular film songs. In 1984 three film stars contested the elections on Congress (I) tickets—Sunil Dutt, Vyjayanthimala, and Amitabh Bachchan, the leading hero of the Hindi and long-time friend of Rajiv Gandhi. Sixteen members of former princely families also contested for the Congress (I). In 1991, seven of the eleven film stars running for Parliament won, and among the royal contenders, three winners were from one family, the Scindias of Gwalior—the Rajmata Vijaye Raje Scindia and her daughter Vasundhara belong to the BJP, while her son Madhavrao Scindia is in the Congress (I). In addition to the luster provided by film stars and royalty, national political figures make appearances with the local candidates, enhancing their "vote-catching" capacities. Depending on the drawing power of the main speaker and the galaxy of stars present, these meetings may attract several hundred thousand people. A major portion of the audience at any political rally, as in western societies, comes simply to "see" the candidate. In India, however, this has a special meaning, for people come for darshan, that is, "to view the candidate as a sacred object from which they expect to derive spiritual benefit."[12]

The leaders of the major parties, aboard planes and helicopters, conduct whirlwind campaigns. In 1991, Rajiv Gandhi toured some 240 constituencies with visits to as many as three states and addressing a dozen meetings in a single day. He surged into the crowds and scolded his security guards for keeping the people back—an openness that ultimately cost him his life. In 1998 Sonia Gandhi visited 138 constituencies in a whirlwind tour by plane and helicopter that cost the party an estimated Rs. 100 million. In 2004 Sonia again traveled extensively and her persistence and hard work contributed to the surprise comeback of the Congress after eight years out of power. The

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[12]Paul R. Brass, "Political Parties and Electoral Politics," in Marshall M. Bouton and Philip Oldenburg, eds., *India Briefing, 1989* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), p. 78.

Nehru-Gandhi dynasty clearly had charisma, but Indian politics has always had a strong element of "the personal," whether in the factional leader or the great personality who becomes the embodiment of a party. Personalism tends to displace substance, just as slogans collapse the party manifesto into a catchy phrase.

Party Manifestoes

Each of the parties prepares a manifesto, a formal electoral platform, which may be a statement of minimum ideological agreement or a pledge of aspirations. The manifesto can hardly be expected to have more importance in India, with its mass illiteracy, than the party platform does in the United States. In both nations few voters are aware of the formal party positions on most issues; fewer still ever read these documents. The fact that Indian parties devote such concern to the manifesto, however, may have policy significance, even if it is not a determinant of voting behavior.

Party manifestoes reflect the changing internal character of the party, the rise and fall of various factions, shifts in ideological stance, and efforts to secure new and broadened bases of support. In the first two elections, the Congress manifesto, like the Congress campaign, emphasized the party as the embodiment of the freedom movement. The Congress stood before the people on the record of its struggle and achievement, and individual Congress members sought to establish their credentials of sacrifice by citing the time they had spent in British jails. By 1962, however, more than half of the electorate had come to political maturity after the struggle and sacrifice of the nationalist movement. These appeals were lost on them. To the young, the Congress was a party of privilege, wealth, and power, not of martyrdom. Responding to this change in the electorate, the Congress, no longer able to trade on history alone, tried to demonstrate that it could satisfy popular demands. The manifesto sought to do this, but it could do so only in terms of real issues.

The new era of coalition politics has resulted in the release of pre-election coalition manifestoes. The BJP-led NDA, for example, issued a coalition manifesto in 1998 and again in 2004. In 2004, however, the BJP felt strong enough to also issue its own "Vision Document" that reiterated its commitment to the traditional ideological goals of the party. Unlike the NDA, the Common Minimum Program issued by the UPA and its Communist supporters was prepared after the election.[13]

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[13]*Frontline* (Chinnai), May 7, 2004, pp. 12–13 and June 18, 2004, pp. 12–16.

Issues

In India's first four general elections—1952, 1957, 1962, and 1967—parliamentary and state assembly elections were conducted together, and local issues, varying from state to state, constituency to constituency, dominated the scene. It was only with "delinking" of parliamentary and assembly elections that national issues began to emerge. In 1971, the first parliamentary election delinked from state assembly contests, Indira Gandhi sought to raise national issues, summed up in the populist slogan Garibi Hatao, "Abolish Poverty." The major issue, however, was the Prime Minister herself. In 1977 the elections again took the form of a plebiscite on Indira Gandhi's rule, this time on the emergency and personalized power. In place of the stern emergency image of Mrs. Gandhi ("She Stood between Order and Chaos. She Saved the Republic"), Congress sought to portray the Prime Minister as a benign, motherlike figure. The message was simple: "For Progress and Stability—Vote Congress." For Janata the issue was liberty itself: "Save Democracy—Vote Janata."

In the 1980 elections the tables had turned. It was now a referendum on the Janata government and the capacity of the non-Congress parties to provide stability and coherent policy. The Janata Party sought a mandate to "finish the unfinished tasks: Giving the People Bread and Liberty; Giving the Country Stability and Freedom." With an emphasis on trust, party leaders pleaded for another chance. The Janata sought to revive fears of emergency excesses and dictatorship, but to little effect: The emergency was no longer an issue for a mass electorate whose concerns now lay with more immediate matters—rising prices and a breakdown of law and order. Mrs. Gandhi's appeal was simple and direct: "Elect a Government That Works."

In 1984 the opposition no longer had Mrs. Gandhi as an issue, and the petty squabbles among the opposition party leaders, frustrating their attempts at unity, made mockery of their promise to provide an "alternative" by forming a responsive and stable coalition government. For the Congress, the traumatic events in the Punjab and the assassination of the Prime Minister gave force to what, even if Mrs. Gandhi had lived to lead the party, would have been the likely campaign issues: political stability and national integration. The Congress manifesto declared that: "Nothing less than the unity and integrity of the country are at stake." "The Congress (I) is the only political party which can and will keep the country together." "The Congress (I) alone stands between unity and disintegration, between stability and chaos and between self-reliance and economic dependence." Rajiv himself took

up the unity theme but added to it the promise of efficient and clean government. He offered at once continuity and change.

By 1989 Rajiv had become the issue. The opposition depicted him as indecisive, autocratic, pro-rich, pro-urban, out of touch with the people, and—symbolized by Bofors—tainted by corruption. If the opposition personalized their attack, however, the Congress (I) reinforced its identity with Rajiv and the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Pictures of Rajiv were everywhere, providing a ready target for the National Front, with V. P. Singh projected, by contrast, as "Mr. Clean" and a platform that addressed issues of poverty, inequality, and rising prices. The Congress (I) theme was an unconvincing "Power to the People."

Two years later, India again went to the polls. In the 1991 elections, each of the three major political groups pursued a different issue. For the National Front and its Left Front allies, it was social justice, with particular appeals directed to the backward castes and to Muslims. The BJP took up the drumbeat of Ayodhya, Hindutva, and national unity. After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, it sought as well to project itself as the party of order and stability. "Only the BJP Can Save India," its posters proclaimed. The Congress (I) began with emphasis on proven accomplishment and political stability, a promise it contrasted with the fractious and immobilized governments of V. P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar. Its campaign ended in evoking the memory of Rajiv: "Vote to fulfill Rajiv's dream . . . Vote Congress." Ironically the most pressing issue—India's economic crisis—never came to the fore in the campaign, despite polling data that placed rising prices and the overall condition of the economy as the principal concern of Indian voters.

The 1996 elections were basically devoid of issues. The Congress (I) stressed stability, progress, national unity, and secularism, while the BJP campaigned on the themes of security, probity, swadeshi, and uniformity as part of its overall ideological theme of Hindutva, or cultural nationalism. In contrast, the National Front-Left Front campaigned as a secular and democratic alternative to the Congress (I) and the BJP and promised to promote social and economic justice, unity, and federalism.

Although the national parties stressed good governance and political stability during the 1998 elections, the campaign tended to be shaped by issues raised by state parties. Voting in turn ran deeply along the lines of caste and religious loyalties as regional parties have come to play a more important role in Indian politics. While political stability remained a major issue following the collapse of the BJP led government a year later, the December 1999 elections became dominated by the May–June Kargil crisis that threatened to escalate into a

major war with Pakistan. The 2004 elections, however, took place at a more tranquil time and were dominated more by slogans than issues, which attempted to highlight each party's economic agenda. While the NDA projected a "feel good" factor and an image of "India Shining," the Congress projected a more populist agenda and charged the NDA with willfully disregarding the plight of the poor.[14]

The Indian voter has become increasingly politicized and sensitive to a party's capacity to deliver results. When frustrated, the electorate will not hesitate to punish those in authority, and in recent elections the anti-incumbency factor has come to play a major role in determining election results. Rajni Kothari argues that as "the voters are becoming aware of problems of policy and performance. . . , the appeals that parties make must increasingly be based on concrete items of social and economic change and less and less on either vague manifestoes or reliance on local party organizations and 'vote banks' to deliver the votes, no matter what the party appeal is."[15]

Party Funds and Campaign Financing

Political parties in India derive their funds from a variety of sources: membership dues, contributions, public meetings, business houses, traders, contracts, nonresident Indians, cooperatives, industrial groups, and the underworld. Traditionally, the Congress Party had been the best-financed party in India. While its paid membership[16] provided a portion of its financial backing, most contributions were secured from the business community, wealthy supporters, and fund-raising campaigns. During the 1975–77 emergency period, the business community was subjected to virtual extortion by the Congress and the auxiliary Youth Congress. Businesses, for example, were encouraged to take out exorbitantly expensive advertisements in the souvenir program of the party's annual session, and government approvals were available to anyone willing to pay for them. A major portion of the

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[14]See "India Shining," *Seminar,* 538 (May 2004); and "A Mandate for Change," *Seminar,* 539 (July 2004).

[15]Rajni Kothari, "The Political Change of 1967," *Economic and Political Weekly,* 6, annual number (January 1971), p. 250.

[16]Membership figures must be approached with some caution, as factional competition has inflated party rosters with bogus members. In 1992, in the first party organizational elections in 20 years, Congress claimed a membership of some 25 million, but "active members"—those who enroll at least 25 primary members and who alone vote in party elections—numbered less than 1 million. In 1996 the Congress was estimated to have collected Rs. 67.5 million from its 1.5 million members. *India Today,* (New Delhi), March 31, 1996, p. 23.

donations that poured into the Congress coffers was from "black money"—unreported income. It was the "black money" connection between business and politics that helped to perpetuate the "permit, license, quota Raj" that strangled the Indian economy for decades as politicians traded influence in return for business contributions.[17] In the 1980s, the Congress Party was alleged to have been the beneficiary of kickbacks on government contracts for major arms purchases from abroad, most notoriously the $1.3 billion Bofors contract. By the 1990s, corruption had become so pervasive that P. V. Narashima Rao, Rajiv's successor as leader of the Congress Party, became the first Prime Minister in Indian history to be convicted of bribery. His conviction, however, was later overturned by a higher court. Despite the post-1991 era of deregulation and dismantling of the "permit license quota Raj," industrialists complain that it has been simply replaced by the "inspector Raj," which subjects them to as many as 52 visits by government inspectors a year.

The party in power has an obvious advantage in raising money for its campaign coffers, and the Congress' long control of the Center and most states gave it a tremendous advantage. Totally dependent upon government regulators in launching new ventures, expanding existing units, and the day-to-day running of their factories, businesses contributed generously to the ruling Congress Party and its agents. Even during the high point of Congress dominance, however, many businessmen also contributed smaller amounts to each of India's major parties, including the Communists, in an effort to protect their interests.

With the decline of the Congress, the relative electoral strength of a political party and its potential as a coalition partner came to determine its share of financial support from industrialists. Control of government, however, continues to provide incumbents with special benefits. Even the BJP, which claimed to be "a party with a difference," was caught in a corruption scandal in March 2001 by a sting operation initiated by Tehelka.com, an Internet news service. Posing as arms dealers, Tehleka journalists video taped the president of the BJP and the president of the Samata Party, a key BJP coalition partner, accepting bribes to facilitate the prospects of the company in obtaining defense contracts. Two years later, a candidate chosen by the BJP to become the new Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh was

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[17]Stanley A. Kochanek, "Briefcase Politics in India: The Congress Party and the Business Elite," *Asian Survey*, 27 (December 1987), pp. 1,278–301.

caught in another sting operation involving bribes to obtain mining leases in protected forest areas in the state.[18]

Each of the parties divides membership dues between the Center and lower organizational units. The Congress Party constitution requires the central organization to retain one-eighth of the income from dues and distribute the rest among the state units. Other parties have similar arrangements, but ones involving considerably smaller amounts. Since party membership is largest immediately before elections—often the result of mass recruitment or bogus membership arranged by factions to strengthen their bargaining position in the competition for party tickets, income from dues fluctuates considerably. The candidates themselves may be expected to make sizeable contributions to the party election fund, and tickets are occasionally awarded for a major commitment of financial support. This practice varies considerably from party to party and from seat to seat, for there are clearly a number of candidates from the Congress as well as from other parties without any major source of private income. Levies are also made on the salaries of parliamentary and assembly members.

Each of the parties derives some income from publishing, and the most active have been the communist parties. In addition to several newspapers, the Communist Party of India (CPI) also operates a publishing house and a chain of bookstores once subsidized by the Soviet Union. Indeed, it is widely assumed that the Soviets financed the CPI, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) is alleged to have at one time received support from China.

Each party also has its own special sources of support. Traditionally, the BJP had depended upon traders and small business for its financial support. As the party began to gain electoral support, however, it began receiving large amounts of funds from India's large business houses, especially in Mumbai during the period when it controlled the state government. The All-India Anna DMK (AIADMK) receives funds from the local liquor and transport lobby in Tamil Nadu and Jayalalitha's personal backers and, when in power, from government contracts. The Samajwadi Party is supported by Uttar Pradesh traders, dealers, and the sugar, chemical, and cold storage lobby in the state.[19] The Janata Party and the Janata Dal depended on its factional leaders

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[18]Niraja Gopal Jayal, "Politics: The BJP Falls From Power," in Alyssa Ayres and Philip Oldenburg, eds., *India Briefing: Take Off at Last?* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), pp. 26–27.

[19]For a detailed survey of financing political parties in India, see *India Today* (New Delhi) March 31, 1996, pp. 13–25, and *Business World* (Bombay), February 7, 1998, pp. 36–38.

to collect funds from their personal supporters in various business houses and lobby groups. The CPM uses mass collection, trade unions, its members of Parliament, members of the state legislative assemblies, and party members. It can also command some funds from business houses in Calcutta where it controls the state government.

The costs of mounting a campaign are high and have increased with each election. In a closely competitive contest, each candidate spends far beyond the legal limit set by the Indian Election Commission. Since ceilings on campaign expenses were, in fact, openly flouted, in part because the ceilings are unrealistically low, the Government of India raised the ceiling on election expenses on December 31, 1997. The legal limit for Lok Sabha candidates was raised from Rs. 450,000 to Rs. 1.5 million and the limit for state assembly elections were raised from Rs. 150,000 to Rs. 600,000. The limits for campaign expenditures in the 2004 elections were raised to Rs. 1.0–2.5 million depending on the size of the constituency. The Election Commission has also restricted the length of the campaign and has taken a variety of other steps to keep election costs down.[20]

Given the evasion of reporting requirements, figures for actual campaign costs in India are conjectural at best. In a study of campaign finance in 1996, *India Today* estimated that the cost of contesting a seat for the Lok Sabha ranged from a low of Rs. 500,000 to as high as Rs. 50 million depending on the size, location, importance, and level of competition for the seat. It estimated the average cost per candidate for a Lok Sabha seat at Rs. 2–3 million and about Rs. 500,000–600,000 for a state assembly seat. The Congress (I) and the BJP, India's two largest parties, noted the magazine, were expected to spend an average of more than Rs. 20 million per candidate.[21] A similar study conducted by *India Today* in 2004 estimated that a candidate would need to spend about Rs. 22.5 million ($500,000) to win a seat in the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. Total party expenditures were expected to be as much as Rs. 115.6 billion (about $2.6 billion) for the 2004 elections.[22] The Communist Party of India (Marxist) reported that the cost of election to the Lok Sabha in 2004 would be between Rs. 30 million and Rs. 60 million per constituency.[23]

[20]*Frontline* (Chinnai), January 1, 1998, p. 25.

[21]*India Today* (New Delhi), March 31, 1996, pp. 16–17.

[22] *India Today* (New Delhi), April 3, 2004, pp. 26–28.

[23]Communist Party of India (Marxist) *Review Report of Lok Sabha Elections 2004* (New Delhi: CPIM, July 31–August 1, 2004), p. 17.

These are enormous sums for a poor country like India and have led to numerous calls for election reform, stricter limits on campaign expenditures, and some form of public financing of elections.

Most campaign funds are used to pay for campaign workers, air and land transport, political meetings, office expenses, polling booth monitoring, publicity, audio tapes, liquor, and muscle men. A study by *India Today* estimated that about 8 out of every 10 rupees spent in the 2004 elections would be spent on campaign workers and transportation.[24]

While India's apex business associations have proposed laws that would allow business houses to contribute tax-deductible contributions to a public pool to be distributed to political parties, and reformers have called for public financing of campaigns and public auditing of party finances, no such reforms have been forthcoming.

"Money, Muscle, and Criminality"

"Money politics" is an important lubricant of the Indian political machine. With every election, money has assumed increasing importance, but over the course of India's 14 parliamentary elections and the many state assembly elections, how that money is used has changed. In the first elections a candidate made a sizeable payment to a village or caste leader in return for a promise to deliver a bloc of votes. Such payment sometimes was used for the group's benefit, but more often it simply enriched the leader alone. As these traditional "vote banks" began to fragment, however, individual voter contacts and payments increasingly replaced group payments. The practice was more prevalent in rural than urban areas, and in many constituencies voters came to expect payment of money by all candidates. In the course of time, payment for votes made plain the importance of voting, and, as a result, payments had less and less effect on the way voters used their power. Widespread vote buying contributed to attitudes of cynicism, but ironically money politics impressed the people with the power of a single vote and served to draw new participants to the polls. In much the same way, the gifts of the American political machines in the early 20th century politicized new immigrants in the United States and served to integrate them into the society and the political system. As individuals became increasingly involved politically and as voting practice thus became institutionalized, payment declined in importance. Although direct payment to voters has been increasingly

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[24]*India Today* (New Delhi), April 3, 2004, pp. 26–28.

displaced by the mass campaign, some local payments continue. During the 1996 elections in Andhra and U.P., for example, money was used to pay for liquor for voters while in major cities like Delhi and Mumbai parties paid from Rs. 30 to 100 to buy votes or to provide gifts to voters.

Campaign rallies draw both supporters and the curious, but in urban areas, and most visibly in New Delhi, they are frequently augmented by "volunteers" trucked in from surrounding slums and outlying villages. They are paid a few rupees and are often given a blanket and liquor for their day's work. It is from among these "lumpen elements," as they are typically described in India, and their rural counterparts that politicians have recruited the goondas (thugs) who have come to assume an increasingly prominent role in public life, especially in North India. "Muscle" may be used to extort contributions, scare off opponents, or intimidate voters. This is by no means new to Indian politics, for in the past landlords often hired toughs to keep the landless and lower castes in political submission.

In states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where booth capturing was prevalent, parties had to spend between Rs. 50,000 and 100,000 to pay a 10-member gang to capture an election booth to guarantee victory.[25] In booth capturing, armed "muscle men" for one candidate either forcibly prevent voters from going to the polls or physically take over the polling station to stuff the ballot boxes. Often their presence alone around the polling station is sufficient to discourage would-be voters for the opposing candidates.[26] The Congress (I), the Janata Dal, and the BJP have each been implicated. Election law provides that where booth capturing has occurred, repolling is to be conducted as soon as possible—usually the following day—under police protection. In 1980, repolling was ordered in 39 polling stations. By 1984, it was 264, and in 1989, the Election Commission ordered repolling in 1,139 stations, most in the "problem areas" of North India. In 1991, booth capturing was again extensive, though primarily in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and, for the first time, election results were countermanded in five constituencies because of rigging. Although the introduction of EVMs has not completely eliminated the booth capturing, it has reduced the impact of such tactics. Most booth capturing involves seizing a polling booth, stamping ballots, stuffing them in ballot boxes and quickly escaping from the scene.

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[25]*India Today* (New Delhi), March 31, 1996, p. 15.

[26]For a description of booth capturing, see Weiner, *India at the Polls, 1980*, pp. 48–49.

Since EVMs can only record five votes per minute, their use severely limits the number of votes that can be cast during the brief time the group controls the voting booth before making their escape.[27]

The nexus among politicians, local police, bureaucrats, and criminals has gone beyond booth capturing to an increasing "criminalization" of politics. In many states gangs of goondas hired by politicians engage in widespread violence at the time of elections in their struggle for control. In some constituencies in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh goondas themselves have now become the politicians. In 1984 in the notorious Dhanbad constituency in Bihar, center of the mafia-dominated coalfields, for example, Suryadeo Singh, the Janata Party candidate, mafia don, and a member of the Bihar legislative assembly, contested the parliamentary election while on bail. At the time, Singh had 17 charges of murder pending against him and had been expelled from the district as a permanent threat to law and order. His opponents, including the ultimate Congress (I) victor, bolstered by bodyguards, were prepared to match him with muscle power. In U.P. dacoit gangs entered the political arena in 1984 to "persuade" voters in the areas of their influence. The bandit queen Kusma Nain, sought by the police for mass murder, moved with apparent freedom throughout Jalaun District, mobilizing support among the Thakur caste for the Congress (I). Other dacoit gangs, largely on the basis of caste ties, got out the vote for the various opposition parties.[28] In 1989 at least 50 candidates for the Lok Sabha faced charges ranging from robbery to murder, and their numbers in the 1990s were surely no fewer. Whether it is dacoits operating with ties to politicians, goondas hired by politicians, or criminals who have become politicians, their involvement in politics has raised the level of election violence.

In May 2002 the Supreme Court handed down a decision that made it mandatory for all candidates to furnish background information to the Election Commission in order to run for public office. In March 2003 the Election Commission implemented the court order by directing all candidates to submit background data to the Commission including a list of all criminal cases registered against them. A study of 541 of the 543 MPs elected in 2004 revealed that almost one-quarter of all elected MPs had criminal cases pending against

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[27]Ahuja, pp. 42–45.

[28]"The Battle for Booths," *Sunday Observer* (Bombay), pp. 23–29, December 1984; "Bandits 'Persuading' Voters," *The Times of India*, 22 December 1984. See also Arvind Verma, "Policing Elections in Urban," *India Review,* Vol. 4, No. 3–4 (July–October 2005), pp. 354–76.

them in the courts. The problem was especially acute in the North Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Jharkhand. These four states accounted for over one-half of all criminal cases that could attract a penalty of five years in jail or more. The study also showed that the incidents of criminal cases tended to be much higher among MPs from the smaller regional parties, those with low levels of education, and those with fewer assets.[29]

Elections sharpen social conflict and are the occasion for eruptions of violence. The campaigns are filled with charges and countercharges of assaults, kidnappings, and even murders, though few such allegations have been brought to court. Stories abound of candidates who stepped down because they were intimidated or "bought off." Posters and symbols are often defaced, and tensions, aggravated by rumor, often reach the breaking point. In recent elections, armed clashes between workers for the competing parties have become the norm in some constituencies. During the course of the 1980s, violence mounted with each election, and in 1991, some 350 people were killed, including five Lok Sabha and 21 state assembly candidates. In the 1998 elections at least 150 people died, including 62 killed in a series of bomb explosions in the South Indian city of Coimbatore.

Candidates

Over the course of 60 years, Indian elections have attracted a growing number of candidates for both state and national legislatures. The number of candidates seeking election to the Lok Sabha has grown enormously from a low of 1,864 in 1952 to a high of 13,952 in 1996. In one Tamil Nadu constituency in 1996, voters were confronted by a ballot listing 1,033 candidates by name and symbol. Most candidates are frivolous or are "dummy" candidates put up to draw support away from someone else, but such candidates win few votes from an increasingly discerning electorate. The numbers had grown because of the ease with which aspirants for office may place themselves on the ballot. To appear as a candidate, a nomination for a seat from a parliamentary constituency must be accompanied by a deposit. In an effort to check the multiplicity of nonserious candidates, Parliament amended India's election laws in August 1996 and increased the security deposit from Rs. 500 to Rs. 10,000 for the Lok Sabha and from Rs. 250 to Rs. 5,000 for state assembly elections. (Members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes need deposit only

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[29]Samuel Paul, and M. Vivekananda, "Holding a Mirror to the Lok Sabha," *Economics and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 45 (November 6–12, 2004), pp. 4927–4934.

half these amounts.) Unless the candidate receives at least one-sixth of the total vote, he or she forfeits the deposit. As a result of these changes, the number of candidates in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections dropped to 4,750. After declining again in 1999, the number of candidates again increased in 2004 to 5,398.

The Selection of Candidates   Among the conflicts in Indian political life, perhaps none has been more intense or significant than the selection of candidates within the governing party. As conflicting interests become more vocal, parties are forced to reconcile their pledge to select the "best" candidates with the competing personal and parochial claims of those upon whom their support depends. Ramashray Roy, in analyzing this process in the states of Bihar and Rajasthan, argued that the selection process is "a crucial test of the party's flexibility and adaptability in coping with the pressures and counter-pressures that impinge upon it from both within and without."[30]

If a party is to be successful, it must be able to accommodate various group pressures, both state and local, in its selection of candidates. Five kinds of claims are advanced in the selection process: personal, regional, socioeconomic, institutional, and factional. Personal demands are those made by individuals who press for recognition and the reward of a ticket for their sacrifice, service, experience, and competence. Regional claims are those that derive from feelings of localism, such as the demand that the candidate belong to the constituency. Various socioeconomic groups may also seek to advance their interests by claiming the right to representation among the party's candidates. Institutional demands for representation are made by the various organs of the party, such as the student or youth organization and the trade union federation. Factional claims are advanced to ensure proportionate representation for the party's constituent elements. The failure of the party to respond to these conflicting demands might well mean that even before the election important social sectors are lost to the opposition. However, factional competition within the party may serve to articulate and aggregate diverse group demands and to provide them with access to political power and a stake in the political process.[31] Thus, candidate selection is a vital recruitment and mobilization process.

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[30]Ramashray Roy, "Selection of Vol. XXXIX No. 45 Congress Candidates," Part I, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31 December 1966, p. 835.

[31]See Ramashray Roy, "Selection of Congress Candidates," Part III, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 January 1967, pp. 61–62, 69.

The formal criteria established by the Congress for selecting candidates emphasizes (1) the applicant's record of party loyalty; (2) his or her commitment to the Congress program; (3) activity in "constructive work" as well as legislative experience; and in a reflection of the Congress' concern to broaden its base of support, (4) his or her representation of groups the Congress may wish to attract.[32] Over the years, however, little agreement has been reached in the Congress on the mechanism of selection. Rather, a tug-of-war has occurred between the national leadership, which favors centralization of decision making, and the lower strata of the party organization, which push for more power. Consequently, different procedures have been adopted for each election. Those party members supporting centralization argue the importance of freeing the selection process from local and parochial considerations, whereas those at the bottom claim that they are in a better position to judge the merits of a winning candidate. In 1952 the district Congress committees played the key role in the selection of candidates, but in 1957 they were relegated to an advisory position and the pradesh (state) Congress committees were responsible for making recommendations to the party's Central Election Committee, which is responsible for the final approval of all Congress candidates. In 1962 the district organizations were given more importance, but the 1967 procedure placed the pradesh committees in decisive control again.[33] In 1971, in the wake of the Congress split, candidate selection was highly centralized, and many of the candidates were handpicked by the Prime Minister. Under both Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv, the selection of Congress candidates for both Parliament and state assembly seats was highly centralized. Even when state party organizations again began to play a more significant role after 1984, the final decision remained with the Congress high command. Since becoming Congress President in 1998, Sonia Gandhi has played an important role in candidate selection and in preparation for the 2004 elections she removed a considerable number of incumbents and replaced them with younger candidates.

The Social Base of the Constituency   In the selection of candidates each of the major parties, including the communist parties, is sensitive to the social base of the constituency. When one community is

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[32]Roy, "Selection of Congress Candidates," Pt. I, p. 837.

[33]Ibid., pp. 838–39, and Stanley Kochanek, "Political Recruitment in the Indian National Congress: The Fourth General elections," *Asian Survey*, 7 (May 1967), p. 298.

dominant within a constituency—in the traditional terms of landed wealth, ritual status, and political power, or, increasingly, in terms of the modern calculus of numbers—each party is likely to draw its candidate from the community. It has been argued that this practice neutralizes caste as a political factor, but the fact remains that all castes do not have equal access to power.

Dominant castes are themselves arenas of political competition between factions, each of which may try to win the support of other castes. More frequently, a faction will seek vertical support, cutting through caste lines. Thus, the divisions within the dominant caste are mirrored in divisions within each of the other castes that follow traditional patterns of economic dependence and patron–client relationships. In such cases the candidates, while all from the same community, do not have equal claim to support from within their own caste. When the castes are self-conscious and cohesive in their political behavior, one candidate of the dominant caste may often be clearly identified as the "community man," and other castes will polarize in opposition around the other candidate, even though he is from that same community.

In constituencies in which two or more communities are in relative balance, candidates may be selected from numerically insignificant castes in order to depoliticize the caste factor. In constituencies where there are a number of small castes, none of which commands disproportionate influence, the candidate may be selected without regard to caste. In any case, determination of the party candidacy must always take the caste complexion of the constituency into account, and there may be a conscious, statewide attempt to put together a balanced ticket with each of the major communities represented. The political party that chooses its candidates from the dominant caste of a particular constituency does no more than the American city boss who seeks to aggregate the support of ethnic communities by offering candidacies to their leaders. Few politicians can afford to court a single caste, for in most constituencies no single caste predominates enough to command a majority. Although they may seek to gain the support of a caste by appealing to its particular interest in a given situation, they must do so without alienating the other communities and driving them into united opposition.

Appeals to Specific Groups   Adept candidates have done their demographic homework. They have at their fingertips information on the patterns of social cleavage and the numbers and relative strength of each caste and religious group within their constituencies.

Before they ever arrive in a village, they have attempted by whatever means possible to determine its caste and factional complexion, the degree of their support, and the specific needs of the villagers. Since voters may readily pledge to vote for every candidate, it may be necessary to get an independent assessment. Candidates therefore may enlist undercover workers in villages and neighborhoods to probe voter feelings. Some even infiltrate the organization of other parties.[34]

On village tours candidates may leave their jeeps some distance from the village and enter the village on foot, accompanied by an impressive group of party workers. Having previously ascertained what the villagers want most, they may well promise this alone if they are elected, emphasizing their credentials of integrity by not offering them everything but, conveniently, just what the villagers want. After a short public speech, they may make personal visits to villagers at all levels, particularly those in pivotal or decisive positions. The appearance may then be followed, perhaps some days later, with individual contacts by party workers.

Political candidates must make mass appeals, but much of their attention is directed toward specific groups. Candidates once sought to capture the support of traditional groups that could be guaranteed as a "vote bank" to deliver a bloc of votes on instruction by a leader. The framework of modern politics, however, structures new forms of behavior, and the traditional patron-client ties of the vote bank have weakened. In most cases, traditional sentiments are all that remain of the old structures of authority. Unless bloc leaders can reinforce these sentiments by securing for their groups the benefits they demand, traditional blocs are likely to disintegrate. In all but the most isolated villages, vote banks can no longer be relied on.

If blocs of votes can no longer be "delivered," caste and community are still powerful forces shaping political identity. Like ethnic or racial groups in the United States, such groups in India tend to vote together, and parties and candidates make their appeals accordingly. The Congress (I), for example, traditionally relied on support from Brahmins, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims in North India. Since 1985, the party has seen the erosion of this social base. The message for the Congress (I), and for other parties as well, is that "vote banks" cannot be taken for granted, for while such groups tend to vote as a bloc, they may shift their support from election to election, and the pattern may vary from state to state.

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[34]A. C. Mayer, "Municipal Elections: A Central Indian Case Study," in C. H. Philips, ed., *Politics and Society in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), p. 124.

ELECTION TRENDS

As seen in Tables 8.2 and 8.3, Indian elections since independence reflect a steady decline of the once dominant Congress Party, the mushroom growth of political parties, and a reconfiguration of the party system. The erosion of Congress support has been accompanied by the rise of the BJP; the collapse of efforts to build a viable centrist, third force alternative; the persistence of a small, narrowly based communist left; and an explosion of caste and regional parties. Since 1989, this proliferation of parties has transformed India's one-party dominant system into a multiparty coalition system in which no single party has been able to win a majority and elections have repeatedly ended in a hung Parliament. From 1989 to March 1998 India had seven governments, six prime ministers and four inconclusive national elections. The collapse of third force politics and the disintegration of the United Front toward the end of the 1990s, however, led to successful efforts first by the BJP and later by the Congress (I), India's two largest national parties, to construct more enduring, broad based, pre-election, multi-party coalitions based upon a common election manifesto. These new coalitions have been non-ideological, tenuous, and based on elusive mandates that have resulted from minor shifts in popular electoral support.

As Table 8.2 shows, the 1999 and 2004 elections were fought by four distinct political groups. These groups include the Congress (I) and its allies, the BJP and its allies, the Left Front, and an increasing number of regional and caste-based parties.[35]

In the late 1990s the Congress (I), which is over 100 years old and had ruled India for 45 of the 50 years immediately following independence, suffered three successive defeats in the elections of 1996, 1998, and 1999. In the 1999 elections the Congress suffered the worst defeat in its long history when it was able to win only 114 seats in the Thirteenth Lok Sabha. As a result of repeated election defeats, the Congress abandoned it traditional election strategy and decided to negotiate a set of strategic alliances with state parties. This new coalition strategy proved to be highly successful and enabled the Congress to win 145 seats in the 2004 elections. Although the Congress was able to win only 26.4 percent of the popular vote, the decline in the party's vote share was primarily due to that fact that the party contested 39

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[35]For a review of the 1996 and 1998 elections, see Atul Kohli, "Enduring Another Election," *Journal of Democracy*, 9 (July 1998), pp. 7–20; Ramesh Thakur, "A Changing of the Guard in India," *Asian Survey*, 37 (June 1998), pp. 603–23; and "Power Play," *Seminar*, 465 (May 1998).

fewer seats than in 1998 in order to accommodate its coalition partners. Since Congress coalition partners in the newly formed United Progressive Alliance won an additional 74 seats and 10 percent of the vote, the Congress was able to cobble together a government with the support of the Communists.

The surprise defeat of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in the 2004 elections brought a halt to the steady rise to power of the BJP. The BJP, which had won only two seats in 1984, had steadily increased its strength to 183 seats in 1999 and was able to rule India as the leader of the NDA for six years from 1998 to 2004. In the 2004 elections the BJP suffered a severe setback, however, and was able to win only 138 seats and 22.2 percent of the popular vote compared to 182 seats and 23.8 percent of the vote in 1999. The apparent minor decline in BJP support in the 2004 elections was in fact much greater because the party contested 25 more seats than it had in 1999. The BJP's allies suffered an even worse defeat and were able to win only 51 seats compared to 118 in 1999.

By 1999 the United Front, the centrist third force that had ruled from 1996 to 1998, had completely disintegrated. Many of the caste and regionally based parties that had formed the core of the United Front joined the BJP-led NDA in 1999 or the Congress-led UPA in 2004. Despite repeated talk about resurrecting a centrist alternative, the Communist left in India, which continues to enjoy pockets of support in West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura, has focused its strategy on the need to build an ideologically cohesive and viable Left Front to combat communalism, economic liberalization, and American imperialism. In the 2004 elections the Communist left turned in its best performance in history by winning 61 seats in the Lok Sabha. Despite its traditional antipathy toward the Congress, the Left Front, which is dominated by the CPM, agreed to lend its support to the UPA government based on a Common Minimum Program (CMP). The Left Front insists that it will act as an outside pressure group to ensure implementation of the CMP. Its long-term goal is to build a Left Front alternative to fight Congress economic policy and BJP communalism.

The most significant development in Indian politics since 1989 has been the explosion of caste and regional parties. While the total popular vote received by the Congress and the BJP, India's two major national parties, has declined from 59 percent in 1991 to 49 percent in 2004, the total popular vote received by the counties' regional and caste parties has grown from 36 percent in 1991 to 47 percent in 2004. At the same time, the number of state and registered parties represented in the Lok Sabha has increased from 20 in 1991 to 37 in 2004.

T A B L E 8.2 **The Lok Sabha Election Results, 1952–91**

		1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
Indian National Congress (INC), (INCI) in 1980	Seats won/ % votes	364 45.0	371 47.8	361 44.7	283 40.8	352 43.7	154 34.5	353 42.7	415 48.1	197 39.5	232 36.5
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), (BLD) in 1977, (BJS) until 1971	Seats won/ % votes	3 3.1	4 5.9	14 6.4	35 9.4	22 7.4	295 41.3	—	2 7.4	86 11.5	120 20.1
Janata Dal (JD), (SWA) until 1971	Seats won/ % votes	—	—	18 7.9	44 8.7	8 3.1	—	—	—	142 17.7	59 11.8
Communist Party of India (CPI)	Seats won/ % votes	16 3.3	27 8.9	29 9.9	23 5.0	23 4.7	7 2.8	11 2.6	6 2.7	12 2.6	14 2.5
Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPM)	Seats won/ % votes	—	—	—	19 4.4	25 5.1	22 4.3	36 6.1	22 5.7	33 6.5	35 6.2
Indian Congress Socialist Sarat Changra Sinha (ICSS), (INCU) in 1980	Seats won/ % votes	—	—	—	—	—	—	13 5.3	5 1.6	1 .3	1 .4
Lok Dal (LKD), (JPS) in 1980, (INCO) until 1977	Seats won/ % votes	—	—	—	—	16 10.4	3 1.7	41 9.4	3 5.6	0 .2	0 .1

Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP), (JP) until 1989	Seats won/	—	—	—	—	—	—	31	10	0	5
	% votes							19.0	6.7	1.0	3.4
Telugu Desam (TDP)	Seats won/							30	2	13	
	% votes							4.1	3.3	3.0	
Praja Socialist Party (PSP), (KMPP) in 1952	Seats won/	9	19	12	13	2	—	—	—	—	—
	% votes	5.8	10.4	6.8	3.1	1.0					
Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), (SOC) until 1962	Seats won/	12	—	6	23	3	—	—	—	—	—
	% votes	10.6		2.7	4.9	2.4					
Others	Seats won/	47	31	34	45	53	52	35	44	44	41
	% votes	16.5	7.6	10.5	10.0	13.8	9.9	8.5	10.0	12.2	12.1
Independents (IND)	Seats won/	38	42	20	35	14	9	9	5	12	1
	% votes	15.9	19.4	11.1	13.7	8.4	5.5	6.4	8.1	5.2	3.9

BLD, Bharatiya Lok Dal; BJS, Bharatiya Jan Sangh; SWA, Swatantra Party; INCU, Indian National Congress Urs; JPS, Janata Party Secular; INCO, Indian National Congress Organisation; JP, Janata Party; KMP, Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party; SOC, Socialist Party

SOURCE: David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (Delhi: Books and Things, 1995), p. 67.

TABLE 8.3 Lok Sabha Elections, 1996–2004

Party	1996			1998			1999			2004		
	Seats Won	Seats Contested	% Votes	Seats Won	Seats Contested	% votes	Seats Won	Seats Contested	% votes	Seats Won	Seats Contested	% votes
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	161	471	20.29	182	388	25.59	182	339	23.75	138	354	22.20
BJP Allies	26	105	3.95	73	269	11.94	118	—	17.00	51	179	13.70
BJP and Allies	187	576	24.24	255	653	37.53	300	—	40.80	189	543	35.90
Congress (I)	140	529	28.80	141	474	25.88	114	453	28.30	145	414	26.40
Congress (I) Allies	—	—	—	26	180	4.06	23	—	5.70	77	121	10.10
Congress (I) and Allies	140	529	28.80	167	654	29.94	137	—	34.0	222	535	36.50
United Front/Left	174	407	28.60	97	569	21.80	43	—	8.00	61	112	8.00
Other Parties	31	165	13.02	18	293	6.03	57	—	14.46	70	—	15.81
Independents	9	10,635	6.28	5	1,900	2.40	6	1,945	2.74	1	—	3.79
Totals	542	13,952	100.90	542	4,069	97.70	543	4,648	100.00	453	5,435	100.00

SOURCE: for 1996 elections—Press and Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, *General Elections 1998 Reference Handbook Vol. I,* December 1997, Results of the 1998 elections were taken from Paul Wallace and Ramashray Roy (eds), *India's 1999 Elections and 20th Century Politics*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), p. 2. Results of the 1999 and 2004 elections taken from Yogendra Yadav, " The Elusive Mandate of 2004,"*Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. XXXIX No. 51 (December 18–24, 2004), p. 5385.

Electoral Systems and Elections

India, like the United States and the United Kingdom, uses the single-member district plurality, or "first past the post" (FPTP), system of voting. Under this system the candidate with the largest number of votes wins. Because of the Congress Party's historical legacy as leader of the freedom movement, its extensive national organization, the popularity of the party's leadership, and the fragmentation of the opposition, the FPTP system of voting contributed to the Congress Party's dominance of Indian politics. From 1952 to 1977, the Congress Party was able to win massive legislative majorities of 60–75 percent despite receiving only 41–48 percent of the popular vote. Thus, although the opposition was able to win almost 60 percent of the popular vote, the very fragmentation of the opposition into a large number of diverse parties diluted each party share of the vote and enabled the Congress to win. The opposition, therefore, was almost compelled to agree to seat adjustments with other parties, unite under a common symbol as the Janata Party did in 1977, or enter into alliances and coalitions as the BJP has done since 1998, if it expected to have an impact.

Unlike the system of proportional representation that directly translates the percentage of votes received by a party into legislative seats, the relationship between seats and votes under the single-member simple plurality system of voting is not as clear. Given this absence of a simple relationship between seats and votes, scholars have developed a variety of approaches in an attempt to predict the legislative strength of parties in single-member plurality voting systems. The three most frequently used tools for such forecasting and analysis are "cube law," the Index of Opposition Unity (IOU), and the swing vote.[36]

The concept of "cube law" argues that the number of seats won by a party will be in proportion to the cube of the percentage of votes polled by a party (that is, a 2 percent increase in votes would result in a gain of 8 percent in seats). This approach, however, works best in two-party systems and is, therefore, less applicable in India's multiparty system. The more frequently used methods of electoral analysis in India have been the IOU and the swing vote.

The IOU measures the overall level of opposition unity by an index based on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the level of unity, the better the chances of victory are for the opposition. The approach

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[36]David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (Delhi: Books and Things, 1995), pp. 27–38.

was developed in the 1980s by Prannoy Roy and Ashok Lahari to ana-
lyze Indian elections.[37] They devised the IOU to measure the extent
of division among the parties fighting Congress.

$$IOU = \frac{Vote\ of\ the\ largest\ oppositions\ party}{Sum\ of\ the\ votes\ of\ all\ opposition\ parties} \times 100$$

If the opposition to the Congress Party is wholly united as one
party, the IOU is 100. As seen in Table 8.4, only once has this even
been approached—in 1977 when the non-Communist opposition
united in the Janata Party against Indira Gandhi, yielding an IOU
of 90.

The disintegration of the Janata Party reduced the IOU in the
1980 elections to 65 and enabled Indira Gandhi to return to power
by winning 42.7 percent of the vote and 66.7 percent of the seats.
In 1984 the failure of the opposition parties to form a united front
both discredited their fractious leadership and ensured that Congress
would again be returned to power. With an IOU of 74, the Congress
garnered 48.1 percent of the vote, won 76.7 percent of the seats. But
even in those constituencies where, on a local basis, the opposition
parties succeeded in reaching an agreement to support a common can-
didate, the "Rajiv wave" swept over all but a few. Of the 401 Congress
victors, 289—a full 72 percent—won by an absolute majority.

In the 1989 elections, opposition unity was only partially
achieved—reflected in an IOU of 77, only three points higher than
in 1984—but seat adjustments by the major opposition parties,
while giving no single party a parliamentary majority, provided the
basis for the National Front to come to power with the outside sup-
port of the BJP and the Left Front. Against a united opposition, the
Congress won 39.5 percent of the vote and 37.3 percent of the
seats. Two years later, in 1991, a divided opposition was measured
in an IOU of 66 and, although the Congress vote declined to 37.6
percent, it picked up 44.4 percent of the seats.

Following the 1996 elections, Indian pollsters concluded that
opposition unity no longer decided the fate of the Congress (I).
Some scholars, in fact, went so far as to argue that the decline of Con-
gress dominance and the increasing fragmentation of the party system
rendered the IOU obsolete in analyzing Indian elections. Others,
however, argued that the approach was still helpful wherever there

[37]Ibid., p. 30; and David Butler, "The Predictability of Indian Election Results," in Mitra
and Chiriyankandath, eds., *Electoral Politics in India*, pp. 261–66.

T A B L E 8.4 **The Index of Opposition Unity (IOU) and Congress Vote and Seats, 1962–91**

	Election Year							
	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
IOU	67	67	71	90	65	74	77	66
Percentage of Vote	44.7	40.8	43.7	34.5	42.7	48.1	39.5	37.6
Percentage of Seats	73.5	55.0	68.1	28.5	66.7	76.7	37.3	44.4

SOURCE: Adapted from Butler et al., *India Decides: Elections 1952–1991,* Tables 4.1 (p. 31) and 4.6 (p. 35). Some figures vary slightly from other sources.

was a dominant party in a particular state as, for example, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in West Bengal.[38]

Given the increasing difficulty in applying the IOU in light of changes in the Indian party system since 1989, analysts have begun to place more emphasis on the concept of the swing vote, which measures the change in the strength of the dominant party or parties between one election and the next. Although the concept was designed primarily to estimate the likely relationship between seats and votes in two-party systems, it has been adjusted to fit India's multi-party context. Studies using the concept of the swing vote have shown that even in the case of the 1977 elections, the Janata victory was more a result of a huge electoral swing away from the Congress than the result of opposition unity.[39]

An analysis of the swing vote in Indian elections since independence found that except in the case of the 1991 elections, an increase in votes for the Congress was matched by an increase in seats and a decrease in Congress votes resulted in a decrease in seats. The relationship, however, was quite variable. From 1962 to 1989, for example, a one percent swing in vote caused between 20 and 25 seats to change hands. In the 1991 elections, however, the relationship broke down as the Congress (I) lost votes and yet was able to increase the number of seats it was able to win.[40]

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[38]Arun Kumar, *The Turning Point: 1996 Poll Story* (Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1997), pp. 211–13.

[39]Butler, Lahiri, and Roy, pp. 33–34.

[40]Ibid., pp. 29–30.

In the 1996 elections there was a massive 8.4 percent swing away from the Congress (I) as the party suffered its worst defeat in history. Congress (I) electoral support dropped from 36.5 percent in 1991 to 28.1 percent in 1996 as the party lost over 100 seats and fell below the critical 30 percent threshold level of voter support. In contrast, despite a minimal increase in electoral support from 20.1 percent in 1991 to 20.3 percent in 1996, the BJP was able to win 161 seats in 1996 versus only 119 seats in 1991 to become the largest party in the Lok Sabha. Given the absence of a major swing of electoral support to the BJP, one has to look to several other factors to explain its performance. In the first place, unlike the Congress (I), support for the BJP was highly concentrated in a very narrow belt of a half-dozen states located in northern and western India. In addition, the BJP had negotiated several strategic alliances with regional parties that resulted in a positive electoral swing of 2.7 percent to the alliance. Finally, despite a negative swing of 4.7 percent from 24.9 percent to 20.2 percent, the National Front-Left Front was able to retain almost all of its seats. The biggest gainers in the 1996 elections were India's regional parties. These results demonstrate the difficulty in applying almost any system of electoral analysis to the Indian case.

The most dramatic development in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections was the huge swing in favor of the BJP and its regional allies. The BJP was able to increase its voter support by five percent and win 179 seats in the 1998 elections. Its allies, however, were able to win 11.9 percent of the vote and 73 seats. This gave the BJP alliance a total of 37.4 percent of the votes and 252 seats and enabled them to form a government with the support of additional postelection allies. Although the BJP's performance in its strongholds was uneven, the key to the ability of the BJP to break out of its core area of support in the North and the West was its remarkable success in building pre-poll alliances. These alliances enabled the BJP to make spectacular gains and enabled it to form a BJP-controlled government that lasted until April 1999, when it lost a vote of confidence by a single vote.

While the BJP fought the 1998 elections by cobbling together a limited alliance of caste and regional parties, the party altered its strategy in 1999 to create the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a broad based BJP-led coalition of 24 parties that agreed to fight the elections under a common, moderate, non-Hindutva election manifesto. Because of the need to make seat adjustments with its coalition partners, the BJP contested 49 fewer seats in the 1999 elections and received only 23.8 percent of the popular vote, a slight decline from the 25.6 percent of the vote it received in 1998. The party's allies,

however, won 118 seats and 17 percent of the vote compared to only 73 seats and 12 percent of the vote in 1998. The massive victory of the BJP-led NDA in the 1999 elections enabled the coalition to form a stable government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee that served a full term in office for the first time in India's history.

The popularity of Vajpayee and the stability and performance of the NDA government appeared to guarantee its reelection in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. In an effort to capitalize on its apparent popularity and renew its mandate, the NDA decided to dissolve Parliament several months ahead of schedule. To the astonishment of the NDA and India's pollsters, the coalition suffered a major defeat at the hands of a newly formed Congress-led coalition. Despite contesting 25 more seats than in 1999, the BJP was able to win only 138 seats and 22.2 percent of the vote. The party's vote share in terms of seats contested declined by 6.7 percent. The BJP's allies suffered an even greater setback and were able to win only 51 seats compared to 114 in 1999.

The decline of the Congress (I) following its defeat in 1996 continued for the rest of the 1990s as India's once premier party was to spend the next eight years in opposition. Although the Congress (I) suffered an additional 3.4 percent swing away from the party in the 1998 elections, it was still able to retain 141 seats, almost the same number it had won in 1996. Unlike the BJP, however, its electoral allies were able to contribute very little additional support. Congress (I) regional allies won only 26 seats and 4.1 percent of the vote.

In the 1999 elections the Congress (I) suffered the worst defeat in its history. Despite a slight increase in popular vote from 26 percent in 1996 to 28.3 percent in 1999, the party was able to win only 114 seats. Once again its electoral partners contributed very little to the alliance. Congress (I) electoral allies were able to win only 5.7 percent of the popular vote and 23 seats.

To the surprise of pollsters, pundits, and the BJP, the Congress (I) made a remarkable comeback in the 2004 elections. For the first time in its history the party abandoned its traditional image as "the natural party of government" and decided to enter into a pre-election coalition with a group of strategically selected state and caste parties. The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) succeeded in winning 219 seats and 36 percent of the vote. Although this fell short of an absolute majority, the UPA was able to form a government with the outside support of the Communist-led Left Front, which had turned in its best performance in history winning 61 seats and eight percent of the popular vote. In the 2004 elections the Congress (I) won 145 seats, 31 more that in 1999. Due to its coalition arrangements, the

Congress (I) contested 44 fewer seats in the 2004 elections and as a result, the party's share of the popular vote decreased from 28.3 percent in 1999 when it contested 453 seats to 26.4 percent. The party's vote share on a per seat basis, however, registered a slight improvement.

The biggest loser in the 1998 elections was the United Front, which saw a massive 7.7 percent swing away from the alliance. Within the United Front, the left stood its ground; there was an erosion of support for its regional allies; and the Janata Dal was all but destroyed.[41] By the time of the 1999 elections, the centrist Third Front that had played such an important role in Indian politics since 1989 had disintegrated into its constituent caste and regional components. Since the late 1990s many of these caste and regional parties joined either the BJP- or Congress (I)-led coalitions. The only coherent survivor remains the Communist-led Left Front. While the long-term strategy of the Left Front is to build a coherent, secular, anti–globalization, anti–American alternative to the Congress (I) and the BJP, popular support for the Left Front remains largely confined to its regional base in West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura.

A review of Indian elections since 1952, therefore, demonstrates that despite changes in the Indian party system, some degree of underlying regularity in the relationship between votes and seats that is subject to conceptual analysis does remain.

VOTING BEHAVIOR IN INDIA

In the last two decades public opinion polls and exit polling have become standard in India and have provided a rich source of data on Indian electoral behavior and changes in voter preferences. The pattern and diversity of group support for the major political parties are revealed in the exit polls taken during the 1999 and 2004 elections by the Center for the Study of Developing Societies. The results are shown in Table 8.5 and Table 8.6.

The most important development in Indian politics has been the decline of the once-dominant Congress Party. Voter support for the Congress has fallen steadily from 45 percent of the popular vote in 1952 to a low of 26 percent in 1998 and 2004. The party has also ceased to have a strong national base and is especially weak in several states including in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu. In the 2004 elections the party was able to win seats in only

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[41]*India Today* (New Delhi), March 16, 1998, pp. 29–35.

T A B L E 8.5 All-India Percentage Vote for Major Political Formations by Caste/Community, 2004

Caste/Community	UPA (Congress) Alliance			NDA (BJP) Alliance			Left	BSP	SP	N
	UPA	Congress	Congress Allies	NDA	BJP	BJP Allies				
Upper Caste	24	21	3	56	43	13	9	1	3	3,552
Peasant Proprietors	37	23	14	47	25	22	4	1	3	1,907
Upper OBC	36	23	13	39	21	18	4	3	8	4,516
Lower OBC	36	23	13	39	23	16	10	3	4	3,602
Dalit	37	28	9	23	12	11	10	21	3	3,632
Tribal	42	35	7	33	26	7	8	Neg	Neg	1,697
Muslim	53	37	16	11	7	4	7	3	16	2,227
Sikh	26	25	1	47	18	29	8	5	3	559
Christian	54	39	15	21	6	15	11	1	—	767
Others	27	22	5	30	16	14	23	3	1	113
Average/Total	36	26	10	36	22	14	8	5	5	22,567

Note: 'Neg' Less than 1.

SOURCE: National Election Study–2004; Weighted Data Set. Yogendra Yadav, "The Elusive Mandate of 2004,"*Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 51. (December 18–24, 2004), p. 5393.

T A B L E 8.6 All-India Vote Change for Different Parties by Social Segments, 1999–2004

Caste/ Community	Congress Alliance			NDA			Left	BSP	SP	Others
	Alliance Total	Congress	Allies	Alliance Total	BJP	Allies				
Hindu Upper Caste	6.8	3.9	2.1	−6.5	−5.5	−1.0	−1.0	0.5	2.3	−2.1
Hindu Peasant Proprietors	9.1	−4.1	13.2	−8.3	−7.8	−0.5	−1.9	−0.1	3.2	−2.0
Hindu OBC Upper	4.0	−0.9	4.9	−5.6	−1.1	−4.5	2.1	0.4	−0.9	0.0
Hindu OBC Lower	3.5	−0.9	4.4	−5.2	2.6	−7.8	−0.3	1.6	0.5	−0.1
Dalit	1.3	−2.2	3.5	−2.6	−3.3	0.7	−1.3	3.9	1.6	−2.9
Tribal	−5.1	−11.6	6.5	−1.0	4.8	−5.8	−0.3	−0.1	0.2	6.3
Muslim	−1.9	−4.1	2.2	−3.7	1.0	−4.7	−2.4	0.8	4.9	2.3
Sikh	9.6	8.4	1.4	−10.3	6.5	−16.8	8.4	3.6	2.5	−14.0
Christian	−6.3	−21.2	14.9	−6.9	−6.2	−0.7	1.5	1.0	0.4	10.3
Others	−11.5	−5.2	−0.4	9.7	−5.5	−1.8	−7.0	1.0	1.3	−6.6
Total	2.5	−1.9	4.4	−4.9	−1.6	−3.3	0.0	1.2	1.2	−0.1

Note: Table entries for this and subsequent "swing" tables are percentage point change in vote share among different caste/community groups between 1999 and 2004 Lok Sabha elections. Positive or negative sign indicates gain or loss of votes respectively in the 2004 elections compared to the vote share of the party within the relevant social sections in the 1999 elections. The gains and losses of votes do not always match, for the table excludes many other smaller political parties and independents.

SOURCE: NES 1999 weighted by vote share and NES 2004 weighted (state electorate and party votes) data set. Yogendra Yadav, "The Elusive Mandate of 2004," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 51. (December 18–24, 2004), p. 5393.

26 of 35 states and union territories. In the four major states of U.P., Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, it was able to win only 27 of a total of 220 seats (9 of 85 in U.P., 3 of 54 in Bihar, 10 of 39 in Tamil Nadu, and 5 of 42 in West Bengal). This decline has been due not simply to the fact that the Congress (I) has failed to attract new voters but also to the fact that the party has gradually been losing the support of its traditional constituencies.

Traditionally, the Congress relied on the support of Brahmins, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Muslims, and other minorities. From 1985 to 1989 onward, however, the party has seen the erosion of its social base. A large proportion of Brahmins have shifted to the BJP, the Scheduled Castes have begun to drift toward the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and the Muslims have shifted support to the Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Party.

During most of the 1990s the Congress (I) suffered from a bankruptcy of leadership and was increasingly associated with corruption, criminalization, and communalization, which tended to alienate many of its traditional supporters. As Yogendra Yadav has argued, survey data reveals that the Congress (I) is no longer a rainbow coalition but has come to depend increasingly on the support of the poor, women, and marginalized communities such as dalits, adivasis (tribals), and Muslims.[42] As seen in Table 8.5, Congress (I) supporters in the 2004 elections tended to be drawn primarily from these sectors of society.

The marginal improvement in Congress performance in the 2004 elections, notes Yogendra Yadav, was not linked to any major changes in the social composition of the Congress (I) vote or the entry or expansion of participation on the part of new social groups. This pattern of participation, he argues, helps to explain the apparent stalemate in Indian politics that has continued to produce hung parliaments.[43]

The decline of the Congress has been accompanied by the rise of the BJP. Over the past 60 years the Hindu nationalist movement has increased its popular vote from 3.1 percent in 1952 to a high of 25.5 percent in 1998 when the BJP polled just 0.41 percent fewer votes than the once dominant Congress (I). The BJP has developed especially rapidly since 1989 when it was able to mobilize support among Hindus behind its campaign to destroy the Babri mosque and build a Ram temple at Ayodhya. This process of ethno-religious mobilization, however, was not

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[42]Yogendra Yadav, "The New Congress Voter," *Seminar*, 526 (June 2003), pp. 64–70.

[43]Yogendra Yadav, "The Elections Mandate of 2004," pp. 5383–5398.

sufficient to win a majority. Following the humiliation and isolation that saw the BJP's newly formed government collapse in 13 days in 1996 for lack of support, the party toned down its Mandir rhetoric and embarked upon a new, vigorous coalition strategy that brought the party to power in 1998. Due to the limited and narrow base of the coalition, the BJP government was unable to survive and was voted out of office in 1999 by a single vote. In the 1999 elections the BJP broadened its coalition further to include 24 parties that returned the BJP-led NDA coalition to power with a much larger majority. The NDA was the first coalition government in India to serve a full term. The BJP-led NDA was so confident of reelection that it decided to renew its mandate several months before its term was to end only to be defeated by the Congress-led UPA.

Traditionally, the BJP was a Hindi-belt, urban, upper-caste Hindu, petty trader party. As seen in Table 8.5, by 1998 the BJP had begun to broaden its base and increasingly has become the party of the Hindu middle class, the young, the rich, and the well educated. In the 1998 elections, however, it was able also to gain some support from OBCs, Dalits, and even tribals. The party remained weak among women and minorities. As seen in Table 8.5, in the 2004 elections the BJP continued to draw support from the urban-based upper strata of Indian society. Support for the party declined as one moved down the social hierarchy.

The BJP continues to face a series of challenges that make it unlikely to become India's dominant party in the near future. First, the pattern of alliances and coalitions continue to be the key determinant of the party's success. This was especially demonstrated in the 2004 elections as the party's poor selection of allies contributed considerably to its defeat. Second, the BJP faces serious internal differences between its Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) wing and its political wing. The political leadership sees the party as a broad-based movement that can unite the diversities of Hindu society through caste appeals to the OBCs and Scheduled Castes and even minorities through a process of social engineering. The upper-caste leadership of the RSS, however, insists on the organic unity of the Hindu community and opposes appeals based on caste. Third, despite its claims of discipline and organization, the BJP has become increasingly faction-ridden like other parties, especially in states where it is in power. Finally, the BJP-governed states have not been an overwhelming successes and the party has suffered the same anti-incumbency backlash as other parties.

The centrist non-Congress, non-BJP United Front that played such an important role from 1989 to 1998 has disintegrated. Clearly V. P. Singh's Mandal strategy had failed to produce an effective, new Third Force in Indian politics. The unity of the OBCs produced by

Mandalization in 1991 collapsed in 1998 as the highly diverse OBC community proved to be far less cohesive than anticipated. As seen in Table 8.5, the OBCs divided their vote among the Congress (I), the BJP and various caste and regional parties. The Communist-led Left Front continues as a weak but important force in Indian politics. Its long-term strategy remains focused on building an ideologically cohesive Left Front. Electoral support for the Left Front, however, remains static and confined to a handfull of states. The movement has proven almost incapable of breaking out of its traditional strongholds.

Perhaps the most dramatic development in Indian politics in the 1990s has been the steady rise of regional parties. These parties are built on the basis of local issues and local caste and religious configurations.

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION
AND INDIA'S FUTURE

Expanding participation provides the impetus for developing higher levels of institutionalization. The enhanced capacity of the party system to both generate and absorb change in expanding participation has held the critical balance in India's political development. The parties, in organizing and structuring participation, may provide access to demands, but they cannot wholly satisfy them. The viability of the political system depends on both the will and the capacity of the government to respond to these demands.

In their study of mass political behavior in India, Eldersveld and Ahmed argue that political development has occurred in four critical senses:

> Citizens have become politically participant, party and electoral institutions have emerged, identification and commitment to national symbols and a national system have occurred, and the polity has expanded to the rural and social periphery. In an institutional and attitudinal sense, at the micro and macro levels, great political change has taken place since independence. And one senses that this political development has already had significant consequences for social and economic change, and will have an even greater impact in the future.[44]

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[44]Samuel K. Eldersveld and Bashiruddin Ahmed, *Citizens and Politics: More Political Behavior in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1978), p. 6.

India, however, confronts a crisis of governance. The institutions of government in India, notably the bureaucracy, were grounded in the structure of the British Raj. They were designed for administration and for the maintenance of stability; their purpose was to contain demands, not to respond to them. The fundamental problem of transition was to adapt these instruments of order to the needs of social change and democratic response. Rapidly expanding participation and escalating demands, however, quickly outran the capacity of the highly institutionalized structures that India's new leadership had inherited. Economic development, Nehru once said, is "for the growth of the individual, for greater opportunities to every individual, and for the greater freedom of the country." "Political democracy . . . will be justified if it succeeds in producing these results. If it does not, political democracy will yield to some other form of economic or social structure. . . . Ultimately, it is results that will decide the fate of what structure we may adopt in this country. . . ."[45]

Parties and elections have been the fundamental catalyst to expanding participation and rising levels of support for the political system. The greatest increases in political participation have occurred among the middle castes and classes, and it is this middle sector of the electorate that has become the dominant force in Indian political life. Among the lower strata of society, increased electoral participation is registered, for example, in the mobilization of new voters among untouchables in Uttar Pradesh and in several other states by the Bahujan Samaj Party and in the sharpening of political consciousness by Dalit and tribal protest movements. Social movements, as we saw in Chapter 5, act to mobilize the otherwise politically uninvolved and to heighten participation. The movement for the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya brought young Hindus into the political arena, and in the 1991 elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) richly capitalized on an expanded base of active support.

In relative numbers of people politically active and in their range of participation—from voting to attending rallies, to joining demonstrations or processions, and to campaign activities such as canvassing—India compares favorably with western democracies. Widespread frustration exists about politics and cynicism regarding politicians, a democratic malaise that India shares with many western countries including the United States. Among the most alienated are those who join in violent protest or terrorism, but alienation is most frequently expressed in withdrawal from political life and, like apathy,

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[45] *Parliamentary Debates—House of the People: Official Report*, Vol. 6, No. 10, Pt. II (15 December 1952), col. 2371.

is reflected in low voter turnout. Nevertheless, Eldersveld and Ahmed, in their study of *Citizens and Politics*, conclude that

> a large portion of the Indian public are cognitively aware of politics, support parties and the election system, and demonstrate considerable personal "psychological involvement" with that system.... This emergence of a "modern" set of political system orientations and attitudes . . . may be the most significant aspect of Indian political development.[46]

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[46]Eldersveld and Ahmed, *Citizens and Politics*, p. 44.

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9

Policy and Performance: The Politics of Development

T HE INDIAN MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT EMERGED from a series of strategic choices made during the early years of independence. These choices 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 crosscurrents that existed within the nationalist movement. The model that grew out of these strategic choices evolved incrementally into a set of policies that became the basis of India's development consensus.[1] 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 objectives of India's development model were to achieve rapid economic growth, self-reliance,

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[1]Bruce Williams, "Strategic Choice, Justification and Institutionalization: A Model of the Public Policy Process." Paper prepared for delivery at the Midwest Political Science Association meeting, Chicago, 20–22 April 1978.

full employment, and social justice. Four decades of planning, however, produced mixed results. Although the Indian economy achieved a considerable degree of self-reliance, growth was sluggish, unemployment intractable, and social justice remained a distant goal. Despite periodic shifts in emphasis, the basic outlines of the Indian development model remained unchanged until the early 1990s, when a major financial crisis forced significant alterations in development policy. These policy alterations have sparked a new economic debate that has focused on the role of markets, liberalization, and globalization.

ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY

The Creation of a Development Model

Postindependence India engaged in a great debate over the future of the Indian economy and the economic content of freedom.[2] This debate took place in an environment of division, war, upheaval, and uncertainty. Attempts to develop a coherent and acceptable economic policy had to compete with other needs, such as how to cope with the social and strategic consequences of partition, communal riots, war with Pakistan over Kashmir, the integration of the princely states, and the framing of a new Constitution. This myriad of problems had to be managed by a divided and largely inexperienced political leadership confronted by a variety of domestic and external pressures.

Three distinct visions of India's economic future existed within the Indian leadership, the Congress, and the country at large: a Gandhian vision, a socialist vision, and a liberal capitalist vision. Mahatma Gandhi felt that a westernized pattern of industrialization for India would be dehumanizing and socially undesirable. He wanted an Indian economy and polity based on decentralized political and economic structures rooted in India's rural villages. Each village would be organized around agriculture, would be largely self-sufficient, and would produce its own limited consumer needs, such as cloth, shoes, and soap, in village and cottage industries.

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[2]For a discussion of this period, see Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 164–81; and Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 509–54.

Nehru and Patel, on the other hand, were concerned about build-
ing a strong, centralized, industrialized state capable of defending
India's freedom and meeting the needs of its poverty-stricken masses.
They differed, however, over the role of government in achieving
these objectives. Nehru was a socialist. He considered capitalism an
outdated, exploitative, immoral system, and saw scientific planning
and socialism as the inevitable wave of the future. He, therefore,
wanted to create a system of not only centralized planning but also
government ownership and control of the commanding heights of
the economy. He distrusted India's private sector and felt that if it
were allowed to continue at all, it should be tightly regulated and con-
trolled to ensure that it served the public interest. Patel, on the other
hand, distrusted planning, had little respect for vague socialist ideas,
and favored private-sector development.

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—which instruments the 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 for-
eign 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.

The great debate over the future of the Indian economy raged
from 1947 to 1951 and was never fully set to rest until 1956. Initially
the debate created enormous economic uncertainties and led to a seri-
ous domestic economic crisis. Foreign business began to divest its
holdings, domestic investment came to a halt, and production declined
sharply. Faced by this economic crisis, the government was forced to
clarify its policy, and the result was the first of a series of key strategic
choices outlined in the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948.

The Industrial Policy Resolution of April 6, 1948, was essentially
a document of compromise that sought to clarify government eco-
nomic objectives, placate each of the ideological tendencies in the
Congress Party and the government, and temper the growing fears
of indigenous and foreign investors. The resolution called for a
mixed economy in which public ownership would be confined to
three industries—munitions, atomic energy, and railroads. In six
other industries—coal, iron and steel, aircraft manufacturing, ship-
building, telephone and telegraph, and minerals—government
reserved the exclusive right to start new ventures. Most important

of all, the resolution provided a preliminary blueprint for future industrial development. The resolution specified 18 key industries of national importance that would be developed under the control and regulation of the central government; indicated that foreign capital and enterprise would be welcome but subject to government control and regulation; and announced that the government would create a planning commission in the near future. The resolution also promised that the government would encourage the development of village and cottage industries.

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 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.

Detailed implementation of the Industrial Policy Resolution came in the form of the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, which became the legal framework not only for the control and regulation of the private sector but also for Nehru's 1949 Statement of Policy on the future role of private foreign capital, for the creation of the Planning Commission in March 1950, and for the publication of the First Five Year Plan in 1951. Despite Patel's death in 1950 and Nehru's emergence as supreme leader of the Congress Party, the government, and the country, the strategic choices made between 1947 and 1951 remained the basis of Indian planning and development. Instead of reversing these earlier decisions, Nehru attempted to build on these decisions to create a broad national consensus on development policy. Although India entered the era of planned development in 1951, the First Five Year Plan was hurriedly assembled by the newly created Planning Commission and consisted largely of projects already underway. The future shape of the Indian economy was left undetermined. Under the plan, the bulk of the development funds went to agriculture, power development, and irrigation. The pattern of industrial development remained uncertain, and the debate

over the future of the private sector, nationalization, and the role of village and cottage industries continued. Although Nehru's socialist rhetoric initially frightened indigenous capital, business gradually moved toward a process of accommodation and cooperation.

The process of accommodation began with the formulation of the Second Five-Year Plan and became fully established with the proclamation of the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956—another masterful consensus document that succeeded in satisfying all major constituencies and united the entire nation behind a series of Five-Year Plans that gradually transformed the economic base of India. The foundation for the golden decade of development from 1956 to 1966 had been laid. Despite periodic shifts in emphasis, the Industrial Policy Resolution, issued on April 30, 1956, remained the basic strategy for the Indian model of development until the liberalization and globalization was begun in 1991.

Although the Resolution expanded the scope of public-sector development, it also allocated extensive areas to the private sector, guaranteed existing private-sector facilities from nationalization, and provided for their eventual expansion. Three categories, or schedules, of industries were created. Schedule A, consisting of 17 industries reserved for development by the public sector, included most 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 part of Schedule C and open to private-sector development. The Second Five-Year Plan spelled out the details of the government's development strategy. A large, basic-industry sector would serve as the foundation for economic development. At the center of this scheme would be three giant public-sector steel mills as well as a variety of machine-building industries. In order to create employment and provide basic consumer goods, the development of village and cottage industries would be encouraged, with the government ensuring their protection from competition. Finally, the private sector would have vast scope for expansion, free from the fear of nationalization, and would be controlled, regulated, and protected from foreign competition by the State. In order to implement the new scheme, the government gave earlier controls a new orientation and supplemented them with additional regulatory measures. The result was the creation of one of the most comprehensive systems of control and regulation in the noncommunist world. The Planning Commission, assisted by numerous interdepartmental committees, commissions, and boards, attempted to direct the economy and the implementation of a series of Five-Year Plans.

The decade from 1956 to 1966, covering the Second and Third Five-Year Plans, produced a massive industrial boom. A growth strategy based on rapid industrialization through capital-intensive investment, import substitution, and emphasis on heavy industry provided opportunities for almost every industry to grow, and the lines between the public and private sectors became blurred. When an acute foreign-exchange shortage developed in 1958, India turned to outside private capital and foreign governments for support and aid. Both the public and private sectors grew rapidly, and India appeared headed for an economic takeoff into self-sustaining growth. The decade from 1956 to 1966 was seen as the "golden age" of Indian development.

1963 to 1969: The Policy Debate Revived, the Shift Right

The first signs of uneasiness and doubt began to appear in the early 1960s as the economy began to falter, the development consensus came under attack, and the Nehru era began drawing to a close. The trouble started when achievements began to fall far short of plan targets: The economy began to stagnate and rapid economic growth did not seem to be producing the desired results in relieving poverty. Moreover, despite the logic of planning, India was confronted by a slowdown in growth and a major recession. As a result, some began to question the entire utility of planning, regulation, and government controls, and the development consensus of the Nehru era itself began to erode.

Pressure for a major change in policy developed from a variety of sources. First, a potentially potent political challenge emerged with the creation of the Swatantra Party, a loose coalition of conservative elements that, for the first time, publicly challenged Nehru's socialist pattern of planning and regulation. The Swatantra characterized Congress rule as the "permit, license, quota Raj" and demanded an end to governmental control of the economy. It even went so far as to attack the very concept of planning, which had enjoyed an almost sanctified position in Indian political discourse. In its place, the party advocated a policy of economic liberalism and championed private-sector development.[3]

A second major source of attack on the development consensus came from the World Bank and major foreign-aid donors. By the late 1950s India's development program had become heavily dependent

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[3]See Howard Erdman, *The Swatantra Party and Indian Conservatism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 65–81.

on outside aid to pay its import bills and close its massive foreign-exchange gap. The World Bank began repeatedly to advise India to eliminate as many controls as possible in an effort to stimulate greater efficiency and accelerate economic growth.

A third source of pressure came from the Indian business community. A decade of planning and rapid growth had made the community a growing political force and an increasingly powerful segment of the economy. As business grew more self-confident, many sectors—particularly the new, modern industrial sectors that regarded price controls, distribution controls, and high taxation as barriers to faster private-sector growth—became willing to forego some controls in return for greater freedom of action.[4]

Fourth, there appeared a series of government-sponsored studies that were highly critical of the operations of the entire system of controls, which was increasingly equated with socialism and planning. These studies concluded that the system of controls as implemented and administered had failed to accomplish its stated objectives. In fact, the controls had resulted in monopoly, concentration, and unequal geographic development. The studies also revealed that the development strategy of heavy capital investment and growth had not significantly benefited the vast majority of the population. Unless the pattern of plan allocation was changed, the studies argued, the condition of the poor would continue to remain unchanged or might even grow worse.[5]

Finally, the confidence and certainty of the political leadership was itself shaken by a variety of events. Nehru, the architect of the system, died, and his successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, was much more receptive to the building pressures for modification of the system. Shastri set in motion a process of liberalization that lasted from his brief tenure in office (1964–66) to the early years of Indira Gandhi's rule. During this period, the concept of liberalization became so widespread that it was incorporated into the initial approach document of the Fourth Five-Year Plan. The document stated that "within the broad framework of control in strategic areas, there is an advantage in allowing the market much fuller play."[6]

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[4]Stanley A. Kochanek, *Business and Politics in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 214–25.

[5]For a summary of these studies see Rakesh Khurana, *Growth of Large Business: Impact of Monopolies Legislation* (New Delhi: Wiley Eastern, 1981), pp. 2–10.

[6]Charan D. Wadhua, *Some Problems of India's Economic Policy*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill, 1977), p. 298.

From 1963 to 1969 the policy of liberalization took a variety of forms. First, the Government of India made major changes in its traditional policy of maintaining tight control over the pricing and distribution of major products. Sixteen items were decontrolled in 1963, cement was decontrolled in 1966, and cotton in 1967. Second, controls on investment were liberalized. Industrial units with fixed assets of less than 1 million rupees (about $100,000 at the time) were exempt from the licensing systems, several key industries were decontrolled, and significant procedural reforms were introduced. In short, the Indian economy appeared to be moving in a new and different direction. These changes in industrial policies were paralleled by equally significant changes in the government's attitude toward agriculture.

1969 to 1973: The Populist Counterattack

Nehru's death, the attack on planning and controls, and the tentative and halting steps toward deregulation frightened the left within the Congress Party and its socialist and Communist allies in the opposition. These groups began a concentrated counterattack intended not only to stop the erosion of the development model that had emerged during the first three Five-Year Plans but also to push the country even further to the left and along a more clearly socialist path. The key device they used was a concerted effort to transform the socialist rhetoric of the Congress Party into public policy. In an effort to build and maintain a progressive image, the Congress Party over the years had adopted a series of resolutions promising a fundamental transformation of the Indian economy. These resolutions had acquired an increasingly radical tone as Congress fortunes began to slip at the polls. Calls for nationalization of private-sector banks, insurance companies, and key industries entered the Congress program, in addition to demands to end the alleged concentration of economic power and provide a greater degree of social justice for every person.[7]

Demands for redistributive justice became embroiled in Congress factional politics when Indira Gandhi's power was challenged by her senior and more conservative colleagues in the Cabinet and the party. Mrs. Gandhi, on the advice of P. N. Haksar, decided to counter this challenge by transforming the factional dispute into an ideological crusade. This approach enabled her to build a new coalition of support among left-of-center Congress members, socialists, and Communists.

[7]See Francine R. Frankel, *India's Political Economy, 1947–1977: The Gradual Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 388–433.

The strategy was a resounding political success and resulted in reversing the process of economic liberalization. In its place, Mrs. Gandhi embarked on a massive populist program designed to restructure the Indian economy and provide redistributive justice. Public-sector development was to be accelerated; the private sector was to be brought under tighter control; and steps were to be taken to rein in the alleged concentration of economic power.

From 1969 to 1973 major structural, legal, and policy changes were made as part of an effort to restructure the Indian economy. A series of sweeping constitutional amendments enhanced the government's power to alter property rights and eliminate existing privileges. The power of Parliament to amend the Constitution, including the right to property contained in the provisions on fundamental rights, was affirmed, and parliamentary decisions relating to compensation in cases of nationalization were made independent of judicial review. In addition, the princes were deprived of their privy purses and other privileges. These changes were accompanied by a major assault on the independence of the judiciary in an effort to secure more liberal and responsive courts.

Along with the fundamental changes in the Constitution and the attacks on the judiciary came the first massive wave of nationalization since independence. Major private-sector banks were nationalized in 1969, followed by the coking coal industry in May 1972, insurance companies in September 1972, and the remainder of the coal industry in 1973, as well as a series of small undertakings in shipping, gold, and copper. In addition, the government took over the management of 46 textile mills, the Indian Iron and Steel Company, and a large railway wagon construction firm. Finally, the government took over the wholesale trade in wheat and rice.

The assault on the private sector was accompanied by the passage of a whole new array of regulatory measures and the initiation of a series of significant policy changes. The government pushed through the Monopolies Restrictive Trade Practices Act (MRTP); issued a new, highly restrictive licensing policy designed to curb the growth of large conglomerates (typically referred to in India as "business houses"); and amended the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) as a new and comprehensive device to control foreign capital. These actions, along with revised patent legislation and a new drug policy, were all designed to control monopolies, dilute the concentration of economic power, and regulate foreign multinationals.

By the end of 1973, the populist wave of structural reform had run its course. Mrs. Gandhi's massive electoral victories of 1971 and

1972 had reduced her reliance on the left; India had begun to feel the full economic consequences of the Bangladesh war; the country was hit hard by the oil crisis of 1973; and the economy was confronted by a major drought. Spiraling inflation, loss of production, and economic stagnation brought structural reform to a halt and touched off a massive political and economic crisis.[8]

Although the populist wave lasted only four years, it had long-lasting consequences. It superimposed a new series of laws and regulatory instruments on an already tightly controlled and regulated economy. The result was an increase in the degree of overlap and complexity of laws, policies, and regulations; massive procedural delays; increased politicization of the regulatory process; shortages; and the rapid growth of the nonproductive sector. Manipulators, traders, and speculators, along with their political and bureaucratic allies, prospered on shortages while production stagnated.

The System Restored: The Second
Wave of Liberalization

The populist phase was followed by a second major effort to liberalize what had become the most controlled and regulated economy in the noncommunist world. Because of a quagmire of complex rules, regulations, and procedures, the Indian economy was plagued by excruciating delay, increasing project costs, rampant corruption and bribery, and one of the largest black-money systems in the world. Rigid price controls created massive shortages and black markets; industrial projects required 50 categories of approvals and took three years or more to pass through the Byzantine clearing process; technological development fell further and further behind; and India found itself increasingly unable to compete on world markets because of its high-cost economy.[9]

The liberalization process began in 1973 and was designed to keep the broad outlines of the system intact, while making just enough changes to prevent the system from collapsing. The changes were introduced in a slow and halting manner and passed through four phases: the initial steps from 1973 to 1975, the emergency from

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[8]See Henry C. Hart, ed., *Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraised* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976).

[9]V. P. Arya, *A Guide to Industrial Licensing in India* (Delhi: Iyengar Consultancy Services, 1981), pp. 32–33; and K. V. Iyer, *Clearances for Industrial Projects* (New Delhi: Indu Publications, 1983), pp. 5–18.

1975 to 1977, the Janata phase from 1977 to 1979, and the Indira–Rajiv Gandhi efforts of the 1980s. Although the liberalization process produced some results, incremental change and tinkering with the regulatory system proved to be insufficient, and the Indian economy began to slide deeper and deeper into economic crisis. By the early 1990s India was on the verge of bankruptcy and was forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a bailout. This decision forced fundamental changes in Indian economic policy that marked the beginning of the end of the "permit, license, quota Raj," and started an era of liberalization, privatization, and globalization of the Indian economy.

The first steps toward liberalization were taken between 1973 and 1975. The government tried to regain the confidence of the private sector by reaffirming its commitment to the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956, by introducing a less restrictive industrial licensing policy, by overhauling and revamping the industrial licensing procedures for the first time since their creation in 1951, and by attempting to modify the rigidities that had developed in the regulatory system during the populist period.

The economic crisis of the early 1970s, however, fueled a major political crisis that threatened the very existence of the political system. Mrs. Gandhi proved unable to manage these developments, and when her personal power was threatened by the Allahabad court judgment, she declared a national emergency. The emergency period, in turn, brought to the fore a new set of factors and a renewed effort at economic liberalization.

The most important new force to develop on the Indian scene during the 1975–77 emergency was Sanjay Gandhi, Indira Gandhi's younger son. Though he held no official position, Sanjay became his mother's closest and most trusted advisor. However, Sanjay not only failed to share his mother's commitment to some vague brand of socialism, he developed a strong antagonism toward the bureaucracy, the public sector, and government control and regulation of the economy.[10] As a result, the process of liberalization begun in 1973 was broadened and accelerated during the emergency from 1975 to 1977. At the same time, Sanjay also politicized the industrial regulatory system more than ever before. The system increasingly became a mechanism for extraction of resources and a reward to friends, allies, and supporters.

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[10]See Uma Vasudev, *Two Faces of Indira Gandhi* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1977).

During the emergency, the government tried to further liberalize industrial licensing policies, relax price controls, and provide tax incentives for new industrial investment in an effort to accelerate the rate of economic growth. These policy changes, however, had only limited success. Although economic growth did increase, the new policies failed to bring about the expected production break-through. This failure was attributed to an inadequate revival of the construction industry, investment emphasis on expansion rather than on new projects, and weak consumer demand.[11]

The defeat of the Congress Party at the polls in 1977 brought a new government to power for the first time since independence. The Janata coalition was united on political issues and determined to restore the political system to its pre-emergency state. The party was sharply divided, however, on economic policy. Except for Communism, almost all of India's ideological tendencies were reflected in the Janata coalition. Of the three major tendencies—liberalism, socialism, and Gandhiism—the Gandhian sentiment appeared strongest. Initially unable to agree on an economic policy, the Janata proclaimed its basic commitment to the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956. It became clear that the basic outline of the Indian economy would not be altered despite the change in government.

When it finally emerged, Janata economic policy assumed a Gandhian tone. Major emphasis was placed on creating employment by concentrating investment in the development of agriculture and small-scale industry. Janata policy reflected a certain antagonism toward big business and heavy industry in favor of a dramatic expansion in the number of products to be reserved for production by the small-scale sector. The core of Janata industrial policy was: "What can be produced by cottage industry shall not be produced by the small-scale and large-scale sectors and what can be produced by the small-scale sector shall not be open for large-scale industry."[12]

Mrs. Gandhi's return to power in 1980 resulted in a restoration of the concept of economic growth through rapid industrialization. Once again, the basic consensus reflected in the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 was reaffirmed, and Mrs. Gandhi set about attempting to restore growth through a process of liberalization designed to maximize the utilization of resources, encourage investment, and move in

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[11]Frankel, *India's Political Economy*, p. 558.

[12]Prem Shankar Jha, *India: A Political Economy of Stagnation* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 191.

the direction of a more open, market-oriented system. Among the major changes were a liberalization of licensing and procedures to stimulate investment and production, a relaxation of administered prices, a liberal import policy to reduce domestic shortages and supply raw material for industry, and increased efforts to encourage foreign private capital and technology. These steps, however, were taken in an atmosphere of caution. Control and regulation of the economy were to be loosened, not eliminated, and the government was prepared to reimpose tight controls if economic conditions worsened due to a poor monsoon, foreign-exchange crisis, or other unanticipated developments. Yet the changes marked a significant shift away from the isolationist policies of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when self-reliance was a dominant theme. In fact, the very process of liberalization was to be financed by a massive drawing of $5.7 billion from the Extended Fund Facility of the IMF.[13]

Rajiv's Policy of Liberalization

Following Mrs. Gandhi's assassination, the massive electoral victory of Rajiv Gandhi in the December 1984 parliamentary elections brought a new mood of optimism and a spirit of renewal to India. Rajiv's youth; his emphasis on economic liberalization, technology, and efficiency; and his new "Mr. Clean" image appeared to mark a new post-independence era for India. Indian business—protected by Indian government policy for three decades—was suddenly told that it must learn to compete or perish.[14] India was going to prepare itself for the 21st century, and Indian industry would have to learn to adjust to these changes. Initially Rajiv's actions seemed to confirm this new sense of direction to the horror of elements of the Congress (I) Party, the bureaucracy, and those sections of the business community that enjoyed protected markets. During the first two years of his term as Prime Minister, Rajiv embarked upon a major process of economic reform. The first budget presented by V. P. Singh, Rajiv's Finance Minister, appeared to set the tone and was marked by several important breaks with the past. The government took a variety of selective steps to decontrol and deregulate key industries in an effort to spur production, diversification, and modernization, enabling the private

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[13]Catherine Gwin and Lawrence A. Veit, "The Indian Miracle," *Foreign Policy*, 58 (Spring 1985), pp. 79–98.

[14]Stanley A. Kochanek, "Politics of Regulation," *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 28 (November 1985), pp. 189, 209–10.

sector to bypass time-consuming licensing procedures. Liberalization of industrial policy and tax reform were accompanied by a major war on tax evaders and unreported "black money."

The "permit, license, quota Raj" had generated huge stores of black money that were used to help pay party election costs, purchase government benefits, and support politicians and party leaders. The ruling Congress (I) was known to be a major recipient of such funds. In the words of a former minister in Mrs. Gandhi's government, "If a peon accepted money, it was called baksheesh; if a clerk took it, it was mamool (custom); if an officer took it, it became a bribe; and if a minister took it, it was called party funds." As Rajiv Gandhi told the 100th anniversary meeting of the Congress Party in December 1985, "Corruption is not only tolerated but even regarded as the hallmark of our leadership."[15]

Rajiv's initial onslaught against India's regulated economy proved to be short-lived. In early 1987 his government was rocked by a series of major scandals involving alleged favoritism toward Congress (I) business allies, illegal overseas bank accounts held by Rajiv's close Congress (I) friends, and huge kickbacks on government defense contracts involving the purchase of German submarines and Swedish Bofors artillery pieces. These scandals smashed Rajiv's "clean" image, and the young Prime Minister came under intense political attack. As a result, Rajiv was forced to fall back on the support of party regulars and reverted to the populist, socialist slogans of the past. Rajiv's policy of liberalization was quickly sacrificed to the demands of political survival, and the reform effort almost came to a halt.[16]

Despite its cautious and tentative character, Rajiv's policy of liberalization did produce significant results. Under his leadership, the Indian economy seemed to break the cycle of stagnation that had been characterized by the 3.5 percent "Hindu rate of growth" of the previous three decades. During the 1980s, the Indian economy grew at an annual rate of five percent per year. In addition, the industrial sector grew at an impressive eight percent a year, a rate that had not been achieved since the golden decade of industrial development from 1956 to 1966. For the first time since the early days of planning, the Seventh Five-Year Plan, which ended March 1990, exceeded

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[15]Stanley A. Kochanek, "Briefcase Politics in India: The Congress Party and the Business Elite," *Asian Survey*, 27 (December 1987), pp. 1, 292.

[16]Ibid., pp. 1, 294–99.

several of its targets. The growth in gross national product was 5.5 percent versus a target of 5 percent, and the growth for industry reached 8.5 percent. This growth, moreover, was accompanied by a booming stock exchange that saw the private sector raise $6 billion compared to a mere $550 million in 1981–82. The long-awaited takeoff of the Indian economy appeared to have arrived.

The apparent success of the Indian economy, however, was in part bought at the expense of bigger budget deficits and foreign borrowing. As a result, higher growth rates were accompanied by a major financial crisis brought on by a worsening balance of payments, raising internal and external deficits, and persistent inflation. This financial crisis, in turn, touched off a major debate over the wisdom and sustainability of the entire policy of liberalization. This debate became increasingly divisive and highly politicized, shattering the old consensus on which the Indian model of development rested. Three points of view emerged in this debate reflecting different lobbies, ideologies, and political perspectives.

Rajiv Gandhi and his supporters in the party, the bureaucracy, and sections of the business community defended the policy of liberalization and selective deregulation as a great success. The policy, they argued, was not just one of liberalization but one that involved structural change. Although it did not completely open up the economy, as some demanded, it did select priority areas and gradually removed controls on capacity, pricing, production, type of product, and protection. This selective liberalization, in turn, enhanced domestic competition and improved industrial growth and efficiency. The change also prepared the Indian economy to cope with greater international competition.

Rajiv's critics, composed of leftist, Gandhian, and anti–Congress (I) economists and intellectuals; small, medium, and regionally based businesses; and the swadeshi lobby, however, proclaimed the policy of liberalization to be "misconceived," "unworkable," and the "road to ruination." These critics questioned almost every aspect of the policy and charged that its supporters represented comprador (antinational) political and business interests. First, they insisted that the policy had produced industrial stagnation, not growth. Critics charged that the industrial growth claimed by the government was the result of a change in the measurement index. Both industry and employment from 1981 to 1988, they argued, had been stagnant. Second, they claimed that the policy was elitist. It had helped the rich at the expense of the poor. While the top 10 percent of the population had been provided with durable goods, items of mass consumption were in short

supply. Third, the policy of liberalization had threatened the country's self-reliance and its political and economic sovereignty. It had created an internal and external debt trap, emasculated the public sector's indigenous capacity, and undermined the public sector with cheap imports. Fourth, by giving greater scope to the private sector and foreign capital, liberalization had sharply eroded the role of the Planning Commission, while at the same time aggravating unemployment, poverty, and external vulnerability. Fifth, the policy created false industrial growth based on a high import content and destroyed indigenous technological development and production. Finally, by cutting taxes for corporations and the rich, liberalization had not only aggravated social inequality but was also responsible for creating a massive budget deficit. In short, critics charged, Rajiv's policies had been a disaster and had produced a massive financial crisis that had made the Indian economy vulnerable to external pressure.

The most important step required to reverse Rajiv's policies, according to his critics, was a "restoration of faith in planning." The Planning Commission must then take steps to restrict imports, curb consumption, and restore the earlier model of development that had attempted to blend socialist demands for the development of heavy industry in the public sector with Gandhian demands for village-level self-sufficiency and employment-generating schemes. These demands for a restoration of the development consensus of the Nehru era were reflected in the non-Congress (I) coalition that defeated Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress (I) in the 1989 parliamentary elections.

While Rajiv's domestic critics attacked his policy of liberalization for going too far, the World Bank, the IMF, the donor community, and elements in the Indian business elite argued that India's financial crisis was the result of a policy of liberalization that had been too selective and had proceeded too slowly. The slow, partial, and half-hearted approach to liberalization had contributed to India's financial crisis in a variety of ways. First, the policy retained far too many restrictions and had an adverse effect on India's balance of payments. Second, India had allowed its fiscal situation to deteriorate by letting nonplan expenditures explode, especially the huge cost of subsidies and massive defense outlays. Third, India's hegemonic public sector had become a massive drain on the economy and would have to be either rehabilitated or closed down. Fourth, the Government of India would have to reduce tariffs and eliminate quota restrictions in order to make the Indian economy more competitive. Fifth, India would have to remove all barriers to direct foreign investment, such as FERA. In short, critics

demanded a more comprehensive policy of structural reform designed to open up the Indian economy to foreign capital and greater foreign competition. Unless these policy reforms were enacted, the donors argued, India could not expect additional concessional assistance from the World Bank or the donor community. The donors wanted to see the old regulatory regime scrapped and the Indian economy opened to global competition.

The New Coalition Politics

The defeat of the Congress (I) in the parliamentary elections of November 1989 intensified the economic policy debate as Rajiv's cautious, hesitant approach was replaced by near political paralysis. The National Front government of V. P. Singh was a weak coalition of socialist, Gandhian, and peasant-based politicians supported by the Communists and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The unstable National Front government represented the gamut of economic thought in India, with a particularly strong socialist, Gandhian, and antiforeign capital perspective. The new government came to power stressing the virtues of socialism, and during its first month or so in office was dominated by conflicting slogans pretending to be economic policy. The newly appointed nine-member Planning Commission talked of a revival of Gandhian-style, labor-intensive, small-scale cottage industries. The socialists attacked Rajiv's concessions to foreign capital. The Prime Minister's economic advisors attacked the shortcomings of the liberalization policy. The peasant lobby pressed for massive debt relief for farmers, and V. P. Singh tried desperately to hold his unsteady coalition together.

By early 1990 pragmatism began to take hold, and the first budget appeared to stabilize the situation. It abolished the 30-year-old gold-control order, reduced the tax rates from 50 percent to 40 percent, and adopted a realistic credit policy. The budget was followed by the adoption of a three-year import–export policy that was oriented toward industrialization, export promotion, and continued liberalization. The most significant indication of the direction of the new government's economic policy came in May with the announcement of a new industrial policy that continued the trend toward liberalization and the opening of the economy. The industrial policy of the National Front government, however, proved to be unacceptable to both big business and its socialist critics. While business was unhappy with the failure of the policy to apply to MRTP and FERA companies, the left charged that the policy would hurt the small-scale sector

and encourage nonpriority investment. Chandra Shekhar attacked the Prime Minister for failing to consult the party and for pandering to the multinationals. The result was continued confusion and uncertainty.

During the last months of the National Front government, the debate over economic policy was overwhelmed by political events as the coalition became divided over two events: V. P. Singh's decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report on job reservations for OBCs and the threatened storming of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by Hindu militants. In early November 1990, V. P. Singh's government collapsed, and he was replaced by Chandra Shekhar.

Chandra Shekhar's government was totally dependent upon the support of Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress (I) to stay in power. It was, therefore, even less stable than its predecessor, and even the watered-down economic policies of V. P. Singh seemed threatened. Despite the increased economic difficulties brought on by the Gulf crisis, economic policy and implementation were totally set adrift; the Indian economy continued to deteriorate.

Despite almost two decades of spasmodic liberalization, the entire legal framework of private-sector control and regulation in India remained in place. In the words of the London *Economist,* India remained "one of the most regulated and distorted market economies in the world."[17] The very complexity and multiplicity of these instruments enabled political and bureaucratic decision makers to exercise enormous discretionary power by forcing private-sector entrepreneurs to submit to a Byzantine, case-by-case regulatory drill. The liberalization policies of the past simply lowered entry barriers; they did not remove them.

The slow and uneven pace of liberalization from 1973 to 1991 represented efforts by key interests to make minor changes in India's regulatory policies in a desperate effort to prevent the system from collapsing. Incremental change and tinkering, however, produced only limited results—the system gradually slid into crisis. Increasing domestic deficits, inflation, and a foreign-exchange crisis brought the Indian economy to the brink of bankruptcy and collapse. The country was, therefore, forced to go to the IMF for a $5 to 7 billion bailout. Since IMF support required fundamental structural adjustments, the position of domestic reformers was substantially strengthened as India entered the 1990s.

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[17] *The Economist*, January 12–18, 1991, pp. 27–28.

The System Altered: The Growing
Process of Globalization

The government of P. V. Narasimha Rao took office on June 21, 1991, in the midst of the worst economic crisis since independence. For the first time in its history India was faced with the prospect of defaulting on its international debt, the country's international credit rating had been downgraded, access to external commercial credit markets was denied, inflation was in the double digits, budget deficits were unsustainable, and the overall growth rate had dipped to 1.2 percent. In response to the crisis, the new government launched a series of major reforms in a desperate effort to set its economic house in order and secure external support from the IMF.[18]

The reforms introduced by the Rao government dealt not only with basic macroeconomic policy intended to stabilize the economy but also with fundamental microeconomic reforms designed to stimulate growth, enhance competition, and incorporate an increasingly marginalized economy into the larger global system. The reform process was initiated by a small technocratic elite within the bureaucracy supported by the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, and the Commerce Minister. These reformers were largely successful in initiating these changes because of an overwhelming feeling within the government and the country as a whole that there was no other alternative. Most politicians, industrialists, bureaucrats, and intellectuals were in such a state of shock that they were prepared to accept almost any change that would end the economic crisis and restore confidence.

The reform package included a set of actions designed to overcome the immediate crisis and an extensive list of basic structural reforms that had been discussed within the government for over a decade. These structural reforms included the decontrol and deregulation of industry, changes in monetary and fiscal policy, liberalization of trade policy, changes in foreign exchange regulations, encouragement of foreign direct investment (FDI), financial sector reforms, the promotion of private foreign investment in infrastructure, partial privatization of public-sector units, the promise to enact labor reforms, and an exit policy that would allow bankrupt private-sector firms to go out of business.

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[18]Pyaralal Raghavan, "A Roller-Coaster Reform Ride," *Business World* (March 6–19, 1996), pp. 46–51; Terence J. Byres, ed., *The Indian Economy: Major Debates Since Independence* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Isher Judge Ahluwalia and I. M. D. Little, eds., *India's Economic Reforms and Development: Essays for Manmohan Singh* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Given its technocratic origins, its shallow base of support, the political leadership's reluctance to sell the reforms to the public at large, and the composition of the package itself, however, the government's capacity to sustain the reforms was severely restricted. Initially, the view that there was no alternative blunted criticism of the reform effort. Once the immediate crisis had passed, however, sharp criticism of the reform package emerged from key interest groups in the country. These criticisms were reflected in the media, among political factions within the Congress (I), the trade unions, opposition parties, academics and intellectuals, the bureaucracy, and even the business community itself.

Interest-group opposition to the reforms was compounded by the development of a series of divisive political events that threatened an already fragile government. The first event to affect the reform process was the revelation of a major stock exchange scam in June 1992. Although the scam was not a result of the reform process, it almost led to the removal of Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister and a chief architect of the reforms. Finance Minister Singh took responsibility for the stock exchange scandal and handed in his resignation in December 1993. The Prime Minister, however, rejected it. The second crisis was even more dramatic and threatened the very survival of the government itself. On December 6, 1992, Hindu militants destroyed the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya and major riots erupted throughout India. The failure of the Rao government to prevent the destruction of the mosque and the Prime Minister's tepid response severely weakened his government. As a result of the political impact of these incidents and the buildup of resistance, the pace of reform slowed. By September 1993 the reforms began to lose support and the political will of the government gradually began to weaken. By 1995 the reform process came to a halt as the Congress (I) suffered a series of electoral defeats in state assembly elections, and Congress began to prepare for the 1996 Lok Sabha elections by introducing a series of populist measures.

While initiation of reforms required the government to cope with opponents, the consolidation of reforms required the building of a support base. Initially the reforms of the Rao government encountered little opposition. Once the economic crisis had stabilized, however, opposition emerged both at the political level and among key interest groups. Political opposition came from opposition parties that did not want the Congress (I) to succeed; the swadeshi lobby that opposed opening the Indian economy to the forces of globalization; and factions within the Congress (I) that were ideologically committed to the old

system and feared the loss of patronage that was a critical part of the "permit, license, quota Raj." The major interest groups opposed to reform included wealthy farmers who feared the loss of their subsidies; many bureaucrats who resented their loss of power; labor, especially public-sector workers who opposed privatization and an exit policy that would enable private companies to close their plants; defenders of the poor who insisted that reforms were stacked against the poor; and many sectors of the old business elite that depended on high protective tariffs and feared competition from foreign multinationals. These opponents raised a series of major criticisms of the liberalization policies of the Rao government. First, they charged that the government was exaggerating the impact of regulation and argued that India was turning away from planning toward laissez faire and free markets with all their imperfections. Second, they contended that the government was abandoning the poor in search of growth and repudiating the country's commitment to social justice. Third, they asserted that the government was simply giving in to foreign pressure. The reforms, they insisted, were being imposed on India by the IMF and would result in an economic crisis. Fourth, critics charged that the Congress (I) government was rejecting the Nehruvian model and its development consensus based on self-reliance, import substitution, a dominant public sector, and social justice.

The reforms, however, also attracted a wide group of supporters. Supporters included newer, high-tech business groups and entrepreneurs who opposed the controlled entry of the licensing system, stockholders, salaried professionals, technocrats, traders, some sectors of agriculture, and especially India's new and growing middle class of consumers. The proponents of reform offered a variety of arguments in support of the reform program. First, they noted that the Indian economy had performed below expectations and India had fallen behind other developing countries, especially China, Korea, Taiwan, and the "tigers" of Southeast Asia. Three decades earlier, these economies were no different than India's; yet by the 1990s these same countries enjoyed living standards well above India's, life expectancy had risen, literacy and mass education had spread throughout these countries, and the proportion of poor had declined. Second, while these countries had become major exporters, India had become completely marginalized in global trade. Third, four decades of planning had created a high-cost, inefficient, and low-productivity economy that could not compete in global markets. Fourth, past economic policies had resulted in a massive economic crisis that required a radical change in policy.

Despite pockets of support for the reform program, however, the strength of opposition pressures forced the government to shelve some of the proposed reforms almost immediately. Exit policy was dropped in February 1992 when the Cabinet was unable to reach a consensus; amendment of Company Law was postponed indefinitely; attempts to reduce fertilizer subsidies were abandoned; no action was taken on increasing user fees for electricity and irrigation, privatization, or labor reform; and the upper house of the Indian Parliament defeated attempts at globalization as sharp disagreements developed over General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and patent legislation.

Although the Indian business community welcomed the initial wave of reforms as "a dream come true,"[19] business opposition to key elements of the package quickly emerged. Generally, business welcomed the new emphasis on private-sector development, decontrol, deregulation, and privatization. Major differences emerged, however, over issues of globalization of the economy, opening Indian markets, reduction of tariff protection of domestic industry, and encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI). In the words of one Indian businessman, "globalization is an attractive idea but it doesn't suit my pocket. . . . It is a luxury I cannot afford."[20]

Business resistance to economic reform crystallized in late 1993 as the immediate economic crisis began to ease. The initial attack came from members of the Bombay Club, an informal group of powerful, elite families. The Bombay Club issued a public statement highly critical of the reform policies as unfair to domestic capital and failing to create a level playing field.[21] The statement demanded numerous changes in policy. First, the Bombay Club demanded that government focus on a comprehensive series of internal reforms that would enable domestic producers to become more competitive and provide for an extended period of adjustment for domestic industry prior to any attempt to open the Indian economy to external competition. Second, the Bombay Club objected to government liberalization policies regarding private foreign investment. They especially expressed anxiety over the government's decision to raise foreign investment equity levels from 40 percent to a controlling 51 percent, the takeover of local Indian companies by foreign multinationals, and attempts by nonresident Indians to gain control of Indian companies by buying large

[19]*Patriot* (New Delhi), July 25, 1991; and *Financial Express* (New Delhi), July 26, 1991.

[20]*Times of India* (New Delhi), August 15, 1993.

[21]*India Today* (New Delhi), November 15, 1993, pp. 60–65.

blocks of shares and replacing the original promoters of the enterprise. The Indian business elite also charged that the government was providing benefits to private foreign investors that were not being provided to domestic industry, especially in the case of infrastructure projects. Third, they opposed the planned reductions in protective tariffs on Indian industry and the opening up of the Indian economy to foreign goods. Since the tariff on finished goods would decline while local excise and sales taxes on industrial inputs remained high, the cost of Indian-made goods would become uncompetitive. This would result in unfair competition and would lead to plant closures and increased unemployment. Fourth, the Bombay Club charged that tight credit policies and high interest rates placed domestic industry at a competitive disadvantage compared to foreign capital. Finally, they charged that failure to reform India's complex labor laws, failure to enact an exit policy that would enable unprofitable industries to close, and failure to reform or privatize the public sector limited the impact and effectiveness of the reforms. Underlying the Bombay Club's critique of the reform package was a strong swadeshi tone that sought continued tariff protection, limits on foreign investment, and a desire to keep the Indian market closed to outsiders for an additional decade or even more.

The failure of the Rao government to build a strong constituency behind the reforms and the reluctance of Congress (I) leaders to sell the reform package to the Indian electorate helped to contribute to the massive defeat of the Congress (I) in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections. The elections themselves, moreover, led to additional political and economic uncertainty when no single party or alliance was able to win a majority. Following a brief period of uncertainty, a 14-party United Front government was cobbled together with a promise of support from the Congress (I).

From its very first day in office the United Front government, led by H. D. Devi Gowda, was preoccupied with staying in power and had little real time to devote to policy issues. Although the United Front promised to continue the liberalization policies of the Rao government in a more humane manner, and although it selected P. Chidambaram, Rao's former Commerce Minister, as Finance Minister, internal wrangling and a fear that the Congress (I) might withdraw its support at any moment led to inaction. This uncertainty became even worse when Rao was replaced as Congress President by Sitaram Kesri in September.

The United Front government did not begin to spring into action until November–December 1996, when it became increasingly clear that the Congress (I) was not in a position to withdraw its support

in the hope of forming its own government. The result was a brief spurt of economic policy initiatives that culminated in the widely hailed 1997–98 budget introduced on February 28, 1997. The budget sharply reduced corporate and personal taxes, cut tariffs, and took steps to encourage FDI. A number of new policies were also announced to facilitate investment, amend the companies act, provide for a takeover code, and move toward some degree of privatization.[22] The new sense of optimism that these policies generated, however, was short-lived. In April 1997 the Congress (I) unexpectedly withdrew its support of the Gowda government before the budget had even been passed. Although a crisis was averted by the selection of I. K. Gujral as Prime Minister, the remainder of the year proved to be little more than a holding action. During the second half of the year India's financial situation began to worsen due to a sharp drop in revenue brought on by tax cuts contained in the budget and the United Front government's decision to yield to demands from India's 5.3 million civil servants for a massive pay increase that had been recommended by a government-appointed pay commission. As a result of these financial pressures, the Finance Minister was forced to announce a series of emergency measures in mid-September that included a cut in government spending, increased taxes and duties, and an agreement to sell shares of five public sector enterprises in a desperate effort to raise Rs. 68.8 billion ($1.9 billion). These actions were followed in mid-November by an attempt to partially dismantle administrative prices of petroleum products. By the end of November, however, the United Front government finally collapsed when the Congress (I) again withdrew its support. India once more went to the polls with little prospect of returning a stable government.[23]

The BJP and Liberalization

The new BJP-led 14 party coalition government elected in 1998 came to power under difficult circumstances. The Indian economy was in the midst of a severe recession that was compounded by fallout from the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98. Prior to coming to power the BJP had criticized the Congress (I) for enacting economic reforms that were not sufficiently pro-Indian and in its election manifesto had called for an "India built by Indians." The BJP agreed with

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[22]*India Today* (New Delhi), March 31, 1997, pp. 34–45.

[23]*India Today* (New Delhi), December 8, 1997, pp. 8–16.

the Bombay Club, a group of prominent industrialists, who argued that the country needed a set of economic reforms that guaranteed a level playing field for Indian industry, and the party promised to introduce a series of economic reforms with a strong swadeshi thrust. The first 100 days of the new, ideologically diverse, and inexperienced BJP-led coalition, however, became dominated by fallout from India's dramatic decision in May 1998 to conduct a series of nuclear tests and its declaration that India was now a nuclear weapons state. The Indian nuclear tests sparked an international uproar and led to the imposition of economic sanctions by the United States and most of its allies.

The BJP's determined resolve to conduct nuclear tests was not, however, matched by equally convincing actions on the economic front. Instead of building on the widespread popular support generated by the nuclear tests, the BJP government submitted an unimaginative, swadeshi-oriented budget for the fiscal year 1998–99. The proposed budget sought to stimulate the economy and increase the rate of economic growth from 5 percent to 7.5 percent by means of a massive increase in public spending that was to be financed by an 8 percent increase in tariffs. The budget also attempted to reduce the fiscal deficit by increasing petrol prices and decreasing fertilizer subsidies, pledged to create a level playing field for domestic industry, sought to attract additional capital from non–resident Indians, and promised to reduce red tape for foreign investors. Critics, however, charged that the budget failed to take into account the potential impact of international sanctions on the Indian economy, ignored the downgrading of the country's international credit rating, and represented a return to Nehruvian economic policies that would result in a return to 3.5 percent the Hindu rate of growth of the past.[24]

The newly proposed budget began to unravel the day it was presented and was labeled the "roll back budget" as political pressures from the BJP's alliance partners and supporters forced a major retreat. A day after the budget was presented most of the increases in petrol prices were rescinded, increases in fertilizer prices were cut in half and the 8 percent increase in tariff rates was reduced to 4 percent. Since the impact of these severe cuts on government revenue were not matched by cuts in planned expenditures, the budget was expected to further increase the country's massive budget deficit and spark inflationary pressures. Critics charged that the imposition of economic sanctions called for a defensive economic policy, not an expansive one, and

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[24]*India Today* (New Delhi), June 15, 1998, pp. 26–33.

warned of a possible massive balance-of-payments crisis unless the BJP's economic policies were altered to conform to the new international realities brought about by India's nuclear policies.

Although the government's second budget attempted to move the economy in the directions of greater liberalization by opening up the insurance sector to foreign capital, lowering trade barriers, and cutting food subsidies, Vajpayee continued to appear vacillating, indecisive, and seemed unable to effectively manage the country's faltering economy. The tenure of the BJP-led government proved to be short-lived. On April 17, 1999, the government collapsed when one of its partners withdrew its support and the coalition was defeated on a vote of confidence by a single vote. The collapse of the government plunged the country into political turmoil and economic uncertainty as the cost of vegetables increased suddenly and the price of onions skyrocketed.

Following its reelection in October 1999, the new BJP led government began its first year in office on a highly positive note. Prime Minister Vajpayee moved quickly to restore confidence in his ability to govern and began to develop a more coherent set of outward looking economic policies. The Prime Minister distanced himself from the swadeshi policies of the RSS and the Sangh Parivar and overcame resistance from within the coalition to his proposed economic reforms. The government succeeded in enacting legislation to create a new regulatory authority to monitor the country's telecommunications industry and stock markets and enhanced government revenues by adopting a value added tax. It also moved to counter international economic sanctions and attract foreign capital to help develop the country's woefully inadequate infrastructure by enacting legislation permitting foreign investment in the Indian insurance industry and replacing FERA with less restrictive legislation. Aided by good monsoons and increased foreign direct investment, the country appeared to be pulling out of a two year recession as the economy grew at the rate of 6 percent in 1999–2000. The reform process was further enhanced by government's new budget proposals and the creation of two new reform oriented ministries—a Disinvestment Ministry and a Ministry of Information Technology.

Within a year, however, the government's promise of a second generation of economic reforms failed to materialize, India's economic recovery ground to a halt, and the country's postelection sense of optimism began to wane. Sharp increases in oil prices, poor monsoon rains, and a limited infusion of direct foreign investment plunged the economy into recession. In 2000–2001 the economy grew at a rate of only 4.2 percent, the lowest level since the financial crisis of 1991.

Due to a series of political and economic scandals; cracks in the BJP coalition; bureaucratic resistance to privatization; and the protectionist ideology of the RSS, the Sangh Parivar, and the BJP's coalition allies, the momentum of economic reforms that had lost steam in 2000 slowed even further in 2001. Dissent within the BJP reached such intensity in July 2001 that Vajpayee threatened to resign as Prime Minister. Political uncertainty within the coalition and the lack of progress on economic reforms continued to dampen the prospects for a sustained economic recovery. Despite a good monsoon, the economy in 2001–2002 was able to grow at only 5.8 percent, well below the level of the early 1990s. Poor monsoon rains and a severe drought in the following year had a devastating effect on the country's economy, as economic growth for 2002–2003 slipped to only 3.8 percent, one of the lowest levels since independence.

Despite repeated pledges to introduce a second generation of economic reforms, the pace of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization under BJP leadership remained frustratingly slow, reflecting a major gap between rhetoric and practice. Vajpayee's promise of agrarian reform, changes in the country's restrictive labor laws, deregulation, increases in administrative prices, and privatization of public-sector industries remained largely unrealized as government decision making ground to a halt. The country's trading community, a key BJP constituency, attempted to block the implementation of a value added tax; foreign capital remained hesitant to invest in Indian infrastructure projects; and the Indian business community, which had welcomed the election of a BJP government, became increasingly disillusioned.

As the NDA government's five-year term in office began to draw to a close, its political and economic fortunes underwent a sudden and dramatic change. The political turnaround came in December 2003 when the BJP scored a series of major victories in state assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh. This sudden transformation in the BJP's political fortunes was followed by good monsoons and a dramatic economy recovery. The country's economic growth went from a low of 3.8 percent in 2002–2003 to an impressive 8.5 percent in 2003–2004. While most observers attributed the country's remarkable economic recovery to "rain and pain," the government proclaimed a new golden age of development. Under BJP leadership, the party proclaimed, the Indian economy had been transformed from the 3.5 percent "Hindu rate of growth" of the past to a new, dynamic "Hindutva rate of growth" of 8.5 percent.

Despite these grandiose claims, most economists attributed the country's remarkable growth to excellent monsoon rains that had followed on the heels of a major drought and a decade of economic restructuring. Monsoon rains, they pointed out, had boosted agricultural growth from –3 percent in 2002–2003 to +3 percent a year later. These developments in the agriculture sector were reinforced by a decade of painful industrial restructuring. Years of cost cutting, product upgrades, technological modernization, and the development of economies of scale had transformed the country's telecommunication, automobile, and pharmaceutical industries. These industries were now more efficient and competitive and were joined by the emergence of a host of new industries such as information technology, call centers, and back office services that had transformed the country's economic landscape.[25]

In the wake of the country's remarkable economic performance in 2003–2004, the BJP launched a massive "India Shining" public relations campaign and decided to call early elections in an attempt to extend its mandate. To its shock and surprise, the BJP went down to a stunning defeat at the hands of a populist Congress Party-led coalition.

Unlike the BJP, the newly elected Congress-led UPA government inherited a buoyant economy and promised to continue the process of economic reforms in a way that would benefit those that had been left behind. While the BJP had traditionally supported a more market friendly economic policy, the ideology of the UPA coalition tended to favor the state over the market and emphasized growth with justice. The Congress (I) "save the common man" electoral slogan, Sonia Gandhi's commitment to the economic policies of her mother-in-law and late husband, and the coalition's dependence on Communist Party support led to the adoption of a Common Minimum Program (CMP) that emphasized the need for a rural employment program for the poor, greater investment in agriculture, and continued state intervention in the economy.[26]

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[25]For a review of BJP economic policy, see Baldev Raj Nayar, "BJP's Economic Nationalism in Theory and Practice," in Ashutosh Varshney, ed., *India and the Politics of Developing Countries* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004), pp. 227–55; Paranjoy Guha Thakurta and Shankar Raghuraman, *A Time of Coalitions: Divided We Stand* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004), pp. 63–134 and pp. 349–88; and Rob Jenkins, "The NDA and The Politics of Economic Reform," in Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, eds., *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 173–92.

[26]*The Wall Street Journal* (New York), May 25, 2006.

THE POLITICS OF AGRICULTURE
AND POVERTY

The development of Indian agricultural policy since 1947 roughly paralleled the changes in industrial policy and passed through several distinct phases. The first phase covered the Nehru era, from 1947 to 1964, and focused on attempts at structural reform. The second stage, from 1964 to 1971, concentrated on increasing production through the use of new agricultural technologies of the green revolution. The third phase, from 1971 to 1977, focused on basic needs and income redistribution. The fourth period, from 1977 to 1991, emphasized rural employment, asset creation, and income redistribution.[27] The fifth period, since 1991, focused on the highly contentious issues of liberalization and globalization of India's agricultural economy.

Over the past 60 years, the Government of India has played a crucial role in the development of agriculture in an effort to obtain food security. This objective was achieved by a complex system of price supports, subsidizing key agricultural inputs (especially fertilizer, power, and irrigation), providing institutional credit, and a host of other support measures. As a result, by the 1990s India had achieved food security, built up buffer stocks of food, and was even exporting some food crops. Most important of all, it had succeeded in warding off the widespread famines that had plagued the region in the past.

The initial development consensus evolved by Nehru placed the major emphasis on industrialization rather than on agriculture. Government policy in agriculture focused primarily on structural reform. Over the years, Congress land policy had come to concentrate on three key issues: abolition of intermediaries, ceilings on landholdings, and the development of cooperatives. The abolition of intermediaries concentrated especially on attempts to eliminate the zamindari system, which interposed a variety of rent-receiving intermediaries between the actual cultivator and the government. This process was long and complex due to numerous legal and constitutional challenges raised by powerful zamindars. The Congress and the government, however, were strongly united behind these reforms and succeeded in eliminating the zamindars and placing control of the land in the hands of the tillers. The reforms brought into being a powerful group of owner-cultivators who, in turn, have become a major political force in India.

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[27]See Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

The consensus that existed within the Congress on the issue of zamindari abolition did not exist on the issue of landholding ceilings. A major split developed between the central government and the Planning Commission on the one hand and the state governments, which were largely controlled by influential local landowners, on the other. As a result, land-ceiling legislation was pursued with little seriousness and when enacted was so cleverly framed that little surplus land was ever created. Thus, although land-ceiling legislation ultimately appeared on the books in almost every state, its implementation was extremely uneven and mostly ineffective.

The Congress commitment to cooperatives had a strong Gandhian content. As long as cooperative legislation centered on service cooperatives, the policy generated little real conflict. Congress passage of the Nagpur resolution in 1959, however, proved to be a major turning point. The resolution, pressed by Nehru shortly after a trip to China, called for cooperative joint farming in which land would be pooled for joint cultivation, and those who worked the land would share in proportion to their work, not simply in proportion to ownership. The resolution touched off a massive wave of criticism and led to the formation of the Swatantra Party. Nehru quickly backed off from his commitment to the resolution and insisted that cooperative farming really meant only the development of service cooperatives.[28]

Nehru's death and the massive food crises of the mid-1960s resulted in a major shift in Indian agricultural policy. In 1964–65 the government adopted a production-oriented agricultural strategy based on new technologies of the green revolution. Although the new agricultural strategy affected only 35 percent of the total cultivated area of the country, the use of high-yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, irrigation, and tractors produced enormous increases in agricultural output in these areas. The strategy, however, accentuated regional disparities. In those areas experiencing the greatest increases in productivity, the green revolution, at least initially, widened the gap between the rich and the poor.[29]

The focus on increasing production and generating a process of sustained growth gave way, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to a concern with the problems of poverty and distribution. Mrs. Gandhi's populism was an attempt to attack the alleged concentration of economic power and the growth in disparities and inequities that had

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[28]Kochanek, *Congress Party*, p. 70.

[29]Francine R. Frankel, *India's Green Revolution: Economic Gains and Political Costs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

developed. Beginning with the Fourth Five–Year Plan (1969–74), greater attention was paid to a variety of special programs to assist the poor. The Fifth Five–Year Plan (1974–79) attempted to attack poverty directly by accelerating the process of growth and by redistribution of income. The objective was to curb the consumption of the top income levels in favor of the bottom levels. The effort to translate these objectives into specific policies, however, failed.

As a result, the Sixth Five–Year Plan (1980–85) developed a series of special programs designed to assist specific target groups. These programs included the supply of inputs and credit to small and marginal farmers, employment–guarantee schemes, and transfer of some income–yielding assets to agricultural labor. The Sixth Plan allocated 40 billion rupees (out of a public-sector outlay of 975 billion rupees) for poverty and welfare schemes. The Seventh Five–Year Plan (1985–90) under Rajiv attempted to further accelerate these poverty programs in order to assist the 35–40 percent of the Indian population that remained below the poverty line.[30] The approach to the Eighth Five–Year Plan (1990–95) accorded primacy to the objectives of employment generation and poverty eradication through measures for guaranteeing the right to work, accelerating agricultural and social development, and promoting household and small–scale enterprise.

The economic policies of the post–1991 period were marked by an attempt to make a major break with the policies of the past. These policies involved an undertaking by the Government of India to gradually open up the country's agricultural sector to the forces of free markets and globalization as part of its obligations under the structural adjustment agreement of 1991 and its commitment to GATT and the newly created World Trade Organization. Since these commitments required a massive change in India's traditional policy of comprehensive control, regulation, and subsidation of the agricultural sector, they sparked a major debate over the wisdom of such policy changes. The World Bank and IMF reform package called for liberalization of fertilizer imports and the deregulation of its manufacture and distribution, removal of land ceilings and subsidies, deregulation of food prices, and removal of all controls in order to create a free market in agriculture and allow Indian agricultural prices to reach international levels. These policies, argued the World Bank and its supporters, would increase production, improve efficiency, reduce

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[30]C. T. Kurien, "Paradoxes of Planned Development: The Indian Experience," in James R. Roach, ed., *India 2000: The Next Fifteen Years* (Riverdale, MD: Riverdale, 1986), pp. 179–92.

the country's enormous subsidy bill, enhance agricultural exports, generate higher incomes for farmers, and encourage corporate agriculture and agro-based industries.

Opponents, however, charged that removal of restrictions on the export of food crops; ending monopoly procurement; repeal of land ceiling laws; withdrawal of input subsidies on fertilizer, irrigation, power, and credit; and the introduction of free-market principles would destroy Indian food security, increase inequities, and have a devastating effect on the poor. The highly controversial nature of the reform package was reflected almost immediately when the Rao government in 1992 attempted to reduce fertilizer subsidies by 40 percent in its first budget. An uproar by the farmers' lobby forced the government to reduce the cut to only 30 percent. In addition, in an attempt to offset the lower subsidy rates on fertilizer and reduce the central government's budget deficit, the government raised food prices by 75 percent from 1992 to 1994. The increase in food prices in turn necessitated steps by Rao to counter charges of being anti-poor. In an effort to offset the impact of the increase in food prices on the poor, the government took steps to overhaul the Public Distribution System (PDS), which provided consumers with six essential commodities such as rice, wheat, edible oils, and kerosene at subsidized prices through some 425,000 local ration shops. The PDS is a very poorly targeted antipoverty program; it has failed to reach the poorest 40 percent of the population and has gradually extended its benefits to the point that the cost has become unsustainable. In 1994–95 the program cost the Government of India 5,100 crores (1 crore is 10 million rupees), or 0.5 percent of Gross Domestic Product.[31]

In an effort to reform the program and reduce its costs, the Rao government introduced a Revamped Public Distribution System in January 1992, designed to target 1,752 of India's 5,220 poorer development blocks, located in backward, remote, drought-prone, desert, hill, and tribal areas. The number was expanded by 671 in August 1995 to 2,446 blocks as part of Rao's populist response to assembly election defeats and to charges that Congress (I) liberalization policies were anti-poor.

The United Front government elected in 1996 went one step further. In an effort to assist those below the poverty line, the

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[31]The World Bank, *India: Achievements and Challenges in Reducing Poverty* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1997); Alan Heston, "Poverty in India: Some Recent Policies," in Marshall M. Bouton and Philip Oldenburg, eds., *India Briefing 1990* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 115–16; Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

government introduced the Targeted Public Distribution System in June 1997. The program was designed to benefit some 60 million families by providing them with 10 kg. of food grains per family per month. The allocation was raised to 20 kg. in April 2000, to 25 in April 2001, and then to 35 in April 2002.[32]

The slow pace of liberalization and reform of the agriculture sector, a sharp decline in public sector investment, and a drop in the supply of agricultural inputs have resulted in a series of major problems for Indian agriculture. First, long-term growth rates in agriculture have remained static and production continues to fluctuate widely. As a result, the inclusion or exclusion of a single year during any time period can have a significant impact on the results. Despite the green revolution, the overall long-term growth rate of Indian foodgrain production has declined. In the aftermath of the green revolution from 1967–68 to 1995–96, Indian agriculture grew at the rate of 2.67 percent per year. The trend in total crop production, however, declined from 3.2 percent per year in the 1980s to 2.3 percent per year in the 1990s, and yield declined from 2.6 percent per hectare to 1.3 percent. Since only 35–40 percent of cropland is irrigated, most of India's agriculture continues to depend upon the monsoon rains, and as a result yearly production rates continue to vary considerably.[33] In addition, increases in food production have been confined to wheat and rice, while the production of pulses, a major source of protein in the Indian diet, has declined, as has the production of millet, the major source of cheap food eaten by the poor.

Second, increases in agricultural production have been very uneven across regions resulting in major economic disparities. The initial beneficiaries of the green revolution were a group of states located in northwestern India—the Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh—plus the state of Andhra in the South. The benefits have more recently extended to the East and South. Five states—Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Himachal Pradesh—are almost totally dependent upon monsoon rains and have been designated as dry states. The areas that have been left out of the green revolution suffer increased unemployment, underemployment, and poverty. Depending upon the region, Indian agriculture

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[32]*India 2005: A Reference Annual* (New Delhi: Publication Division Ministry, Information and Broadcsting, Government, India, 2005), pp. 347–48.

[33]M. L. Dantwala, "Emerging Challenges in Indian Agriculture," in M. V. Nadakarni, A. S. Seetharamu, and Abdul Aziz, eds., *India: The Emerging Challenges* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 1991), p. 121.

also suffers from waterlogging, increased salinity, floods, and spreading desertification. Flood control, soil conservation, greater public investment, better rural infrastructure, and the development of new technology for dry-land farming are critical to further increases in Indian food production.

Third, despite growth in food production, Indian agriculture has been plagued by increasing production costs that have especially threatened the survival of small and marginal farmers. Since this group is already threatened by declining size of holdings and fragmentation, their numbers are growing, and many are joining the already large group of landless laborers. The problem becomes further aggravated by India's population growth and the inability of the nonagricultural sector to absorb additional employment.

Fourth, as a result of India's inability to further accelerate sustained growth, poverty remains a major problem. The most recent survey of poverty by the Government of India shows that India has the largest concentration of poor in the world. An estimated 26 percent, or 260 million people, fall below the poverty line. The central government spends an increasing proportion of its annual budget on a variety of subsidies and a wide array of antipoverty programs.

The largest and most costly antipoverty program is the food subsidy provided by the PDS. The poor, however, receive only a small portion of the benefits because of the general nature of the program. Other antipoverty programs are more clearly targeted to assist the poor. These programs include rural employment programs, social welfare and nutrition programs, special programs to help Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, complex nutrition and development packages designed to provide health education for mothers, early childhood education and immunization, midday meals for school children, and programs that assist the states in providing social protection to the poor. Among the major antipoverty programs in India are the National Food for Work Program created in November 2004, the Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) launched in April 1999, the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) created in 2001, the Rural Housing-Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) of 1999–2000, the Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY) begun in 2000–01, the Rural Employment Generation Program (REGP) that started in 1995, the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) begun in 1993, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) launched in 2000, the Drought Prone Areas Program (DPAP), the Desert Development Program (DDP), the Integrated Wasteland Development Program (IWDP), the Antydaya Anna Yojana (AAY) created in December 2000, the Swarna Jayanti Shahari

Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) begun in December 1997, and the Valmiki
Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY) launched in December 2001.[34]

The most recent addition to this extensive list of antipoverty
programs is the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
(NREGA) of 2005. Despite the excellent performance of the Indian
economy in 2004–2005, the defeat of the NDA in the 2004 elections
appeared to confirm the widespread belief that India's vast army of
urban and rural poor had failed to share in the country's rising pros-
perity. These neglected sectors of society for whom India was not
"Shining" had responded to the Congress Party's election promise
to redirect the country's economic priorities in favor of the poor.
One of the first steps taken by the newly elected Congress (I)-led
UPA government was the adoption of a Common Minimum Pro-
gram (CMP) that included a commitment to create an employment
generation scheme that would harness the power of the unemployed,
reduce poverty, and enhance social equity. The coalition also created
a National Advisory Council (NAC) headed by Sonia Gandhi to
monitor its implementation.

Legislation designed to implement the proposed employment
scheme was initially drawn up by the NAC in August 2004 and was
designed to empower the poor. The draft bill that was introduced in
December 2002, however, proved to be a highly watered-down ver-
sion of the program. The Indian bureaucracy tended to see such pro-
grams as very costly, wasteful, and open to massive corruption. The
proposed legislation, therefore, curtailed the scope and cost of the
program and deleted provisions designed to empower the poor.

The draft bill met stiff opposition from the Communists, numer-
ous NGOs, and a variety of social activists who charged the bureau-
cracy with gutting the bill. As a result, the bill was referred to a
parliamentary standing committee for review. The standing commit-
tee heard testimony from over 100 organizations and proceeded to
completely rewrite the bill in an effort to roll back the numerous
restrictions incorporated into the legislation by the Indian bureau-
cracy. Despite continued stiff resistance, the UPA passed the long-
delayed bill in the fall of 2005.

The NREGA drew heavily upon established rural employment
schemes and was modeled on the highly successful program first devel-
oped in the state of Maharashtra that attempted to provide employ-
ment to the rural poor. The Act guaranteed employment to one

[34]*Economic Survey 2004–2005* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2005), pp. 228–29.

person in every rural household for 100 days in a year and was initially designed to cover 200 districts. The IMF estimated that this new, extremely expensive program would cost the country about 1 percent of its Gross Domestic Product when fully implemented and would further worsen India's already high fiscal deficit.[35]

Unfortunately, most antipoverty programs in India have had only a limited impact on poverty. The massive size of the poverty problem means that these programs tend to be very expensive and reach only a small portion of India's 260 million poor. The programs also suffer from unclear multiple objectives, ineffective targeting, poor design and implementation, excessive bureaucratic control, high administrative costs, and leakage of funds. The result has been that only a small fraction of the programs' costly benefits ever reach the targeted groups that they were designed to help. Even Rajiv Gandhi once noted that only 20 percent of the funds allocated to these programs ever reach the poor. Numerous field studies have tended to confirm Rajiv's assessment.

International donors have also been highly critical of India's anti-poverty programs. A World Bank study of poverty in India in 1997, for example, concluded that India's antipoverty programs were fiscally unsustainable and desperately needed reform. The resources devoted to these programs, argues the report, would be more effectively spent on human capital development, enhanced private-public part-nerships, local panchayat institutions, and nongovernmental organiza-tions. In the long run, noted the report, the most important vehicle of poverty reduction in India has been the accelerated process of eco-nomic growth.[36]

While poverty programs may or may not help the poor, the major political debates in India tend to center around agricultural policy toward the rich farmers who have become an increasingly powerful lobby. The farmers' lobby is much more vocal and powerful than the poor and has demanded support of high prices and cheap subsi-dized inputs. Major debates center on the size of producer incentives, the method for calculating such incentives, and demands for higher subsidies on inputs. The farmers' lobby has generally had a strong voice among such parties as the Janata Dal and its various splinters, which draw their principal support from the backward castes. These parties tend to advocate greater support for agriculture in Indian

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[35]*The Wall Street Journal* (New York), May 25, 2006.

[36]The World Bank, *India: Achievements and Challenges in Readucing Poverty,* pp. 31–38.

Five-Year Plans and have accused the Congress (I) of placing too much emphasis on industry.

India's recent agricultural strategy has attempted to expand agricultural research to include food grains other than wheat and rice, as well as nonfood crops; has developed agricultural activities such as animal husbandry and forestry; has attempted to extend employment guarantee schemes; and has begun to focus greater attention on the environmental implications of agricultural development. Given India's population growth rate, however, increased agricultural production is essential to Indian stability and survival and requires greater liberalization of the agricultural sector. The process of liberalization and reform has only barely begun.

INDIA'S RECORD OF PERFORMANCE

The performance of the Indian economy over the past 60 years has been very uneven. During the era of centralized planning, government control and regulation of the private sector, and the country's Nehruvian socialist model of development, the Indian economy was criticized for its slow growth, high capital-output ratios, and poor industrial-capacity utilization rates. In an effort to accelerate the rate of growth, India embarked upon a slow process of liberalization in 1975 that gradually reversed the populist wave of the early 1970s and attempted to reduce the complex regularity framework that inhibited private-sector expansion. An even more dramatic shift in economic strategy began in 1991, as India embarked upon a process of liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and globalization that has had a significant impact on the country's economic development.[37]

As seen in Table 9.1, the overall growth in Gross Domestic Product during the first three decades of centralized planning from 1951–52 to 1974–75 averaged about 3.5 percent, a level that one Indian economist labeled the "Hindu rate of growth." While this growth rate was substantially above the 1 percent rate of growth during the first half of the twentieth century under British rule, it fell far short of plan targets. Following the liberalization of economic policy in the late 1970s, the average annual growth rate increased to 5.7 percent from 1980–81 to 1984–85 and 6.0 percent from 1985–86 to 1989–90. The economic

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[37]The World Bank, *India: Sustaining Rapid Economic Growth* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1997).

T A B L E 9.1   Trends in the Growth of Real Gross Domestic Product, 1951–56 to 2002–07

A. Five Year periods 1951–56 to 2002–07		
First plan	1951–1956	3.60
Second plan	1956–1961	4.21
Third plan	1961–1964	2.72
Fourth plan	1969–1974	2.05
Fifth plan	1974–1979	4.83
Sixth plan	1975–1985	5.54
Seventh plan	1985–1990	6.02
Eighth plan	1992–1997	6.68
Ninth plan	1997–2002	5.50
Tenth plan	2002–2007	8.00 (Target)
B. Twenty-First Century By Year		
	1999–2000	6.0
	2000–2001	4.2
	2001–2002	5.8
	2002–2003	3.8
	2003–2004	8.5
	2004–2005	7.5
	2005–2006	8.4

SOURCE: (1) *India 2005; A Reference Annual* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 2005), p. 566; (2) *Economic Survey 2004–2005* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2005), pp. 1–3; and (3) *India Today* (New Delhi), March 13, 2006, p.19.

crisis of 1991–92 resulted in a sharp drop in Gross Domestic Product growth to 0.8 percent.

Following the introduction of the 1991 economic reforms, higher growth rates resumed and the Indian economy became more buoyant. From 1992 to 1997 the economy grew at the rate of 6.7 percent and reached a high of 7.5 percent in 1996–97 before dropping back to an estimated 5.5 percent from 1997 to 2002. Since 2003 the country's growth rate has accelerated and has averaged about 8 percent per year from 2003 to 2006. The economy was projected to continue to grow at a rate of about 7 percent or more for at least the next decade. Despite these higher growth rates, however, India continued to lag well behind its Asian neighbors, and its

TABLE 9.2 **Trends in Industrial and Agriculture Productions 1951–2004. Annual Growth Rates (Percentages)**

	Industrial Production	Agriculture Production	Foodgrains Production
1st Plan (1951–1956)	7.5	4.2	5.2
2nd Plan (1956–1961)	6.6	4.3	4.0
3rd Plan (1961–1966)	9.0	−1.1	−2.2
3 Annual Plans (1966–1969)	1.6	6.3	8.8
4th Plan (1969–1974)	4.5	3.0	2.5
5th Plan (1974–1979)	5.9	4.3	5.3
Annual Plan (1979–1980)	1.1	−15.5	−18.2
6th Plan (1980–1985)	6.4	6.0	6.3
7th Plan (1985–1990)	8.5	4.2	3.6
2 Annual Plans (1990–1992)	4.4	0.1	−0.4
8th Plan (1992–1997)	6.8	3.0	2.1
2003–2004	7.0	19.6	21.7

SOURCE: *Statistical Outline of India 2004–2005* (Mumbai: TATA Services Limited Department of Economics and Statistics , 2005), p. 9.

population growth rate has caused it to increase its per capita income at a rather slow rate. Economic growth in India, however, continues to be inhibited by a lack of policy clarity, high fiscal deficits, inadequate infrastructure, low levels of FDI, pervasive government regulation, high taxes, and slow and inconsistent implementation of laws and regulations.

Table 9.2 outlines the performance of the industrial and agricultural sectors over the past six decades. Both sectors have experienced widespread fluctuation over the years as India's attempt to achieve a sustained pattern of high economic growth has continued to elude its planners. Industrial production was strong during the golden decade of development from 1956 to 1966. Industry grew at an annual rate of 6.7 percent from 1953 to 1957 and reached an all-time high of 9.0 percent from 1961 to 1966. With the end of this import substitution phase of industrial development and the beginning of Indira Gandhi's populist onslaught, the rate of industrial growth dropped to a low of 1.6 percent in 1966–69 and recovered slightly to 4.5 percent from 1969 to 1974. During the early phase of liberalization from 1974 to 1979, the rate of industrial growth increased to 5.9 percent and then accelerated in the 1980s. Under Rajiv Gandhi's liberalization

program, the rate of industrial growth from 1985 to 1990 reached 8.5 percent. The economic crisis of the early 1990s resulted in a sharp drop in industrial production to a low of 2.3 percent in 1992–93. The economic reforms of the Rao government, however, sparked an industrial boom as industry expanded rapidly in the new liberalized environment and industrial production grew at a rate of 6.8 percent from 1992 to 1997. Although it reached an all time high of 11.8 percent in 1995–96, it declined once again in the second half of the 1990s as India once again failed to achieve a sustained rate of economic growth. During the first five years of the twenty-first century, however, industrial growth has averaged about 6 percent per year and in 2004–2005 reached a high of 7.8 percent.

Indian agricultural production has fluctuated even more erratically than industry and in direct relationship to the vicissitudes of the monsoon. The underlying trends show a growth rate of 2.7 percent since 1950, as India brought more and more land into production and extended the benefits of the green revolution to selected areas in India, making these areas less dependent on the monsoon.

Indian food production has more than quadrupled from 51 million tons in 1950–51 to an all-time high of 212.9 million tons in 2001–02, only to drop back to 179.4 million tons in 2002–03. Following the devastating drought, food production recovered to 212 million tons in 2003–04 and then fell back to 206 million tons in 2004–05. The pace of agricultural growth, however, has faced a number of constraints, including the relatively slow growth of food production, a decline in public investment in agriculture, reduced supplies of agricultural inputs, deterioration in operational efficiency, and poor infrastructure. Critics argue that the liberalization policies applied to industry must be extended to the agricultural sector in an effort to improve the climate for growth and terms of trade for the agricultural sector.

Because of the fluctuation in rates of industrial and agricultural production and the overall slow rate of growth in the economy, only modest increases have occurred in the growth of India's real per capita national income. The collapse of the development consensus of the Nehru era and the Rao reforms of 1991, however, have touched off a renewed debate over the future of Indian economic policy as the issue of markets, liberalization, globalization, and privatization have come to dominate the political discourse.

Despite its shortcomings, India's modest growth rate has resulted in the creation of a large and extensive industrial infrastructure and a gradual improvement in the quality of life. Although the lot of most

Indians has improved in absolute terms in the years since independence, the gains have not been equally distributed. Despite the slogans of socialism, government policy itself has often served to subsidize the fundamental inequities of the society. Thus, India's achievements have not been secured without social costs, as evidenced in the wide regional and individual disparities in income. Moreover, with the enormous changes in education, transportation, and communication since 1950, even the most isolated villages have been penetrated, thus stimulating aspirations for a better life and frustration at the inability to achieve it. The breakthrough in communication has brought a new awareness of poverty to the Indian masses and sensitivity to the widening gap that separates them from the rich.

After 60 years of freedom, India's political and economic performance remains an enigma. Those who insist that India is unique and must be compared only to India point to the resilience of its democracy; its success in feeding its 1.1 billion people; its survival as a nation; its creation of a major industrial base; its increases in gross domestic product and per capita income; the decline in its infant mortality rate; its increase in life expectancy; and its newly achieved nuclear power status.

Those who argue that India must be compared to its Asian neighbors and global standards, on the other hand, point to the corruption and criminalization of its politics; its 260 million people who remain below the poverty line; its 39 percent illiteracy rate; its low rank of 138 out of 175 nations on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index;[38] its low rank of 45 out of 49 nations on the World Economic Forum's global competitiveness scale;[39] its low rank of 118 out of 148 countries on the Heritage Foundation's global index of Economic Freedom;[40] and its dubious honor of being ranked by Transparency International as one of the 10 most corrupt countries in the world.[41] India, in short, is seen as a qualified political success and a less–than–stellar economic performer compared to its Asian neighbors, its own aspirations, and its global position.

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[38]HDR 1997 Rankings, http://www.undp.org/undp/hdro/table2.htm, 1998.

[39]World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Report*, http://www.weforum.org/publications/GCR/, 1998.

[40]Kim R. Holmes, Bryan T. Johnson, and Melanie Kirkpatrick, eds., *1997 Index of Economic Freedom, Special Asia Edition* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation and *Wall Street Journal*, 1997), pp. 2–5.

[41]*New York Times*, June 3, 1996.

The mixed results of India's development model have been attributed to a variety of factors. These include inadequate demand, poor economic management, a decline in public-sector investment, high capital-output ratios, an increasingly hostile global economic environment, overregulation, high-cost production, low productivity, and rapid population growth. Although many see India as poised for a great leap forward during the early decades of the twenty-first century, numerous bottlenecks remain and may produce less than hoped-for or expected results.

INTEREST POLITICS AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

The Indian statist model of development created in the years following independence was managed by the Planning Commission, a newly created extraconstitutional advisory body under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The Planning Commission was empowered to draw up plans for the allocation of the country's resources and the establishment of development priorities and programs. Under Nehru, the Planning Commission assumed the power of a "super cabinet" removed from direct accountability of Parliament. Over the years, however, the Planning Commission's dominance began to decline as the Commission increasingly became more strictly advisory and technocratic. Key decisions were now made within the Finance Ministry rather than the Commission, and the plan allocations were hammered out by the National Development Council (NDC). Composed of the Prime Minister, members of the Planning Commission, and the state chief ministers, the NDC was originally little more than a rubber stamp for central government policy but became gradually transformed into an important center-state coordinating body. The transformation of the role of the NDC followed in the wake of the growing federalization of the political system and demands by state governments for increased autonomy, greater decentralization, and more regional control over economic policy and allocation of resources.

Even in its heyday, the autonomy of the planning process was also challenged by a variety of interest groups that began to develop in the wake of democratization and the increasing politicization of Indian society. One of the most effectively organized and powerful groups that emerged was the rapidly expanding Indian business community. Although India had committed itself to the creation of a "socialist pattern of society" and the development of a hegemonic public sector, in

practice the country's mixed economy remained overwhelmingly private. Harold Gould characterized India's emerging political economy as a "socialist state" built on a "capitalist society."[42]

Due to the dominant role of the state, the caste- and family-based character of trade and industry, and the traditionally negative image of the business community, Indian business was able to exercise only a limited influence over governmental processes. Businessmen and traders in India were perceived as engaging in a variety of antisocial practices such as usury, false weights, quick profits, tax evasion, corruption, and the accumulation of vast sums of illegal, undeclared "black money" and were treated by society and government with suspicion and distrust. The concentration of economic power in the hands of a handful of family-controlled, caste-based, industrial conglomerates generated additional resentment.

The Transformation of Indian Business

Until very recently, most of India's modern private sector business and industry was owned and controlled by families drawn from the country's traditional trading communities—Gujarati Vaisyas, Parsis, Chettiars, Jains, and Marwaris. The House of Birla (Marwari), headquartered in Kolkata, and the House of Tata (Parsi), headquartered in Mumbai, became the two largest business conglomerates in India as a small group of family-based business houses came to dominate the private sector of the economy.

Historically, the extended family and caste had played a critical role in assisting Indian entrepreneurs entering modern industry. Most of India's large industrial companies were originally promoted by a small number of business families who maintained complete ownership and control of the company. In these family enterprises, the founder was regarded as the fountainhead of authority and the sole decision maker. While major policy issues were settled by family consensus, operational details were left to company managers.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Indian business community began to undergo a major process of transformation. India's traditional family based business community began to disintegrate, new family based groups and foreign corporations began to emerge, and India began to develop a new generation of entrepreneurs and high tech enterprises. The death of many of India's industrial pioneers had a profound

[42]Harold Gould, "India: Socialist State or Capitalist Society?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of The Association for Asian Studies, Washington, DC, March 23, 1981.

impact on Indian industry, as the ownership and control of family enterprises was transferred to a new generation. While in some cases the process proceeded smoothly, in many cases it proved to be extremely disruptive as brothers, sons, grandsons, cousins, and nephews fought for a share of the family assets, and intense conflict led to the disintegration of numerous old business houses.

Three patterns of family succession and generational change emerged. In some cases families proved to be highly adept at remaining united and the succession proceeded smoothly. The ability of a family to hold together varied from family to family. The most successful families were those that had cultivated close-knit family ties, had enforced a coherent set of values, and had remained united. For example, the Bajaj group under the leadership of its founder Jamnalal Bajaj, a strong supporter of Gandhi and Gandhian principles, had developed strong family bonds built on a tradition of simplicity, discipline, and equality. As a result, the family has survived and remains one of the top business groups in India.[43]

A second group of prominent business houses was composed families that were unable to remain united but were highly successful in negotiating a peaceful and equitable separation of family assets. Families like the Birlas, Singhanias, Thapars, Goenkas, and Nandas were able to successfully divide the family empire and continue to grow and prosper as independent family units. A third group of business houses consisted of families that were unable to agree on the distribution of assets and engaged in a bitter and hostile divorce that significantly harmed their growth or led to their disintegration. Examples of hostile splits include the Podars of Mumbai; the Chhabrias, a non-resident Indian (NRI) family; and the Kamanis, Modis, and the Sri Ram group.[44]

The impact of generational change on the structure of Indian industry was compounded by the introduction of economic reforms in 1991, the dismantling of the "permit, license, quota Raj," and the opening up of the Indian economy to foreign competition. The new economic environment had a dramatic impact on India's traditional business houses and opened the field to a new generation of Indian entrepreneurs. Many of the old business houses that had prospered under decades of tariff protection, near monopoly status, and political influence simply collapsed. Those that survived were forced

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[43]See Gita Piramal, *Business Maharajas* (New Delhi: Viking-Penguin Books, 1996).

[44]Ibid.

to drastically restructure, consolidate, and concentrate on developing their core competency.

The new environment also created enormous opportunities for the rise of a new generation of entrepreneurs and the mushroom growth of entirely new sectors of the economy. The most dramatic changes took place in the phenomenal rise of totally new sectors of the economy such as pharmaceuticals, information technology, software, health services, call centers, and business services.

Business and Collective Action

The transformation of India's traditional business community has had a profound effect on the organization of private sector business for collective action. Despite Nehru's policies of centralized planning, the development of a hegemonic public sector, and the creation of a socialist pattern of society, India's mixed economy led to the emergence of a large and influential private sector that came together to become the best organized, most professionally staffed, best financed, and most vocal interest group in the country. No other sector of the Indian economy or society is as well endowed or as capable of influencing public policy. During the era of centralized planning, the business community in India had a limited but disproportionate say in the formulation of economic policy. Despite its strength as an interest group and although business and industry have come to play a much larger and important role in the making of economic policy since the introduction of major economic reforms in India in 1991, India Inc. continues to remain merely a junior partner in the political process. The influence of the business community is inhibited by its own internal divisions, organizational fragmentation, and deep seated political and bureaucratic resistance to market reforms and economic change.

The Indian business community is represented by a multiplicity of organizations that include hundreds of all-India trade and industry associations, a large number of regionally based chambers of commerce, three central employers organizations, and seven national apex associations representing trade and industry. The three most important apex business associations representing private-sector business in India are the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).[45]

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[45]Stanley A. Kochanek, "The Transformation of Interest Politics in India," *Pacific Affairs*, 68 (Winter 1995–96), pp. 529–59.

T A B L E 9.3   Comparisons of India's Major Apex Business
Associations, 2003–2004

	FICCI	ASSOCHAM	CII
Year Founded	1927	1920	1992
Membership			
A) Corporate	1543	750	4803
B) Member	443	125	646
Bodies (Total Number of Businesses Represented)	250,000	150,000	95,000
Budget Rs. Crores	44.0	9.0	131.0
Size of Secretariat	450	90	769

Note: 1 Crore equals 10 million rupees.
SOURCE: Data provided by the staff of FICCI, Assocham, and CII, April 2005.

As seen in Table 9.3, the FICCI, Assocham, and CII differ consider-
ably in age, size, number of interests represented, resources, size of staff,
and strength of secretariat. They also differ in regional representation,
the number and size of family business houses represented, physical infra-
structure, patterns of internal control, strategies, and relationship to gov-
ernment. The FICCI is the largest, most broadly based apex business
association and claims to represent some 250,000 Indian traders and
industrialists. The federation tends to represent older, more traditional,
indigenous, family-owned business houses. Assocham is the oldest private
sector business association in India and claim's to represent some 100,000
large, indigenous, family-owned business houses as well as foreign multi-
national corporations. The CII is the newest, richest, and most influential
apex business association and claims to represent some 95,000 newer sun-
rise industries including electronics, software, and computer technology.

Until the mid-1980s the FICCI was recognized as the premier
apex business association representing trade and industry in India.
The federation was founded in 1927 to counter the influence of British
business and act as the voice of indigenous capital. The Federation saw
itself as the economic arm of the freedom movement led by the Indian
National Congress. A combination of regional competition and intense
personal conflict among India's elite business families for supremacy led
to a split in the federation in 1986 on the eve of the celebration of its
Diamond Jubilee anniversary. The split in the federation had a far-
reaching effect on the organization of Indian business. It led to a revi-
talization of Assocham and the rise of the CII.

Following the resignation of federation dissidents, federation rebels agreed to join a reorganized Assocham. Assocham had been created in 1920 to represent the interests of British capital in India. After independence, Assocham Indianized its leadership and membership and power passed into the hands of large multinational corporations located largely in Mumbai. The reorganization of Assocham in the wake of the split in the federation enabled the organization to broaden its interest base, expand its membership, and receive a massive infusion of new money and talent. Although smaller than the FICCI, Assocham came to represent most large, foreign multinational companies and a majority of India's top 20 business houses. The reorganization, however, also shifted power within the organization away from professional managers toward India's large family-dominated business houses, and Assocham became transformed into a mirror image of the FICCI. While Assocham tended to represent the interests of business groups in western India, the federation came to reflect the interests of business groups in the North and the East and the reorganized Assocham began a major battle for supremacy with the FICCI. Competing claims of supremacy rested on questions of size, representation, and the degree of proximity to government.

By the early 1990s, at the height of the battle between the FICCI and Assocham for supremacy, however, the entire political, economic, and business environment within which Indian business associations had to function began to change drastically. The defeat of the Congress Party in the 1989 parliamentary elections, two years of political instability under the Janata Dal, and the emergence of the most severe economic crisis in Indian history brought India to the brink of bankruptcy. As a result of the economic crisis, the new Congress (I) government of P. V. Narasimha Rao, elected in 1991, was forced to alter fundamentally the development strategy that India had followed for over four decades.

With the radical change in government policy, many businessmen felt there was a need for an equally radical reorientation of India's business associations. During the years that marked the split in the federation, the reorganization of Assocham, and the fight for supremacy between India's established apex associations, the business community witnessed the rise of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a new apex organization that came to challenge the primacy of the FICCI and Assocham.

The CII grew out of the merger in 1972 of the Indian Engineering Association, which had been created by British entrepreneurs in 1895, and the Engineering Association of India, founded by Indian

capital in 1942. The new organization was called the Association of Indian Engineering Industry; in 1986, the association decided to change its name to the Confederation of Engineering Industry, and in January 1992 changed its name for a third time to become the Confederation of Indian Industry. The CII tended to represent younger managers and owner-managers drawn from newer manufacturing sectors and formerly underdeveloped regions like the South. Increasingly, the CII came to be seen by government and the press as very different from India's traditional elite-dominated, grievance-oriented, and largely reactive apex associations. It gained a reputation of being professionally run, broadly based, and outward looking. With the introduction of the 1991 economic reform program, the CII began to play an increasingly influential role in shaping economic policy.

Although the business community has been the chief beneficiary of the 1991 economic reforms, the reforms have not enjoyed the unified support of the business elite or India's apex business associations. While most industrialists and associations welcomed the move toward deregulation and decontrol of the domestic private sector, they were far less enthusiastic about reducing tariff protection for Indian industry, the opening of the Indian economy to foreign trade, and investment and globalization of the Indian economy.

Business resistance to economic reform crystallized in late 1993 as the immediate economic crisis began to ease. The initial attack came from members of the Bombay Club, which demanded a level playing field. While each of India's major apex associations applauded the Bombay Club's call for a level playing field, the strongest endorsement of the Club's policy critique came from the FICCI.

While the FICCI became the most open critic of the government reform policies, the CII adopted a much more subtle approach. Publicly the CII was a major proponent of the reform package both at home and especially abroad. Yet, since many of its most prominent members were leaders of the Bombay Club, the organization became one of the most vocal supporters of the demand for a level playing field and privately continued to lobby for tariff protection for the Indian engineering industry, its chief constituency. The CII also fought for a reduction of tariffs on components, reductions in excise taxes, and special price benefits for domestically produced goods.[46]

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[46]Stanley A. Kochanek, "Liberalisation and Business Lobbying in India," *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 34 (November 1996), pp. 155–73.

Business-Government Relations

Changes within India's apex business associations were accompanied by major changes in the relationship between business and government. In the past, business–government relations were characterized by suspicion and mutual distrust. With the shift in government policy toward greater emphasis on private sector development, however, government has become less suspicious of business demands and more willing to listen to proposals made by apex business associations for changes in government policy. Increasingly, government saw itself as more of a facilitator than a regulator. While India still has a long way to go to equal the level of cooperation between business and government in other liberal capitalist democracies and Japan, there is no question that business has become an increasingly powerful force in the governmental process in India.

Until 1991 the growth and development of the public sector was seen as the driving force of India's statist-oriented command economy with the private sector assigned a restricted and subordinate role under the control and regulation of the state. The primary function of business associations in the country was to act as advisory and liaison bodies that concentrated on the content and implementation of the annual budget, import/export policy, and regulatory legislation aimed at the private sector. These associations concentrated on attempting to secure lower taxes, increased tariff protection, and reduced government regulation of the private sector. Individual business houses and their industrial embassies primarily focused on lobbying for individual benefits in the form of industrial licenses, monopoly control, and various special exemptions and concessions.

The emergence of three competing apex business associations and the beginning of a new era of liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and globalization have transformed the traditional relationship between business and government in India. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the newly created CII developed a very close relationship with the Congress governments of Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao and became the chief supporter of the government's attempt to liberalize the country's economic policies. As a result, the CII supplanted the FICCI as the country's most influential business association and came to exercise considerable influence over government policy.

The election of a BJP-led government in 1998, however, altered the political balance. The FICCI's traditional swadeshi orientation, its close relations with the BJP, and the organization's recovery from the disastrous

split of 1986 enabled the FICCI to recover its old influential status and develop a close working relationship with the new BJP-led government.

The CII, however, became an increasingly vocal critic of the policy and performance of the NDA government. The CII's frustration with BJP government's economic record burst into the open in July 2001 when Tarun Das, the organization's Director-General, issued a rare public attack on the NDA government's nonperformance. Das openly criticized government for being weak, failing to implement major infra-structure projects, and neglecting its commitment to privatization. Although projects were cleared by the government, he noted, "there is zero attention in government on implementation"; the "bureaucracy has lost interest and is demoralized"; and disinvestment had ground to a halt "because there are so many people who are resisting it."[47]

CII's criticism of the government's economic policies took on an intense political tone following the failure of the BJP government in Gujarat to prevent the Muslim pogrom in the state in February 2002. The Gujarat riots had a profound impact on the economic and political life of the entire country. The looting, curfews, destruc-tion of shops and factories, and the massacre of hundreds of Muslims, the CII charged, had devastated the state's economy, tarnished the global image of India, reduced the prospects for foreign investment, created a major political crisis, and brought a halt economic reforms.

Due to the political, social, and economic impact of the Gujarat riots, the CII insisted, the Indian business community was compelled to take a stand alongside the larger civil society on the issue of Gujarat. In a dramatic break with its longstanding apolitical tradition the CII scheduled a separate session to discuss the Gujarat pogrom at its annual meetings in April 2002. In addition, rather than inviting the BJP Prime Minister to inaugurate the session, the CII broke with tradition and invited Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the opposition Congress Party, to open the conference. Prime Minister Vajpayee, however, was asked to address the closing session of the conference. Sonia's invitation was interpreted by many as a signal that the CII expected a change of gov-ernment. The CII's unprecedented action attracted additional political attention when Sonia Gandhi herself underscored the significance of her invitation by declaring that "when the leader of the opposition is invited by the country's leading industrialists to start off their annual get together, it is natural to speculate. What could be the motive; what sort of political winds are blowing and in what direction?" She went

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[47] *The Business Standard* (Kolkata), July 6, 2001.

on to highlight the political significance of her presence even further by launching into a major attack on the NDA government and Narendra Modi, the BJP Chief Minister of Gujarat, for the negative effects that the Gujarat riots had had on the Indian economy, prospects for foreign investment, and the country's international image. She went on to declare that her party represented a credible political alternative to such a discredited government. Her blistering 40-minute speech was greeted by enthusiastic applause from the assembled business elite.[48]

The Vajpayee government was quite unhappy with the CII for allegedly politicizing the country's premier apex business association by inviting Sonia to address the opening session and for scheduling a special session to discuss events in Gujarat. Vajpayee's advisors hinted that the Prime Minister might cancel his appearance at the closing session, but the threat was withdrawn when Sanjiv Goenka, the outgoing President of the CII who enjoyed a close a relationship with Vajpayee and his advisors, intervened to placate the Prime Minister. In his address to the CII, however, Vajpayee openly expressed his displeasure at the organization by launching into a scathing attack on Sonia Gandhi and the CII. While he insisted that he had not intended to inject politics into his speech, Sonia Gandhi's remarks and the speeches of several CII leaders implying an impending change in government had left him little choice. Rejecting the notion that a change in government was in the offing, Vajpayee declared that the NDA government was stable would serve a full term. The business community, he warned, would have to continue to deal with him and his government[49] and destabilization of the government was good for neither government nor business. Talk of an impending change in government, he insisted, was groundless, and he warned Congress that "It does not make business sense to count one's chickens before they are hatched." He went on to attack those who saw some kind of hidden meaning in Sonia's presence: "If invitations to inaugurate and conclude conferences could make them speculate about an impending change in the direction of political winds," he asserted, "such people seem to think that chambers of commerce and industry have more powers to make and unmake governments than the people of India."[50]

[48]*The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), April 27, 2002; and *Financial Express* (New Delhi) April 27, 2002.

[49]*The Economic Times* (New Delhi), April 28, 2002.

[50]*The Financial Express* (New Delhi), April 28, 2002.

The CII's actions led to an open attack on the organization by BJP leaders who accused the CII of transforming itself into a political plat-form to attack the Prime Minister and warned of a possible boycott of future CII sponsored events. "The CII," charged a spokesman for the BJP, "is mainly for the interest of industry but certain members of CII have sought to give it a political color and we don't approve of it."[51] The CII, the spokesman went on to argue, allowed Sonia to attack the government of Gujarat, raised speculation about industry's perceptions of the NDA government, and engaged in BJP-bashing. It was wrong for the CII to allow its platform to be used for political purposes.

Despite these attacks, the CII initially refused to yield to BJP pres-sure. It called the party's charges of politicization baseless and arro-gantly declared that no government could ignore "India Inc."[52] The NDA, however, responded by distancing itself from CII sponsored events and began to cultivate a closer relationship FICCI.[53] Like Congress leaders of the past, the BJP was also determined to keep business out of politics. In an address to Assocham, L. K. Advani warned business that it must refrain from using its "financial clout to meddle in government policies and decisions, and to influence political processes." Such attempts, he noted, were good for neither business nor government.[54]

Stunned by the BJP government's reaction and Modi's victory in the December 2002 Gujarat state assembly elections, the CII moved quickly to try to rehabilitate itself in the eyes of BJP. In an effort to heal the breach, Tarun Das sent a personal letter of apology to Modi and appealed for a restoration of partnership between the CII and the government of Gujarat.[55] The apology, noted one editorial, represented a sorry episode and a clear demonstration that the Indian business community must still kowtow to politicians and govern-ment.[56] In a direct confrontation between business and government, it was India Inc. that was forced to yield. While CII's influence with the NDA declined sharply, the influence of the FICCI soared.

Under the reforms of 1991, the driving force for economic development shifted from the public sector to the private sector

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[51] *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), May 11, 2002.

[52] *Asian Age* (New Delhi), May 11, 2002.

[53] *The Tribune* (Ambala), December 12, 2002.

[54] *The Hindu* (Chennoi), September 29, 2002.

[55] *The Economic Times* (New Delhi), March 7, 2003.

[56] *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), March 8, 2003.

and from a statist-oriented command economy to a more market-oriented approach. This fundamental shift in development policy has altered substantially the traditional role of private-sector business and its associations in a variety of ways. First, the role of business associations in the policy process has shifted from an advisory and liaison role to a negotiating role. Both government and business are now forced to work together to develop policies that would improve the business climate, promote exports, and facilitate private-sector development. This has resulted in a more intense level of cooperation, consultation, and dialogue between business and government, and government decision makers have become much more receptive to business' advice. Second, in an effort to increase their revenue and retain member loyalty, business associations have moved to expand and improve the services it provided to its members. The result has been an expansion in the number of trade fairs; policy seminars; workshops; training programs to help increase productivity; initiatives to improve the environment; and policy studies on how to improve public education, health care, rural development, and poverty alleviation. Third, business associations have focused special attention on policy reforms that would improve the business climate for both domestic and foreign capital. These include reform of antiquated labor laws; improving and expanding infrastructure; attracting foreign capital; and ending what business calls the "inspector Raj," which involves the simplification of government regulation of the private sector. Fourth, business associations have attempted to influence civil society and the media in an effort to enhance their image and build support for policy reforms. This has resulted in the development of a social agenda that includes education reform, population polices, agricultural and rural development, and the environment. Fifth, business has made an effort to improve corporate governance, promote business ethics, and enhance the social responsibility of the business community. The attempt by the Indian business community to play a larger public role, however, clearly remains limited as illustrated by the government's response to CII's efforts to highlight the Gujarat riots of 2002 and its criticism of the Modi government.

Overall, the last decade has witnessed a significant psychological change in the role of business in India and in the public's perception of the role of the private sector in the economy. With the development of new industries and the emergence of a new generation of entrepreneurs, especially in the information technology, outsourcing, and business service sectors, the business profession has ceased to be

caste-based and is now seen as an arena of activity open to all sectors of society. Students are flocking to join MBA programs; entrepreneurs enjoy a higher level of trust, respect, and status; the public image of private sector business has become more positive; and the business community has increasingly been accepted as a legitimate player in the political process.

Despite the new, more positive business environment, the Indian business community continues to face a variety of major obstacles in its attempt to influence the governmental process. First, there continues to remain considerable resistance across the political spectrum to attempts to alter the traditional policies of the past. Key sectors of Indian society remain determined to protect their entrenched benefits. India's small but organized working class is determined to block any attempt at reforming the country's highly protective labor laws. Both the extreme left and the extreme right remain ideologically opposed to foreign direct investment. The urban middle class and big farmers are determined to retain their government subsidies. Politicians refuse to support policies such as privatization, which would reduce their control over patronage, and the Indian bureaucracy is determined to block all reforms that would reduce its size, power, and postretirement job opportunities in the public sector. Even major sectors of the Indian business community oppose reforms that reduce tariff protection, allow the foreign investors to compete against Indian owned firms, or reduce benefits they enjoy due to selective access.

Resistance to policy reform is reinforced by the persistence of a regulatory mind set among bureaucrats. Reforms are hedged in by numerous conditions that reduce their impact, the bureaucracy refuses to reduce its discretionary powers, and administrators continue to manipulate rules and regulations in an effort to impede the implementation of reforms. Having agreed to allow foreign investment in the oil and natural gas industry, for example, the Indian bureaucracy suddenly introduced a variety of impediments. Economic ministries have repeatedly designed policy changes in such a way as to protect public-sector units under their control from competition, and they block reforms as part of turf wars between ministries. Thus, for example, the Oil and Gas Ministry has designed its oil exploration policies to favor the public-sector enterprises under its control and has inhibited private-sector investment in the exploration and production of oil. Furthermore, having agreed to allow private-sector oil companies to establish retail outlets, the ministry proceeded to issue a directive prohibiting petrol

pump owners from terminating their contracts with nationalized oil companies.[57] Ministries also block reforms in an effort to protect their turf or impose policy restrictions that would enhance their interests. Thus while the Commerce Ministry may press for tax concessions to expand exports, the Finance Ministry objects to the potential loss of revenue that such reforms would entail. Similarly, when the Oil and Gas Ministry granted permission to the Shell Oil Company to build a $600 million terminal in India to facilitate the import of liquefied natural gas (LNG), once the plant was complete the Shipping Ministry suddenly issued a directive declaring that only Indian flag vessels could be used to import LNG. This directive not only involved a post facto change in the contract but was further complicated by the fact that no Indian company even owned a vessel capable of transporting LNG.[58]

Although the shift in development strategy in 1991 has altered the psychological relationship between the private sector and government, persistent resistance from entrenched political, bureaucratic, and societal groups has slowed the process of reform. Liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and globalization in India have proceeded at a very slow, incremental pace that has stymied the reforms. While deregulation of the Indian economy has progressed, key elements of the reform package continue to face stiff resistance. Privatization has been very slow and limited; India's swadeshi fixation remains strong and has impeded the growth of foreign investment; protectionist sentiments remain very strong; government subsidies remain inviolate; and policy implementation continues to be a major bottleneck. In short, while the traditional Nehruvian socialist consensus has become almost completely eroded, Indian society and politics remain divided over an acceptable alternative. While the urban middle class has benefited a great deal from the reforms, the poor in India's rural areas have yet to share in the benefits. The result has been a political backlash that resulted in the defeat of the NDA and the election of the UPA. The UPA itself, however, is deeply split between a small core of reformers and the traditional political left in India, which continues to oppose key elements of the reform package, especially privatization, labor law reform, and foreign direct investment.

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[57]*Business India* (New Delhi), April 24, 2005, p. 1.

[58]Ibid. p. 45.

Despite over half a century of independence, India continues to present a mixed picture of political, economic, and social development. The past sixty years of development and economic growth have raised living standards, created a growing middle class, improved the quality of life and the country has been free of major famines. Overall, the people of India are better off today than during the decades that preceded independence in 1947.

At the same time, India also finds itself under increasing internal and external stress. Because of the region's ancient history and diverse traditions, religious, ethnic, linguistic, and tribal groups overlap modern territorial boundaries and have come to complicate the task of nation building and regional interstate relations. The population of the region remains largely rural, religiously, linguistically, and ethnically diverse and is among the poorest, most illiterate, most malnourished in the world. In addition, the region has experienced increased ethnic, caste, and sectarian violence; the rise of religious extremism; uneven economic growth; political instability; and increased regional insecurity.

The development of India over the next decade will depend on several factors. These factors include: the rate of economic growth; the pace of economic reforms; the ability to forge a new national consensus on identity; the effective management of internal conflict; improved governance; and regional peace, stability, and cooperation.

Economists have developed three possible growth trajectories for India in the coming decade. Some analysts see India poised for a new era of accelerated economic growth that will transform the country into a global power and make the twenty-first century the century of India. Most observers, however, do not share this optimistic scenario. They see the region hobbled by the slow pace of economic reform, political instability, and poor governance. Baring a major war or other catastrophic event that would lead to a second scenario of negative growth, they see these stresses and strains dominating the region in the coming decade and resulting in a third trajectory that would produce a moderate pace of economic growth and social transformation roughly similar to the past decades.

In short, the greatest challenges to India in the coming decade are the need for more effective governance, accelerated economic growth, the containment of Hindu nationalism and Muslim fundamentalism, and a continuation of peace and stability in the region. Unless India can meet these challenges successfully, the twenty-first century is unlikely to be "the Indian century."

RECOMMENDED READING

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Byres, Terence J., ed., *The Indian Economy: Major Debates Since Independence*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998. An excellent review of the major debates that have shaped India's economic policies since independence.

*Dreze, Jean, and Amartya Sen, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996. A study by two leading Indian economists that assesses the country's failure to eliminate basic deprivation and outlines the need for basic social change.

Frankel, Francine R., *India's Political Economy, 1947–2004: The Gradual Revolution*, 2nd ed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005. A major work analyzing the contradiction between the practice of accommodative politics and the commitment to social change.

Jalan, Bimal, *The Future of India: Politics, Economics and Governance*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2005. A superb analysis of how politics, economics, and governance have contributed to India's mixed record of development and prospects for the future by a former governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

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Mongia, J. N., ed., *India's Economic Policies, 1947–1977*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1980. A collection of papers outlining the development of

Indian policies in almost every government field and covering their development over the first 30 years of independence.

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Park, Jong-soo, Duk-ahm Kong, and Han-sang Lee, *Economic Liberalization and Indian Economy*. Center for Area Studies GSNU , 2003. A review of the India's policy of economic liberation.

Piramal, Gita, *Business Maharajas*. Viking-Penguin India, 1996. A very interesting sketch of eight of India's most powerful industrial tycoons.

Rao, C. H. Hanumantha, *Agriculture, Food Security, Poverty, and Environment: Essays on Post-reform India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005. An analysis of the impact of economic reforms on the agricultural sector, poverty, and food security in India.

*Sachs, Jeffrey D., Ashutosh Varshney, and Nirupam Bajpai, eds., *India in the Era of Economic Reforms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. A collection of essays designed to assess the impact of India's post–1991 economic reforms on public finances, agriculture, labor markets, exports, and center–state relations.

*Available in paperback edition.

10

Policy and Performance: National Security and Foreign Policy

INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Indian foreign policy has been driven by a relentless search for major power status.[1] In the past, India's ability to achieve this goal was hampered by conflict in its immediate neighborhood, the slow pace of the country's economic growth and development, massive levels of poverty, sectarian tension, and political instability. In the late 1990s, however, India's new nuclear status, the acceleration of the country's economic growth, and the end of the Cold War have enabled India to pursue its global ambitions with greater vigor. Although the gap between ambition, capacity, and rhetoric has begun to close, major problems at home and within the region continue to thwart India's global aspirations.

The basic goals and objectives of Indian foreign policy were first laid down by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India. In a speech at Columbia University in 1949, Nehru succinctly stated the goals of Indian foreign policy:

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[1]See Baldev Raj Nayar and T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

> India is a very old country with a great past. But it is a new
> country also with new urges and desires. . . . Inevitably she had
> to consider her foreign policy in terms of enlightened self-
> interest, but at the same time she brought to it a touch of her
> idealism. Thus she has tried to combine idealism with national
> interest. The main objectives of that policy are: the pursuit of
> peace, not through alignment with any major power or group
> of powers, but through an independent approach to each
> controversial or disputed issue; the liberation of subject peoples;
> the maintenance of freedom both national and individual; the
> elimination of want, disease, and ignorance, which afflict the
> greater part of the world's population.[2]

Nehru not only set forth India's basic foreign policy goals but also suc-
ceeded in building a remarkable domestic political consensus in sup-
port of these goals. As a result, these goals endured over the years
despite changes in Congress leadership, political instability, and
changes in government. This consensus embodied three basic objec-
tives. First, India seeks independence, self-reliance, and to retain policy
autonomy independent of others. During the Cold War this goal took
the form of nonalignment. Nonalignment was pursued as a tightrope
act of attempting to balance its close relationship of friendship and
cooperation with the Soviet Union and its desire to maintain friendly
relations with the United States and the West. In the late 1970s, having
become heavily dependent on Moscow for arms, India sought to
diversify its arms suppliers and attempted to secure increased access
to advanced Western military technologies. In economic develop-
ment, India sought to secure its independence by balancing its
dependence on the West for aid and loans with Soviet credits and tech-
nical assistance. In trade, India developed a barter arrangement with
the Soviet Union, even as it sought to expand exports to the rest of
the world to meet rising import costs. Although Russia reemerged
as India's most important military arms supplier following the collapse
of the Soviet Union in 1991, India has continued to attempt to main-
tain a global "balance" in its relationship with major powers. While
India's traditional policy of nonalignment has ended, the doctrine itself
remains a centerpiece of Indian policy in a modified form as the coun-
try continues its effort to retain its autonomy and independence. India
has adjusted its quest for self-reliance and enhanced security in the

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[2]Quoted in William J. Barnds, *India, Pakistan and the Great Powers* (New York: Praeger,
1972), pp. 47–48.

context of an increasingly competitive, international market economy and a global environment in which superpower rivalry has been displaced by the undisputed military power of the United States. Its own regional security environment has also been fundamentally affected by the end of the Cold War and by the rising power of China—factors essential in India's decision to cross the nuclear weapons threshold.

Second, India seeks to guarantee its national security against invasion from without and subversion from within, against external support for secessionist and insurgent movements, and against foreign interference in its internal affairs. Indian security is fundamentally regional in its scope of concern. For India, successor state to the Raj, the whole of South Asia constitutes a strategic entity and, therefore, also constitutes the proper perimeters of its defense concerns. As a nation of over one billion people, with the third largest standing army in the world, India is the preeminent power of the subcontinent. Viewed by its neighbors as having hegemonic ambitions, India seeks recognition of its status in the region it regards as its natural and rightful sphere of influence. India has opposed external intervention and great power presence in the region both as a threat to regional security and as a challenge to its own preeminent position.

Third, India's search for great-power status and its desire to be regarded as China's equal in world affairs continue to dominate its foreign policy. With its vast population and military strength, India seeks inclusion as a permanent member of an expanded United Nations Security Council, and in international economic forums it wants both to be heard and to be taken seriously. Until recently, India's low gross national product per capita, slow rate of economic growth, and less than 1 percent of total international trade meant that India played only a marginal role in the world economy. In the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War, moreover, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the virtual eclipse of the Non-Aligned Movement further diminished India's international role, save in the South Asia arena where it seeks to establish its dominance. During the last decade, however, India's entry into the global nuclear club, its accelerated rate of economic growth, and its expanding relations with the United States have led many Indians to declare the twenty-first century to be the "Indian Century." Domestic concerns and regional instability, however, continue to impose constraints on India's role in the world. As Australian strategic analyst Sandy Gordon observes, "An India that continues to be tied down by its domestic difficulties and the problems of its South Asian

neighborhood is unlikely to emerge quickly as an important actor on the wider international stage."[3]

Foreign Policy Decision Making

Foreign policy decision making in India tends to be highly centralized, informal, elitist, ad hoc, and reactive.[4] The country's approach to national security and strategic issues is burdened by a lack of coordination, poor planning, and "a tendency to hedge and vacillate,"[5] a process that one critic characterized as "The India That Can't Say Yes."[6]

The policy process in the post-Nehru era involves no grand design or long-range strategy,[7] but instead engages a framework for tactical maneuver. The process varies with the character of the decision and with the Prime Minister's interest in the issue. Indian organization for the conduct of foreign policy is very poor. The country has a small, elitist, and highly bureaucratic foreign service composed of 750 officers, and most routine decisions are made by these officers within the hierarchy of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)—known as "South Block" for the buildings of the Secretariat in New Delhi that it occupies. Major decisions on policy are made by the Foreign Minister, or the Prime Minister and a small coterie of personal advisors. Often the Prime Minister also holds the External Affairs portfolio. Nehru, for example, served not only as his own Foreign Minister but also as a one-man think tank. The most active foreign policy-oriented prime ministers since independence have been, Nehru, Narasimha Rao, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The national security and foreign policy process in India is much more informal than any "flowchart" would suggest. For the most important decisions, formal institutions give way to consultation within

[3]Sandy Gordon. *India's Rise to Power in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 12.

[4]For an analysis of foreign policy decision making in India, see Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., *India under Pressure: Prospects for Political Stability* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 133–42; J. Bandyopadhyaya, *The Making of India's Foreign Policy,* 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Allied, 1980); and Krishnan D. Mathur and P. M. Kamath, *Conduct of India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1996).

[5]Gordon, pp. 7–9.

[6]Stephen Philip Cohen, *India Emerging Power* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), pp. 66–91.

[7]George K. Tanham argues that India lacks a tradition of strategic thinking. See *Securing India: Strategic Thought and Practice* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996).

a small coterie of advisers and political confidants. Prime Minister Vajpayee, for example, brought only a handful of people into the decision to conduct nuclear tests in May 1998. Although its role has varied under different governments, an increasingly important venue for decision making is the Prime Minister's Secretariat and the Prime Minister's National Security Advisor, a position that has at times been held by the director of the Research and Analysis Wing—India's C.I.A.

The making of Indian foreign policy is also hampered by a lack of coordination among the various ministries concerned with India's international relations—notably External Affairs, Defense, Commerce, and Finance. Frequently ministries other than MEA make important decisions on sensitive issues affecting the conduct of Indian foreign policy without consulting External Affairs. The problem is most critical in the lack of strategic policy coordination between MEA and the Ministry of Defense. Each guards its sphere of authority—diplomatic and military respectively.

As in the case of so many countries, including the United States, long-range planning in India falls victim to the immediate demands of day-to-day decisions, to the "ad hocism" that characterizes the policy process. Justified in terms of making each decision "on merit," the approach is a response to the demands—and the expediencies—of the moment. But for all the ad hocism in Indian foreign policy, decisions are made within the context of a broad national consensus on national interests and policy goals—a consensus shaped by Nehru and adapted over time, albeit fitfully, to changing circumstances.

Until the end of the Cold War, there existed a broad national consensus on the country's foreign policy, and foreign policy issues seldom became a central issue in election campaigns. While the press devoted considerable attention to foreign policy issues, it was fundamentally supportive of government policy. But even today the government is limited in the exercise of authority in foreign relations. Public opinion, as expressed in the press and voiced in Parliament, can exert influence and impose restraint, but it is less a source of influence in creating foreign policy than it is a limit on the decision makers' range of options. The major constraints on Indian foreign policy are imposed by the consensus itself. In giving continuity to Indian foreign policy, the consensus minimizes initiative and reinforces the essentially reactive character of Indian policy. Within that consensus, however, the Prime Minister has considerable freedom, but any break from "policy as usual" is likely to meet resistance from within the government and from the public. Thus Vajpayee, in his decision to cross the nuclear threshold—a stunning departure from India's long-held policy of

retaining, but not exercising, the nuclear weapons option—sought to frame the tests in terms that emphasized continuity and congruence with fundamental principles of Indian foreign policy. Against a back-drop of enthusiastic popular support for the tests, politicians and pun-dits across the political spectrum, with few dissents, rallied to the prospect of India as a nuclear weapons power. The unease of critics of this major policy shift may yet rise to the level of a national debate, but at least in the short run, India's decision to "go nuclear" has been absorbed into the "consensus" that dominates the nation's foreign policy.

The weakness of India's foreign policy decision-making process has been paralleled by a failure to develop an institutional mechanism for dealing with problems of national security. In the early years following independence, Nehru's dominance of foreign policy and his distrust of the military concentrated power in the hands of the Prime Minister and civilian bureaucracy. Even in the wake of the security failures sur-rounding India's China debacle in the early 1960s, the country failed to reevaluate its national security decision-making process. Attempts by V. P. Singh and Narasimha Rao in the late 1980s and early 1990s to remedy the problem by creating a National Security Council were thwarted by the country's entrenched foreign policy bureaucracy.[8]

The election of a Hindu nationalist government in 1998, however, altered the national security landscape in a variety of ways. The BJP-led coalition conducted a surprise set of nuclear tests in May 1998, declared India a nuclear weapons state, and on November 19, 1998, fulfilled its electoral pledge to create of a National Security Council. The structure of India's new National Security Council (NSC) was based on the rec-ommendations of a government appointed task force. The national security system created by the BJP consisted of three tiers, a National Security Council, the Strategic Policy Group, and a National Security Advisory Board. The National Security Council was headed by the Prime Minister and included the Home Minister, Defense Minister, External Affairs Minister, Finance Minister, and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. Other ministers would be invited to attend when required. The Principle Secretary to the Prime Minister was to serve as the National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, and the Council was assisted by a Secretariat composed of a revamped Joint Intelligence Committee. The National Policy Group was designed to provide inter-ministerial coordination for the NSC and was composed

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[8]Dr. Subash Kapila, "India's National Security Council—A Critical Review," *South Asia Analysis Group Papers*, May 10, 2000. http://www.saag.org/papers2/paper123.html.

of the Cabinet Secretary, the three service chiefs, the Foreign Secretary, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, and secretaries drawn form almost all major ministries. The National Security Advisory Board was made up of outside experts and was to focus on long-term assessment and analysis.[9] Despite the creation of the new national security system, indications are that not much has really changed. Decision making continues to be concentrated in the hand of the Prime Minister and a small group of close personal advisor.

INDIAN FOREIGN RELATIONS: NONALIGNMENT AND BEYOND[10]

Indian foreign policy is rooted in two traditions. One is British India, with a concern for the territorial integrity and security of South Asia, especially on the Himalayan frontiers. The other is the Indian National Congress that evolved from the 1920s almost wholly under the direction of Nehru and focused on the problems of world peace, anticolonialism, and antiracism. Although India did not gain independence until 1947, it was an international actor, albeit under British direction, as a charter member of the League of Nations and the United Nations. Nehru had long made pronouncements on international politics in the name of the Congress, and upon becoming Prime Minister he retained for himself the portfolio of foreign affairs.

Among the first problems confronting the new government was its relationship with Great Britain. Nehru overcame strong opposition from those who sought a complete break, and India retained Commonwealth status as a republic by a formula wherein the Crown became the "symbol of free association" among the independent member nations. The Commonwealth tie, along with an active role in the United Nations, provided India with an opportunity to pursue its struggle against colonialism, especially in Africa, and with the end of imperialism, allowed India to assert its claim for the leadership of newly independent nations.

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[9]India News Online, *India News,* http://www.indianembassy.org/inews/December98/9.htm.

[10]On the history of Indian foreign relations in the Nehru era, see Charles H. Heimsath and Surjit Mansingh, *A Diplomatic History of Modern India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1971). The Indira Gandhi years are examined, with very different views, in Surjit Mansingh, *India's Search for Power: Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy, 1966–1982* (New Delhi: Sage, 1984), and Shashi Tharoor, *Reasons of State: Political Development and India's Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi, 1966–1977* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1982).

Central to Nehru's foreign policy was the concept of nonalignment. Neither a policy of neutrality nor of isolation, nonalignment by no means precluded an activist stance in the Indian self-interest. In the Indian view, nonalignment is a pragmatic policy of independent action. It is simply a refusal to make any advance commitments, political or military, to any nation or bloc. "Idealism," as a component in Indian foreign policy, was always mediated by realism in the pursuit of India's national interest. Indeed, India's foreign policy was probably guided no more, or no less, by idealism than that of the United States. In its policy of nonalignment, India was guided fundamentally by pragmatism and prudence.[11]

From the time of Indian independence through the 1950s, India assumed a role of leadership in the Afro-Asian world. Special effort was given to ties with Islamic states, for India sought to prevent Muslim unity in support of Pakistan. In the United Nations, India was always ready to defend the interests of national liberation from the vestiges of imperialism throughout the world. India sought to exert a moral force for peace and to that end has participated in numerous United Nations peace-keeping operations, most recently in Haiti and Angola. India's stance, however, often carried a moralizing tone, and when acting in pursuit of its own interests (as in the 1961 invasion of Goa after long efforts to dislodge the Portuguese from their enclaves in India), India was regarded in the West as inconsistent, if not hypocritical.

India was among the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement, and from its first conference in 1961, India assumed a position of leadership in what was projected as the voice for the newly independent states in a world divided by military blocs. For all India's efforts on behalf of the Third World nations, only a few countries offered even verbal support to India in its 1962 confrontation with China. India's military weakness had been exposed, and in military defeat it suffered a decline in international prestige. Nehru's foreign policy had been based "on global influence without military power."[12] That policy was shattered in 1962. India's position of influence was also affected by the increase in the number of new nonaligned nations and the conflicts among them. Yet India's attachment to the

[11]Ramesh Thakur, *The Politics and Economics of India's Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

[12]Wayne Wilcox, "Nuclear Weapon Options and the Strategic Environment in South Asia: Arms Control Implications for India," *Southern California Arms Control and Foreign Policy Seminar*, 1972, p. 9.

Non-Alignment Movement remained long after the movement lost coherence and ceased to speak with any moral authority.

The bankruptcy of the Non-Aligned Movement was never more evident than in its inability to respond to the Gulf crisis in 1990–91. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait presented India itself with a fundamental dilemma. The Middle East had long been of crucial importance for India as a source of oil, remittances from Indians employed in the Gulf states, and as a counterweight within the Islamic world to Pakistan—and India had forged a close relationship with secular Iraq. India's initial support for the United Nations response turned to an ambivalence that seemed more concerned about the buildup of U.S. forces in the area than about any actions taken by Iraq. As it struggled to come to terms with the crisis, India, still a captive of Cold War mentality and preoccupied with domestic concerns, found itself marginalized as an international actor and its foreign policy adrift.[13]

The Gulf War served as the catalyst for a reassessment of Indian foreign policy and recognition of the realities of the post–Cold War era. "The result," in the words of *India Today,* was "a startling shift in its traditional stance on a crucial range of issues."[14] In December 1991, India voted to repeal the United Nations resolution equating Zionism with racism that it originally supported as a stalwart of the Palestinian cause. In January 1992, it voted with the United States on a United Nations resolution condemning Libyan support for terrorism, and in February, India established diplomatic relations with Israel.

Nonalignment remains officially the foundation of India's foreign policy, but in the decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the notion of "nonalignment" became irrelevant, if not meaningless.[15] Moreover, in opening up to the global economy, India faced new international challenges, with the promotion of exports and attraction of foreign investment as major priorities. In response, India sought to broaden its economic and strategic ties, reaching out to strengthen relations with Europe, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

India's relationship with Britain is sustained by history and sentiment and by the presence of a substantial Indian immigrant population

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[13]See Thomas P. Thornton, "India Adrift: The Search for Moorings in a New World Order," *Asian Survey,* 32 (December 1992), pp. 1,063–77.

[14]"Foreign Policy: Groundbreaking Shift," *India Today,* 29 February 1992, p 20.

[15]On "The Diminishing Returns of Nonalignment," see Thakur, 14–32.

in the United Kingdom, but the salience of that relationship has diminished over time. By the 1980s, in both aid and trade, Europe—especially Germany and France—assumed increasing importance for India, as did the European Union in the 1990s, as economics came to play a major role in India's foreign policy.

The market reforms that India initiated in 1991 also stimulated Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to "Look East." By the mid-1980s, Japan had become India's largest aid donor, and relations deepened in the 1990s as Japan expanded aid as part of its policy of promoting Japanese business interests in India. Yet even as Japan became more important to India in aid, trade, and in investment potential, India still ranked low in Japanese priorities. Japanese investors were discouraged by India's political instability, by the slowdown in economic liberalization, and by the frustrations of remaining regulations and red tape. In response to India's May 1998 nuclear tests, Japan cut off economic aid and imposed sanctions.

For more than two decades, India has sought to broaden its relations with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Despite its proximity, Southeast Asia had not been a foreign policy priority for India until the region began to surge ahead economically. In the mid-1970s, India began to explore establishing a "dialogue" partnership with ASEAN and almost achieved this objective in 1980, but India's support in the 1980s for the Vietnamese-backed regime in Cambodia undermined its efforts to secure closer ties to ASEAN.[16] It was not until the 1990s that even limited "sectoral" dialogue status was extended to India, opening opportunities for closer economic and military ties between India and Southeast Asia. Over the decade, trade significantly expanded, and India was accepted as a "dialogue partner"—along with the United States and China, among others—in the ASEAN Regional Forum, which deals with security issues of the Asia-Pacific Indian Ocean region. However, India's efforts to gain membership in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum has failed, in part because of ongoing India-Pakistan enmity and the related apprehension on the part of APEC states that Indian membership could lead to a similar demand from Pakistan, thus turning APEC into another forum for India-Pakistan rivalry.

In an attempt to break out of the South Asian strait jacket in which India found itself, I. K. Gujral, as Foreign Minister and

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[16]See Mohammed Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia: Indian Perceptions and Policies* (London: Routledge, 1990).

later as Prime Minister in the United Front government of 1996–98, enunciated what came to be known as the Gujral Doctrine. Based on the premise that India will be unable to find its place in the world without peace and stability in South Asia, the Doctrine held that India should be willing to make concessions to its neighbors without demanding reciprocity. It achieved notable success in the Ganges Water Treaty with Bangladesh, but the promise of improved relations with Pakistan was unfulfilled. Problems with Pakistan deepened as the BJP-led government under Prime Minister Vajpayee took power in 1998.

Over the decade of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, even as India sought to recast its foreign policy for a post-Cold War world, the focus of its concerns remains within the region of South Asia and in relations with China, Russia, and the United States. Pakistan, its long-time adversary and the myopic lens through which India has tended to view other relationships, dominates Indian foreign relations as it has for more than 60 years.

Pakistan

India has fought three wars with Pakistan, two of which, in 1947–48 and in 1965, were over Kashmir, the disputed territory that remains the focus of conflict between the two nations and is potentially the flash point for another war—a potential that is all the more ominous as India and Pakistan today have nuclear weapons capabilities. Kashmir is both a source and symptom of the distrust that is a legacy of the 1947 partition. That distrust is reflected in borders that are effectively closed to the movement of people and trade and in accusations traded almost daily from New Delhi and Islamabad that the other foments social and political unrest and seeks to "destabilize" the country. The ongoing conflict of more than 60 years with Pakistan and the seemingly intractable Kashmir dispute have imposed high costs for India—in blood, treasure, and in international prestige and influence.

At the time of the transfer of power and the partition of India in 1947, the population of Jammu and Kashmir was about three-quarters Muslim, but the Maharajah, a Hindu, resisted the pressure to accede to either Pakistan or India. Pakistan sought to force the issue, first imposing an economic boycott against the state and then supporting Pakistani tribes in an invasion of Kashmir. The Maharajah's appeal to India for protection was accepted on the condition of Kashmir's accession, with the promise to consult the wishes of the Kashmiri people once

law and order had been restored.[17] Nehru reaffirmed this "pledge to the people of Kashmir" and agreed to Kashmiri self-determination through an internationally supervised plebiscite. It was by no means a foregone conclusion that the plebiscite would favor Pakistan, for Kashmir's most popular leader, Sheikh Abdullah of the National Conference, was strongly committed to a secular state and to accession to India. Making the conditions for such a plebiscite mutually acceptable to both India and Pakistan was another matter. Most important for India was a complete withdrawal of Pakistani forces from Kashmir.[18]

In 1949 India and Pakistan accepted the United Nations cease-fire line, with one-third of the state under the control of the Pakistani Azad Kashmir government. There followed years of continuous negotiation under the auspices of the United Nations, but with time Nehru, himself a Kashmiri Brahmin, increasingly came to regard Kashmir as the guarantee of India's secularism and as a denial of the "two-nation" theory upon which Pakistan was founded. The 1954 U.S.-Pakistan agreement brought another factor into the situation, as did Pakistan's strengthened hold on Azad Kashmir. Arguing that the circumstances in Kashmir had changed so completely that the original offer for a plebiscite was no longer valid, India accepted the Kashmiri constituent assembly's vote of accession as equivalent to a plebiscite. Kashmir's own constitution, adopted in 1956, specified that the "State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India." Article 370 of the Indian Constitution had recognized special status and a high degree of autonomy for Kashmir within the Indian Union, but over the years that unique position has largely been eroded, and Kashmir's position within the Indian union, always a matter of controversy, is again under review.[19]

[17]See Prem Shankar Jha, *Kashmir 1947: Rival Versions of History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), and the review symposium, "Kashmir 1947: Burdens of the Past, Options for the Future—Four Perspectives," in *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 36 (March 1998), pp. 92–123.

[18]For an analysis of the first Kashmir war and subsequent 1965 and 1971 wars, see Sumit Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia: Indo-Pakistani Conflict Since 1947*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1994).

[19]On Kashmir as an issue of Indian federalism, see Chapter 4, pp. 181–87. A vast literature is available on the Kashmir dispute. See notably Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Robert G. Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Ajit Bhattacharjea, *Kashmir: The Wounded Valley* (New Delhi: UBSPD, 1994); and Raju G. C. Thomas, ed., *Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

In 1965 India and Pakistan again went to war over Kashmir. Pakistan President Ayub Khan, with a decade of American military assistance behind him, embarked on a policy of "leaning on India." Following an increase in tension along the cease-fire line in Kashmir and an armed clash in the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat over disputed boundaries that emboldened Pakistan, in August Ayub sent guerrillas into Kashmir in hopes of triggering internal rebellion against Indian rule. The uprising did not occur, but as Pakistani armored units moved into Jammu, India launched an attack across the Punjab plain toward Lahore. In a reversal of their success in the Rann of Kutch, Pakistani tanks took a heavy beating. The United States and Great Britain, chagrined at the use of arms supplied by them to India and Pakistan, cut off further arms shipments to the two countries. China, on the other hand, sided with Pakistan and denounced India's "criminal aggression" with threatening ultimatums. The United Nations Security Council, with the support of the United States, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R., called for an immediate cease-fire, which India and Pakistan accepted in September. Soviet Premier Kosygin, seeking to strengthen ties with Pakistan, check Chinese influence, and at the same time maintain traditionally close ties with India, extended the good offices of the Soviet Union to negotiate a settlement. Ayub and Shastri proceeded to Tashkent in January 1966. The agreement, rather than solving the basic problems, represented a return to the status quo before the war. Given India's success in the war, the agreement to withdraw forces was not well received by many in the Congress Party or the opposition. "Yet Shastri's untimely death at Tashkent made it certain that India would not repudiate his last official act."[20]

Indian performance in the 1965 war served to renew the confidence of the Army and to restore it to the prestige that had been lost in the 1962 Chinese conflict. Indian anxieties were heightened, however, by the supply of military aid to Pakistan by China. Within Pakistan, political unrest had measurably increased. In 1969, under pressure to resign, President Ayub Khan stepped down in favor of General Yahya Khan, who pledged to restore democratic institutions. The two wings of Pakistan, created out of the Muslim majority areas within the subcontinent, were united by religion but divided by almost every other cultural factor and a thousand miles of Indian territory. West Pakistan from the time of

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[20]Barnds, p. 212.

independence held sway over the Bengali East. When the December 1970 elections yielded a victory for East Pakistan's Awami League, led by Sheikh Mujibur ("Mujib") Rahman, West Pakistan's leaders refused to accept the results. After talks between President Yahya and Mujib broke down, on March 25, 1971, Mujib was arrested, and in a wave of terror, the heel of the Pakistani army came down on the people of East Bengal.

During the nine months of repression that followed, thousands of Bengalis were killed,[21] and some 10 million refugees, most of whom were Hindu, crossed the borders into India. The refugee movement created a situation that was economically, socially, and politically unacceptable for India. India, however, was even more concerned about "the potentially destabilizing influence of the conflict in East Pakistan on strife-ridden West Bengal, as well as the tribal hill states and Assam in northeastern India."[22]

Supplies already "in the pipeline" from the United States continued to flow into Pakistan, and while the U.S. government counseled Indian restraint, the Nixon Administration pursued a policy of "tilt toward Pakistan." Pakistan also found support not only from the Middle East but from much of Asia and Africa as well—new nations, most of which had their own potential Bangladesh.

In August 1971 India and the Soviet Union signed a 20-year treaty of friendship and cooperation. Not a mutual security treaty but an agreement for consultation, it served to formalize the relations already existing between the two nations and involved specific commitments from neither. While the U.S.S.R. had condemned Pakistan's actions in Bangladesh, it sought a political settlement of the problem without war. The treaty was intended as a deterrent to Pakistan and China, but it also brought India into greater dependency on the Soviet Union. India, however, undoubtedly felt bolstered by the treaty, particularly in terms of deterring China's possible entry into the conflict.

India provided aid, training, and sanctuary to the Bengali resistance forces, and as the crisis deepened, in a series of escalating moves, Pakistan, then India, ordered full mobilization of forces. On December 3, after Indian incursions across the border in the east, Pakistan launched a series of air strikes from the west against Indian air bases. That night,

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[21]Figures vary widely, from tens of thousands to Mujib's claims that 35 million Bengalis were killed.

[22]Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 206. Of the many books on the Bangladesh crisis, this is surely the best analysis.

India moved on all fronts against Pakistan. On December 6, India formally recognized the government of Bangladesh, and in a blitzkrieg operation the Indian army moved toward Dhaka. On December 16, Indian troops entered the city and accepted Pakistan's surrender. In disgrace, Yahya was forced to resign, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, leader of the Pakistan People's Party, became president of the dismembered nation.

By early autumn it probably had been clear to India that the liberation of Bangladesh was inevitable. The Bengali guerrilla forces had been growing, but on their own it would have been a protracted war with enormous loss of life. For India to sit on the sidelines could have proven politically costly. India had a vital interest in the character and stability of the future government of Bangladesh and from the beginning had supported Mujib. For India, the danger of political unrest in West Bengal and the Northeast was of fundamental concern, but most immediate was the question of the refugees. If Bangladesh had been liberated without Indian intervention, it is highly improbable that 10 million largely Hindu refugees would have been welcomed back to the East. Only by direct military involvement could India ensure the return of the refugees to East Bengal. Immediately upon Pakistan's defeat, the refugee return began, and by March 16, 1972, three months after the liberation of Bangladesh, the Indian Army was able to complete its final withdrawal. It was yet another month before the United States recognized the new nation of Bangladesh—the last major country to do so, save for China and Pakistan itself.

India was now the undisputed power on the subcontinent. A euphoric atmosphere permeated newspaper headlines proclaiming the liberation as the greatest day since Indian independence. Pakistan had been cut down to size, both figuratively and in real terms. The Simla Agreement, signed July 2, 1972, by Indira Gandhi and Bhutto, confirmed the new line of control in Kashmir and sought to provide the basis for a "durable peace" between the two countries. Both sides agreed to accept the principle that Indo–Pakistani problems would be settled through bilateral negotiations, without outside intervention and without recourse to force. The Simla Agreement remains the basis for official relations between India and Pakistan, though with subtle differences of interpretation.[23]

In 1976 India and Pakistan renewed full diplomatic relations. The improvement in Indo-Pakistani relations survived the 1977

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[23]Mansingh, *India's Search for Power*, pp. 226–30.

military coup overthrowing Bhutto and his execution nearly two years later. In the formation of the Janata government in March 1977, there was anxiety in Pakistan over the appointment of Jana Sangh leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Minister of External Affairs. (Vajpayee, as leader of the BJP, successor to the Jana Sangh, later became Prime Minister of India in 1998.) The Jana Sangh had long taken a vehemently anti-Pakistan stance and had pushed for Indian nuclear capability, but Vajpayee moved quickly to rest any fears of a breakdown in relations.

During the Janata period Indo-Pakistani relations improved markedly, but in December 1979, on the eve of Mrs. Gandhi's return to power, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan fundamentally changed the strategic environment of South Asia. Even before taking office as Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi took command of Indian foreign policy. At her direction, India abstained on the United Nations resolution calling for "the immediate withdrawal of the foreign troops from Afghanistan." In India's view, isolating the Soviet Union by condemning it would only strengthen Soviet resolve and make a political solution to the crisis more difficult. India wanted a Soviet withdrawal, but it also feared that an Islamist government, supported by Pakistan, could come to power in Kabul.

India's fundamental concern was to keep both the Soviet Union and the United States out of South Asia. India maintained that the Soviet action in Afghanistan was not the source but the consequence of deepening superpower rivalry in the region. Its reaction to the Afghan crisis was shaped by a regional perspective and by the fear that South Asia would become an arena of great-power confrontation and international conflict. In this context, India viewed American military support for Pakistan as destabilizing. With the American commitment of 3.2 billion dollars in arms and economic aid to Pakistan and with the agreement to supply the sophisticated F-16 fighter to the Pakistani air force, India became increasingly alarmed, both at the level of U.S. involvement in the region and at what it viewed as the danger of an emboldened Pakistan attacking India in yet another adventure to seize Kashmir.

In 1984 a new element of Indian concern brought a rapid deterioration in Indo-Pakistani relations. Indira Gandhi, and later Rajiv, together with a number of Indian officials, accused Pakistan of providing sanctuary, training, and assistance for Sikh extremists in the Punjab. Against a backdrop of rising tension between India and Pakistan, in late 1986, India began military exercises—Operation Brasstacks—along the Pakistan border. It was an exercise of "unprecedented

magnitude" designed to test the military's operational readiness, and Pakistan responded in alarm with parallel exercises, massing troops at the border in combat-ready formation. The crisis was defused diplomatically, but Brasstacks underscored the dangers of mutual suspicion and misperceptions by bringing the two countries to the brink of war.[24]

Armed conflict between India and Pakistan is almost a daily occurrence somewhere along the Kashmir line of control, and at its northern reaches, on the Siachen Glacier, they have engaged in a "miniwar" at altitudes above 17,000 feet. The 1972 Simla Agreement, in adjusting the line of control, did not delineate the border across the glacier, but indicated simply that it would run north. Beginning in 1984, India and Pakistan deployed troops on the glacier, each to prevent the other from securing claim to the icy waste. With periodic clashes over the years casualties have gone into the hundreds, though most result from terrain, altitude, and weather.

The Siachen conflict was eclipsed by heightened tension over Kashmir itself. Tensions over Kashmir began to escalate in 1989 due to the start of a separatist uprising in the state sparked by charges of election rigging, central interference in Kashmiri affairs, and persistent Pakistani expressions of solidarity with those who would "liberate" Indian-held Kashmir. India accused Pakistan of providing clandestine support, training, and arms to Kashmiri separatists and warned Islamabad of reprisal. By the spring of 1990, with increasingly strident rhetoric on both sides of the border, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto declared that the Pakistani people were prepared to struggle for a thousand years to free Kashmir, and Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan called for jihad against India. Indian Prime Minister V. P. Singh called upon his compatriots to prepare for war and warned Pakistan that if it were to launch a "limited war," overt or covert, in Kashmir, "India's response would be total war" against Pakistan. Jolted by the imminence of war, leaders tempered their rhetoric, and the two countries pulled back from confrontation. The 1990 crisis was "defused," in part, by international involvement—a special American envoy sent to Pakistan and India, together with Soviet and Chinese efforts.

Prospects for improving India-Pakistan relations increased in the mid-1990s with the election of I. K. Gujral as leader of the United Front government in 1996. Gujral's good neighbor policy resulted

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[24]See Kanti P. Bajpai, P. R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen P. Cohen, and Sumit Ganguly, *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).

in the development of a framework for negotiations called "compact dialogue" that attempted to deal with the entire range of individual problems that divided the two countries including Kashmir as part of a bilateral process designed to ease tensions. The dialogue process, however, came to an end with the collapse of the United Front government, the election of a Hindu nationalist government, and the May 1998 Indian nuclear tests that were followed by a series of Pakistani nuclear tests. International concerns that heightened conflict in Kashmir could be a catalyst to war and the use of nuclear weapons led to urgent calls for the two nations to enter into talks to resolve their differences over Kashmir—or at least to pull back from military confrontation. At a minimum, the United States and others have urged India and Pakistan to seek some measure of trust through "confidence-building measures." These might include mutual security agreements, such as a nonaggression pact; a pledge not to deploy nuclear weapons, or a "no first use" commitment; or measures to reduce suspicion through greater transparency. Confidence-building measures provide both structures and processes for "mending fences" and for crisis prevention and management.[25]

In the aftermath of the 1998 nuclear tests, India and Pakistan entered a decade of uneasy relations marked by brief periods of engagement followed by extended periods of intense confrontation that threatened to escalate into nuclear war. The first high level meeting of the newly declared nuclear powers took place at the annual summit meeting of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held in Sri Lanka in July 1998. Prime Minister Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took the occasion to discuss the possibility of opening a regular dialogue on outstanding issues including Kashmir and nuclear weapons but were unable to agree on the terms of such talks. India rejected Pakistan's demand that new talks focus on Kashmir and called instead for a "composite dialogue" that would broadly include peace, security, trade, and other issues. The collapse of the talks was followed by an exchange of artillery fire across the line of control along the Kashmir border that led to heavy civilian and military casualties on both sides.

In February 1999 hopes for peace were renewed when Prime Minister Vajpayee and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met for a two-day

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[25]See Sumit Ganguly and Ted Greenwood eds., *Mending Fences: Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in South Asia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); and Michael Krepon and Amit Sevak, eds., *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building and Reconciliation in South Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

summit in Lahore, the first visit by an Indian leader to Pakistan in a decade. The summit led to what became known as the Lahore Declaration that provided an agreed-upon framework for the renewal of a "composite dialogue." Both sides pledged to reduce the risks of war through various confidence-building measures, to pursue closer economic relations, and to seek solutions to the disputes, including Kashmir, that have divided the two nations for more than half a century. Less than three months later, in April, India test-fired an intermediate-range missile, and three days later, Pakistan raised the ante by testing its own nuclear-capable missile. Even though each gave the other advance notice of this test, the arms race in South Asia had been raised another notch.

The euphoria of the Lahore summit was totally shattered in the spring of 1999 by the emergence of the Kargil crisis. From May to June 1999, India and Pakistan fought an undeclared war in the icy region of Kashmir's rugged Kargil district. The conflict erupted when insurgents and Pakistani troops crossed the line of control and occupied the mountain heights overlooking the town of Kargil and a major strategic highway. India responded in force and after a bitter fight was able to reclaim the area. The danger of a war between the two new nuclear states was averted by intense international pressure and American intervention. During a meeting at the White House, President Bill Clinton persuaded the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to agree to pull back to the line of control. In light of the February Lahore summit, India felt deceived by the Pakistani action and relations between the two states became increasingly hostile. This hostility increased further following the October 1999 military coup in Pakistan led by General Pervez Musharraf, the alleged military architect of the Kargil incursion. India embarked upon a major international diplomatic campaign to isolate the new Pakistani military ruler.

Following two years of confrontation and tension, Vajpayee initiated a renewed attempt to establish a diplomatic dialogue with Pakistan. In the fall of 2000 Vajpayee announced a cease-fire in Kashmir and invited General Musharraf to visit India. Despite extensive prior consultation, the Agra summit between the two leaders proved to be a total failure. The two sides were unable to reach any significant agreements, failed to issue any draft statement following the talks, and did not even hold the traditional end-of-summit news conference. The stalemate developed due to Musharraf's insistence on talking about resolving the Kashmir dispute while Vajpayee was determined to discuss an end to Pakisatni support for the Kashmiri insurgency. The failure of the summit was

compounded when Musharraf incensed his Indian hosts by holding a press conference to publicly outline the Pakistani position.

The collapse of the Agra summit was followed by 19 months of intense confrontation from December 2001 to July 2003 and a near freeze in diplomatic relations. The confrontation was triggered by a terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament complex in New Delhi on December 1, 2001, that killed 14 people. India accused Pakistani supported Kashmiri militants of conducting the attack and began a massive military mobilization along the Pakistani-Indian frontier. By May 2002 some one million heavily armed troops confronted each other along the border, and the two countries appeared to be on the brink of war. Under intense international pressure, the growing crisis between the two nuclear powers was gradually defused.

Following six months of back channel negotiations, a thaw in relations finally came in the spring of 2003 when Vajpayee called for another attempt to resolve the differences dividing the two countries. Secret talks had convinced India that Pakistan had made a serious effort to stop the infiltration of militant jihadis across the line of control (LOC) in Kashmir, and Pakistan became convinced that India was prepared to deal with the Kashmir issue as part of a renewed "composite dialogue."

Relations between India and Pakistan began to improve in December 2003 when both sides declared a cease fire along the LOC and in Siachen. These positive steps were followed by a meeting between Vajpayee and Musharraf at the SAARC summit in Islamabad in January 2004 that led to an agreement to restart the "composite dialogue." Although the resumption of talks were temporarily interrupted by the May 2004 Indian elections and the defeat of the Vajpayee government, negotiations were resumed by the new UPA government. By the end of 2005, two full rounds of talks had been completed as both India and Pakistan seemed determined to reach a modus operandi. India seems to have come to the realization that it cannot attain global recognition and great power status without a settlement with Pakistan, and Pakistan has apparently concluded that it must reduce tensions with India for the sake of its own development and survival.[26]

While bilateral relations have improved and both sides have declared the peace process to be "irreversible," the tangible results of the India–Pakistan "composite dialogue" have remained modest.

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[26]Dennis Kux, *India-Pakistan Negotiations: Is Past Still Prologue?* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006).

The two sides have agreed to confidence-building measures involving prior notification of missile tests, the creation of a crisis hot line, the reopening of consulates in Karachi and Mumbai, and increased rail and road travel. Détente has also encouraged more active "Track II" diplomacy leading to greater political, economic, and cultural exchange.

Despite the shift from confrontation to reconciliation, normalization, and negotiations, however, a deep sense of suspicion and mistrust continues to persist. Pakistan, for example, accused India, in conjunction with Israel, of planning a preemptive strike in May 1998 against its nuclear facilities. Although there was no evidence of any such plan, accusations of this sort—from both sides—are widely believed. Similarly, in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir that killed some 80,000 people, Pakistan eased restrictions along the LOC to facilitate assistance from India but rejected India's offer of helicopters flown by Indian pilots. In addition, India and Pakistan have long accused each other of fomenting unrest and supporting terrorism—India of Pakistan's support for Punjabi and Kashmiri separatists; Pakistan of India's involvement in ethnic and sectarian violence. Whether it is a communal outbreak in India or a riot in Pakistan, governments have been quick to identify a "foreign hand" as responsible. Pakistan, moreover, is convinced that India is bent on its destruction. Most Indians, however, at least those in positions that matter, recognize that a weak and unstable Pakistan, vulnerable to extremist Islamist takeover, would not be in Indian interests. India has no ambition to undo partition and absorb Pakistan, even though most Indians believe partition to have been a tragic mistake. But India does want a Pakistan that poses no threat to its territorial integrity or interests; it wants a compliant Pakistan that accepts India's preeminence in South Asia. Developments such as increased jihadi infiltration into Kashmir, domestic terrorist events in India, or a possible political upheaval in Pakistan, however, continue to make a permanent settlement difficult.

The world today looks at South Asia with heightened awareness and at the conflict between India and Pakistan, nuclear weapons states, with new concern. No external power, however, has sufficient leverage in South Asia to deter either India or Pakistan from a determined course of action. What has been critical through the course of the renewed conflict over Kashmir is that even as India and Pakistan exchange words and fire across the border, neither side wants war. Pakistan, facing a military force ratio with India of

3:1 and a cutoff in American military assistance,[27] would be crushed, and India, even with preponderant force, would bear a staggering economic burden in the conduct of war. Moreover, in "total war," each side could inflict terrible damage on the other, and with Pakistan's very survival at issue, the potential use of nuclear weapons dramatically raises the stakes. War between India and Pakistan is today unlikely, but misperception and miscalculation bring unacceptably high risks in a nuclear-charged atmosphere of mutual suspicion and unresolved grievances.

South Asia

India's relations with its South Asian neighbors have, with the exceptions of Bhutan and the Maldives, been marked by strain. Pakistan, with whom India has fought three wars, is its principal foreign adversary, but in relations with the other states of the region, India has pursued friendship with a sometimes heavy hand.

India's relations with Sri Lanka have focused largely on the persistent problem of the status of the 3.5 million Tamils who make up 18 percent of the island's population. In earlier years, the concern was for the "stateless" Indian Tamils who had immigrated to the island as plantation workers in the 19th century. In the 1980s, India's attention turned to the rising ethnic conflict between Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese community and the Sri Lankan Tamils, whose dominance in the northern part of the island dates back more than 1,000 years. In response to discrimination, in the late 1970s young Tamil radicals voiced the demand for a separate Tamil nation ("Eelam") to be formed in the north and east. By 1983, Sri Lanka was in ethnic turmoil, as Tamil guerrilla raids on police stations and military patrols were met, in retribution, by Sinhalese attacks on Tamils. The escalating violence in the years since has polarized the two communities in a civil war that has taken more than 60,000 lives.[28]

In the early 1980s, sensitive to reactions in Tamil Nadu to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, the Indian government gave sanctuary to the Tamil guerrillas—the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and

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[27]In October 1990, pursuant to the Pressler Amendment, the United States cut off economic and military aid to Pakistan when President Bush was unable to certify to Congress that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear explosive device.

[28]See especially S. J. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

rival organizations—and supported training camps from which the guerrillas operated across the narrow Palk Strait to Sri Lanka. After Indira Gandhi's death, Rajiv sought to mediate a settlement, but with an unresponsive LTTE, Sri Lanka moved toward a military solution. In 1987, as the Sri Lankan military pushed into the northern Jaffna Peninsula, India, fearing a political backlash in Tamil Nadu, air-dropped relief supplies to the besieged Tamils and threatened Sri Lanka with armed intervention. Through secret negotiations, Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene reached an agreement, and in July 1987 signed an accord that provided for the entry of an Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) and a series of concessions by Sri Lanka that tacitly recognized Indian preeminence. Sinhalese nationalists denounced the accord as a violation of Sri Lankan sovereignty. The Tamil Tigers were not a party to the accord, however, and the IPKF, with a buildup to more than 50,000 troops, soon found itself fighting the guerrillas. In 1989, the new Sri Lankan president, R. Premadasa, an opponent of the accord, ordered the removal of all Indian forces from Sri Lanka. The hold of the Tamil guerrillas had not been broken, and, in India's longest war, at least 1,100 Indian soldiers had been killed, with another 2,800 wounded. In the wake of a political and military debacle, the last Indian troops pulled out in March 1990. But India's ill-fated involvement in Sri Lanka took another casualty in 1991: During the course of the election campaign that might well have returned him to power as Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by Sri Lankan Tamil terrorists. Indo-Sri Lankan relations substantially improved after Sri Lankan elections in 1994 brought a new government to power under the leadership of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who has described the relationship as "never better."

India faces a major dilemma in its relations with Sri Lanka. India wants improved relations with Sri Lanka and has endorsed place talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. While India's relations with the LTTE have cooled considerably since the assassination of Rajiv, the future of Sri Lankan Tamils remains a major concern and continues to represent a potential source of friction in India–Sri Lanka relations.

India had long had good relations with the Maldives, a tiny republic of scattered islands off its southwest coast. In 1988, the president of the Maldives radioed New Delhi for help against a coup started by a disgruntled Maldivian businessman with a hired force of Sri Lankan Tamil militants. Within hours, India dispatched 1,600 paratroopers and a naval force to aid its neighbor, crushing the rebellion. Other

South Asian states viewed the operation with unease as India sought to establish itself as the guarantor of regional stability.[29]

India's relations with Nepal and Bhutan have involved matters of vital security concern. As had Great Britain, independent India has sought to maintain a buffer zone in the Himalayas against China. In 1950 India signed a treaty with Nepal, recognizing its "complete sovereignty." At the same time, however, India exerted enormous influence over the domestic affairs of Nepal. In an assertion of Nepali independence, the king sought to balance Indian influence by "regularizing" relations with China, and sought international recognition for Nepal as a "zone of peace"—a proposal that India viewed as an attempt by Nepal to opt out of India's security perimeter and to abrogate the special relationship with India under the 1950 treaty. In 1989, with particular concern over Nepal's secret acquisition of arms from China, India exerted its force by economic muscle. Facing renewal of the trade and transit treaties, India sought a renegotiated single treaty, and to pressure a recalcitrant Nepal, it imposed a blockade of all but two of the land transit routes between the two countries. The 15-month dispute imposed serious hardship on South Asia's poorest nation, but in 1990, with a new constitutional government in Kathmandu and a new government in New Delhi, agreement was reached to restore relations to that of the status quo before April 1, 1987, when the trade and transit treaties lapsed, and to consult each other in all matters relating to their common security.

Over the decade of the 1990s, despite Nepal's political instability, India and Nepal moved to improve relations with new agreements on trade and transit and, most significantly, for cooperation in the development of Nepal's rivers, as in the 1996 Mahakali River Treaty for the construction of a major dam for hydro power and irrigation. India, however, remains unresponsive to Nepal's efforts to replace the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with a new agreement on security. The Nepalese, however, are very uneasy with these treaties, the role of Indian capital in the country, and India's insistence on special status in Indo–Nepalese relations.

Relations between the two countries became strained in February 2005 when, following a decade of violence, political instability, corruption, and growing Maoist insurgency, King Gyanendra declared an emergency and once again supplanted Nepalese democracy by monarchical rule. Confronted by a choice between democracy and

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[29]Ibid., pp. 358–60.

stability, India responded by refusing to attend the SAARC summit scheduled for Dhaka on February 4 and 5, 2005, in an effort to pressure the King to restore democracy; withheld defense supplies; and rallied international support to oppose the takeover. India was spared from taking further actions when a popular uprising forced the King to back down.[30]

Bhutan, the most isolated of the Himalayan kingdoms, is an independent state and a member of the United Nations. The British had exercised suzerainty over Bhutan, but in giving Britain control over its foreign relations, Bhutan had secured freedom from British intervention in internal affairs. In 1949, by a new treaty, Bhutan agreed "to be guided" by Indian advice on foreign relations, but although India provides an annual subsidy, it has chosen not to interfere in the domestic affairs of Bhutan. India has remained neutral in Bhutan's conflict with Nepal over the status of the Nepali minority in Bhutan. More troublesome for India is use of Bhutanese territory as a sanctuary for cross-border raids by various insurgent groups from India's tribal Northeast.

Bangladesh, in its weakness, confronts India with potentially serious problems as a major source of political instability within the subcontinent. With more than 140 million people, Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated nations—and one of the poorest. A victim of both nature and inhumanity, Bangladesh has been ravaged by cyclones, war, floods, and corruption. Its economic situation is difficult, and its political life unstable. Although India had been midwife to the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, resentment against India was widespread, and after the 1975 military coup in Bangladesh, relations deteriorated, with periodic Bangladeshi accusations of Indian interference in its internal affairs and of Indian attempts to destabilize the nation. Major issues have involved the allocations of river waters between the two countries and, most serious, the illegal movement of people across the border from Bangladesh into India. The salience of these issues have varied over time, and by the late 1990s, improved relations brought a breakthrough on the sharing of waters even as the migration issue remained potentially disruptive.

The water issue focused on the Farakka barrage, a low dam that flushes out the heavily silted port of Calcutta by diverting a portion of Ganges water from its course into East Bengal. Tensions in the ongoing dispute were eased for several years with an interim

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[30]"Democracy Derailed," *Seminar*, 548 (April 2005).

agreement in 1977, but by the early 1990s, the allocation of water had again become a matter of discord. In December 1996, with India's agreement to increase Bangladesh's share of the Ganges water, the prime ministers of India and Bangladesh signed a 30-year treaty that was hailed in both countries as a triumph of the "Gujral Doctrine" that India, in its strength, be generous in dealing with its weaker neighbors. Foreign Minister I. K. Gujral, who had negotiated the treaty, said, "If India's energies are wasted on fights with neighbors, we will never become a world power."[31]

The treaty opened the door for additional agreements on transit and trade, but the most serious problem in Indo–Bangladeshi relations remains the least susceptible to diplomatic effort—the illegal migration of Bangladeshi Muslims into India. The flow of migrants seeking work in India has been especially destabilizing in Assam, where in the mid-1980s it precipitated the violent anti-immigrant movement in defense of Assamese culture and political power. Despite India's efforts to stem the tide, movement across the porous border has continued, and the Indian government now estimates the number of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants at more than 10 million, with the greatest concentrations in Assam and West Bengal, where the BJP has made this their main issue. The BJP accuses the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Congress, and other parties of adding "illegals" to the electoral roles as new "vote banks," and in Mumbai and Delhi, far from the Bangladesh border, the presence of large numbers of Bangladeshi migrants have been exploited politically by the BJP city governments, with demands for deportation—an impossible task even if the immigrants could be effectively identified. The migrants make easy scapegoats, and they are potential fuel for Hindu-Muslim communal conflict. The Government of Bangladesh denies that its citizens have entered India, but as this sharpens as a domestic political issue within India, it will surely be confronted with increased tension in Indo–Bangladeshi relations.

Despite India's role in its creation, bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh remain strained due to political, economic, and security problems. Both sides harbor a deep sense of mistrust. Bangladesh fears Indian hegemony, and India resents Bangladesh's apparent hostility and alleged support of Indian insurgents. Despite three decades of independence, land boundaries between India and Bangladesh remain unsettled; the sharing of river waters continues to be a constant irritant; the

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[31]Quoted in *India Abroad*, 20 December 1996.

problem of isolated enclaves remains unresolved; and allegations of Bangladeshi support of insurgents in the North East have all combined poison relations between the two neighbors. In addition, Indian demands for transit rights through Bangladesh, India's plans to link major river systems in the region, trade imbalances, smuggling, and Bangladeshi refusal to allow natural gas exports to India add to the sense of mistrust. The recent proposal by the India-based Tata group to invest $3 billion in Bangladesh marks a major break with the past but has encountered considerable domestic opposition in Bangladesh. Although approval of the project by the government of Bangladesh would mark a major break with the past, the future of the proposal remains uncertain.[32]

South Asian Regional Cooperation   Regional cooperation in the subcontinent has been undermined by the unequal distribution of power in South Asia and by the conflict between India and Pakistan. New Delhi has tended to view regionalism as a design enabling the other states to "gang up" against India. Thus, India has sought to deal with each country bilaterally and to discourage communication and contact among the nations on its periphery. For their part, the smaller countries have been reluctant to enter into regional cooperation for fear that India would inevitably dominate any association and that such an association would, in effect, institutionalize Indian hegemony.

Although these concerns remain, a breakthrough came in the early 1980s. In 1980, President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh proposed that there be a greater degree of regional cooperation among the seven South Asian nations—India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives—in facing their common problems. India and Pakistan were initially reluctant, but through discussion at the foreign secretary level, the groundwork was laid for limited multilateral cooperation in what became the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In 1983 the foreign ministers of the seven nations met in New Delhi to give their formal assent to the promotion of "collective self-reliance" in nine fields: agriculture, rural development, planning, health, education, transport, telecommunications, sports, and culture. To emphasize the equality of each member, the association charges each nation with responsibility for at least one field of cooperation. The declaration proclaims the goal as one of mutual assistance "to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in

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[32]Farooq Sobhan, "Estranged Neighbors," *Seminar*, 557 (January 2006), pp. 75–79.

the region." All decisions are to be unanimous, and "bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations."[33]

SAARC has provided an important framework for an annual meeting of the South Asian leaders. From the first summit in Dhaka in 1985, the meeting rotates among the seven members, with the leader of the host nation assuming the SAARC chairmanship for the ensuing year. Substantive results have been modest and largely confined to such areas as culture and sports rather than engaging the most serious issues of the subcontinent, but SAARC does provide a forum for conflict management in the region. Its significance here is not in the formal sessions of the summit, but in the opportunity it affords for South Asian leaders (as, for example, the prime ministers of India and Pakistan) to meet privately to address their bilateral problems. The opportunity, however, is no guarantee of success, as evident at the July 1998 SAARC summit in Colombo when the Indian and Pakistani leaders, in the wake of the nuclear tests, were unable to agree even to begin talks to address mutual security and the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

From its inception, SAARC has been hostage to India–Pakistan conflict, and the failure in securing greater regional cooperation to the benefit of all must be counted among the major costs of that bitter and seemingly intractable dispute. The 1990s did see increased cooperation in some areas and an opening for the first time under SAARC to subregional cooperation, as in the potential development of water resources for power and irrigation involving India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. Most promising, however, was the establishment in 1995 of the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement, with a commitment to create a free trade area by the year 2001. Reflecting a combination of political mistrust and economic protectionism, trade within South Asia has been minimal: Only 3.7 percent of the region's total foreign trade of $140 billion involves trade among South Asian nations. They look to trade with the United States, Japan, or the European Union rather than with each other—and trade between India and Pakistan, with the largest economies of the region, is virtually nonexistent. Pakistan, for example, imports iron ore from Australia, Canada, and Brazil, while India, with a surplus, exports it to Japan.[34]

[33]On SAARC and regional cooperation more generally, see Eric Gonsalves and Nancy Jetley, eds., *The Dynamics of South Asia: Regional Cooperation and SAARC* (New Delhi: Sage, 1998); Partha S. Ghosh, *Cooperation and Contact in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989); and Bhabani Sen Gupta, ed., *Regional Cooperation and Development in South Asia*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: South Asia Publishers, 1986).

[34]*New York Times*, 3 August 1998.

At the 1998 SAARC summit, India took unilateral action for freer trade by announcing that it would lift restrictions that have limited imports of more than 2,000 products from its neighbors. But even when the benefits of free trade might be apparent to all, the legacy of suspicion and enmity, with the added burden of red tape, frustrated any hope of eliminating trade barriers by 200l or even soon thereafter.

The inability of SAARC to overcome suspicion and distrust within the region has continued to inhibit its development and effectiveness. The turmoil surrounding the convening of the twice postponed thirteenth SAARC summit in Dhaka on November 12 and 13, 2005, was emblematic of the problems confronting the organization. Initially scheduled for January 2005, the summit was to mark the twentieth anniversary of the first Dhaka summit held in 1985 but had to be postponed due to the disastrous tsunami that had swept the region on December 26, 2004. Rescheduled for February 2005, the summit had to be postponed a second time due to political turmoil in the region when India refused to attend the meeting in an effort to pressure the King of Nepal to restore democratic rule following his declaration of an emergency on February 1, 2005.

The thirteenth SAARC summit was finally able to convene on November 12 and 13, 2005. The summit met in a business-like atmosphere and agreed to admit Afghanistan as a new member, granted observer status to China and Japan, and adopted a set of pious resolutions. The 53-point Dhaka Declaration called for improved regional relations, the creation of a regional disaster center, the implementation of the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) created by the twelfth SAARC summit in January 2004, and focus on the reduction of poverty in the region over the next decade. It also agreed on several steps to improve trade relations. Having enunciated these majestic objectives, however, the summit failed to provide for a detailed plan for their implementation, and mutual distrust and clashing interests continued to block action.[35]

China

India's first encounters with the new government of the People's Republic of China were clouded by the reassertion of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. India had inherited the British concern for a Himalayan buffer zone and sought to maintain Tibetan autonomy. Despite

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[35]*Dhaka Courier*, Vol. 22, 17 (November 18, 2005), pp. 9–11, 16–17.

Beijing's denunciation of India as an imperialist lackey, Nehru worked for improved relations. In 1954, recognizing Tibet as a "region of China," India negotiated an agreement with China, setting forth the five principles—Panchsheel—that were to be the basis of their friendship and, as reaffirmed at the Afro–Asian Conference at Bandung in 1955, a cornerstone of Indian foreign policy: (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) nonaggression; (3) noninterference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence.

From 1954 until 1959 India continuously declared its friendship with China. In 1959, however, revolt in Tibet and the Dalai Lama's flight into India served to expose serious tensions between India and China. India had long been aware that Chinese maps showed large areas claimed by India (some 40,000 square miles) as parts of China—regions that had at one time been under Chinese imperial suzerainty. The areas claimed by China included nearly all of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) (now Arunachal Pradesh), small pockets along the India-China border between Nepal and Kashmir, and the Aksai Chin plateau of eastern Ladakh in Kashmir. In the east the dispute focused on the legitimacy of the McMahon Line, defining the border between the North East Frontier Agency and Tibet, which was drawn in 1914 by the Simla convention. Even in its position of weakness at that time, China had refused to sign the convention. In Ladakh, China's claim to the vast and desolate Aksai Chin, again historical, disputed the imperial frontier imposed by Great Britain upon China. Far more important for China, however, was the strategic position of the Aksai Chin, for along the old caravan route was China's most secure access between Xinjiang and Lhasa. The Aksai Chin occupied a position of strategic importance to China in terms of both internal security within Tibet and, at that time, the perceived threat posed by the Soviet Union, particularly as directed against Xinjiang. Chinese concern deepened with Tibetan unrest and the intensification of the Sino–Soviet controversy. In 1957 China completed an all-weather road across the Aksai Chin, linking Xinjiang with Tibet. A year later Indian patrols discovered the road, but it was not until the Tibetan revolt and border clashes along the Tibet-NEFA border in 1959 forced the issue that Nehru revealed to Parliament the full extent of the dispute with China.[36]

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[36]Of the many books on the border question, see especially Steven A. Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For a Chinese perspective, see Xuecheng Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994).

In 1960 Nehru and Chou En-lai entered into "talks" on the border problem. The Chinese proposed to abandon their claims in NEFA in exchange for the Aksai Chin, already under Chinese control. By this time the dispute had become a matter of emotional intensity in India. India was unwilling, and politically unable, to accept the proposal. Despite its comparative military weakness, India embarked on a "forward policy" on the frontier "intended to check Chinese advances everywhere and, if possible, force Chinese withdrawals in Ladakh."[37] In the fall of 1962, in an effort to force India to negotiate and give up claims to the Aksai Chin, China began a push along the NEFA frontier. On October 20 the invasion of NEFA began. Within a month Indian defenses collapsed: China had penetrated 150 miles below the McMahon Line, and India's lack of military preparedness and the debacle in NEFA became a national scandal. The United States and Great Britain rallied to India's aid with emergency airlifts of arms and supplies. The U.S.S.R., as well, reaffirmed its commitment of military assistance to India. On November 20, as Chinese troops stood on the foothills above the Assam valley, China announced a unilateral cease-fire and withdrawal of forces to the 1959 "Line of Actual Control." And there the matter has remained, with China's de facto occupation of the Aksai Chin.

In the mid-1970s, India moved toward an improvement in relations with China, and in 1976, after a hiatus of 15 years, the two countries exchanged ambassadors. In 1981, India and China held the first of a series of talks on the border dispute and other outstanding issues. Calling for "mutual accommodation and mutual understanding," China renewed its package proposal—a quid pro quo involving essentially formal recognition of the status quo: Chinese control of the Aksai Chin in the west and Indian control of Arunachal Pradesh in the east. India rejected the proposal, but pushed for greater contact in trade, cultural exchange, and scientific cooperation. From 1981 to 1987, the eight rounds—held alternately in Beijing and New Delhi—were punctuated by periods of heightened tension along the border, most seriously and with the risk of war in the spring of 1987, following India's grant of statehood to Arunachal Pradesh. The crisis was defused as Indian and Chinese leaders moved to cool tempers, and at the eighth round of talks that fall, the two sides emphasized the need for greater economic cooperation and for

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[37]Charles H. Heimsath and Surjit Mansingh, *A Diplomatic History of Modern India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1971), p. 467.

confidence-building measures to ease tension and avert military confrontation.

Although the rounds of talks failed to yield any resolution of the border dispute, they provided a forum for sustained discussion on outstanding issues and opened the way to expanded contact, but it was clear that if there was to be a breakthrough, political intervention was essential. To that end, Rajiv Gandhi visited Beijing in December 1988. In India, Rajiv's China visit was hailed as a great success, and, supplanting the annual rounds, regularized contacts were raised to a higher level with the creation of the Joint Working Group to seek "a fair and reasonable settlement" on the border question. In 1991, Prime Minister Li Peng went to New Delhi—the first visit by a Chinese Premier in 31 years—reaching agreements to reopen consular offices in Bombay and Shanghai and resume trade across the Indo-Tibetan border. In 1993, India's Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Beijing, where India and China agreed to place the border dispute on a back burner and pull back troops from the "Line of Actual Control," the cease-fire line left from the 1962 border war. Relations further improved in 1996 with President Jiang Zemin's visit to New Delhi and the agreement, among various confidence-building measures, to reduce the number of troops deployed along the Himalayan border.[38]

For all the expressions of goodwill and progress in easing tensions between the two Asian giants, India and China remain deeply suspicious of each other. They are competitors for global markets and for political influence in world affairs. The border dispute remains unsettled—a symbol of India's humiliating defeat in 1962. Even as India seeks to normalize relations with China, India regards China, armed with nuclear weapons, as a continuing threat with the capability to challenge Indian security. Matters of most immediate concern for India have been Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear program, the sale of M-11 missiles to Pakistan, and the increasing Chinese presence in Myanmar (Burma), especially in port-building activities that potentially facilitate Chinese naval operations in the Bay of Bengal.

[38]For an examination of the developments in India-China relations from 1962, see Sumit Ganguly, "Slouching Toward a Settlement: Sino-Indian Relations 1962–1993," The Woodrow Wilson Center, Asia Program, Occasional Paper No. 60 (1994).

Many Indian strategic analysts have long identified China, not Pakistan, as India's greatest security concern,[39] and in early May 1998, just two weeks before India's nuclear tests, Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes identified China as "potential threat No. 1," and described India as being "encircled" by Chinese military activities and alliances. In a letter to President Clinton following the tests, Prime Minister Vajpayee also justified India's actions as a response to the strategic threat posed by China and "an atmosphere of distrust" that prevails because of the "unsolved border problem."

For all India's legitimate concerns regarding China, however, the statements were an unnecessary affront to a nation with which India has sought rapprochement, and they were widely regarded as a setback to Sino-Indian relations. Indeed, both Indian President Narayanan and, subsequently, Vajpayee himself sought to redress the damage by reaffirming India's commitment to improved ties with China.

During the past decade, high-level exchanges and visits have resulted in a marked improvement in relations between India and China. These exchanges have included statements from both sides that there exists no fundamental conflict of interest between the two Asian giants. Bilateral trade between India and China has expanded considerably in recent years; in November 2003 the two countries engaged in unprecedented joint naval exercises off the coast of Shanghai; and during the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to India in April 2005, several new agreements were signed. In addition, the two countries issued a joint statement in which they agreed to establish an "India-China strategic cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity."[40]

China, in fact, may pose little immediate threat to India, and India ranks low in China's international concerns. But China looms large for India, and it is China's military capabilities, not its perceived intentions, that command India's attention.

Russia and States of the Former Soviet Union

India today is reconstructing strong trade and diplomatic relations with Russia, but the "special relationship" it had earlier forged with the Soviet

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[39]This view is shared by George Tanham, who, in "Indian Strategy in Flux?" *Securing India*, p. 137, targets China as "the greatest and longest term strategic challenge to India." Kanti Bajpai, in contrast, does not see China as a military threat to India and argues that China—with control of the Aksai Chin—is a status quo power in the region. "State, Society, Strategy," in Tanham, *Securing India*, 145–50.

[40]"The India-China Thaw," *Seminar*, 562.

Union is a relic of the Cold War. India now seeks to secure new relationships with the successor states of the former Soviet Union as they rebuild their shattered economies and shape their own foreign policies.

The "special relationship" between India and the U.S.S.R. had been cultivated during the course of the Cold War to what each regarded as mutual advantage. The Soviet Union regarded India as an important political asset, as seen in India's position on Afghanistan, and India looked to the U.S.S.R. for diplomatic support in the United Nations and elsewhere on such issues as Kashmir. In addition, India benefited from Soviet aid and technical assistance for India's public-sector heavy industry, Indo-Soviet barter trade, and the favorable terms the U.S.S.R. extended for arms purchases. In the domestic Indian context, Indo-Soviet relations served to undercut the Communist Party of India and to "domesticate" the communist movement in India.

Nehru had long expressed his admiration for the Soviet Union, especially in its industrial development, but the Soviets were initially suspicious of India, regarding it as a tool of "Anglo-American imperialism." By 1952, Soviet policy began to change, and with its support for India on Kashmir, the foundation of Indo-Soviet friendship was laid. The exchange of various delegations was soon followed in 1953 by the Indo-Soviet trade agreement and, two years later, by the exchange of visits by Nehru and Krushchev and Bulganin, and by the Soviet commitment to construct the Bhilai steel works, the first of a number of highly visible projects in India. (By contrast, U.S. aid was aimed principally at increasing food production in rural areas.) Nehru's eagerness to secure Soviet friendship at times came under sharp criticism from within India as well as from abroad—most notably, in response to India's defense of Soviet repression in Hungary in 1956.

In 1960, as the Sino-Soviet controversy deepened, the U.S.S.R. began to supply arms to India. As India's own conflict with China approached war, the Soviets agreed to supply MiG fighters to India and to set up a plant within India for their production. Toward the end of the decade, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, India drew closer to the Soviet Union and came increasingly to rely on Soviet arms in building its military strength. In 1971, in the Bangladesh crisis, a 20-year Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation gave formal character to the developing "special relationship" between the two nations.

Although unwilling to join in international condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, New Delhi was uneasy at the presence of the Soviets at the gates of the Khyber Pass. Soviet action,

moreover, had spurred a new projection of power by the United States into South Asia to support Pakistan and the Afghan resistance. Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 defused superpower confrontation in South Asia, but it also marked a significant change in Soviet involvement in South Asia more generally.

Soviet interests in South Asia, and India in particular, had been driven principally by security concerns to deny any external power—that is, the United States or China—dominant influence within the region and by competition with the United States for "the hearts and minds" of the people of the Third World, with India as its central arena. Even before the final collapse of the Soviet Union, however, these interests had ceased to be compelling. By the late 1980s, with Soviet rapprochement with China, Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and then after the end of the Cold War, with closer relations between the U.S.S.R. and the United States, India became increasingly apprehensive as to its place in Soviet priorities.

In fact, from the late 1970s India had moved to balance its relationship with the superpowers and reduce its heavy reliance on Soviet arms. However, Soviet diplomatic support for India, aid, and trade continued to be important factors underlying Indo-Soviet friendship that were not to be lightly abandoned. Thus, even as India sought to diversify its sources of arms and widen its options, its relationship with the Soviet Union remained of central importance.

India was unprepared for the dramatic events of 1991–92—the failed putsch against Gorbachev, Yeltsin's rise to power, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Having tacitly supported the communist hard-liners,[41] India sought to minimize damage, but the loss of the "special relationship" with the Soviet Union posed immediate and pressing problems. The U.S.S.R. had been the source of some 70 percent of India's military equipment. Even before the collapse, the Soviets had begun to require hard-currency payments for the spare parts necessary for India to maintain weapons in readiness, and with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the supply of spares was itself disrupted, heightening India's sense of vulnerability. The ruble-rupee barter trade was in shambles, and India had lost a major market for its manufactured goods.

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[41]In the attempted coup against Gorbachev in August 1991, India refused to condemn the plotters and a junior minister dismissed Gorbachev's arrest as "an internal affair of the Soviet Union." The Indian government's response came in for a beating in the Indian press and from leading Indian intellectuals, while the two Indian Communist parties, on news of the coup, celebrated the apparent—though brief—triumph of the hard-liners.

India and Russia soon moved toward rebuilding the political, economic, and military ties that were in their mutual interest. In January 1993, Russian President Boris Yeltsin visited New Delhi, where agreement was reached to ease India's repayment schedule for the ruble debt left from the Soviet era. India and Russia also reached agreements for commercial relations on the basis of hard currencies. A year later, in 1994, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Moscow to secure new agreements for the purchase of Russian weapons for the Indian armed forces. Reopening the arms flow was to mutual advantage, for Russia, the Ukraine, and Belarus look to India as a major market for their arms industries. The terms negotiated required payment in hard currency instead of, as previously, Indian rupees, but the high-tech equipment was sold at bargain prices, and India had a long shopping list. India has contracted to purchase Russia's advanced Sukhoi SU-30 fighter bombers and, among other weapons, attack submarines.

Although Russia regretted India's decision to conduct nuclear tests in May 1998 and, like the United States, has long sought India's agreement to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Russia has a strong commercial interest in India's development of nuclear energy in the civilian sector. Resisting pressure from the United States in the wake of India's tests, cash-starved Russia concluded negotiations for the sale of two nuclear 1,000 megawatt power reactors to India at a cost of more than $1.5 billion each.

Since the rise of Vladimir Putin as successor to Boris Yeltsin in 2000, both India and Russia have worked hard to renew and expand their political, economic, and military relationship. The two countries have carried out a continuous wave of high-level political exchanges, India has restored Russia as its chief arms supplier, and the two countries have developed closer cooperation in the energy sector. In October 2000, India signed an agreement to purchase $3 billion worth of Russian weapons including 140–150 Su-30 multi-role fighters and 310 battle tanks, and in January 2002 India signed an additional agreement worth $304 million to upgrade its fleet of MiG-21 *bis* fighters. More recently it has signed joint research, design, development, and coproduction agreements with Russia; has decided to buy Krivak class missile frigates; has conducted a joint war game with the Russians in the Arabian Sea; and has entered into a joint production agreement to produce Su-30 MK "I" fighter jets in Malaysia. While economic relations between the two centuries continue to remain limited, Indian-Russian political ties have strengthened as India continues to endorse the

strengthening of a multipolar world in an effort to reduce American global dominance.[42]

As India has reconstructed and strengthened relations with Russia, it also sought to secure relations with other republics of the former Soviet Union, most significantly those in Central Asia. These secular states, with largely Muslim populations, have become targets of Indian diplomacy to prevent their alliance with Pakistan.

The United States

Until very recently South Asia in itself has never been a major foreign policy priority for the United States. During the Cold War, relations between India and the United States were broadly characterized by intense strain, punctuated by periods of friendships and cooperation. The end of the Cold War, the demise of the Soviet Union, and the rise of China have led to a major revaluation of Indian and American foreign policy in South Asia. India has attempted to build a new relationship with the United States, and the United States has embarked upon a major revaluation of its role in South Asia. The rehabilitation of the relationship between the two "estranged democracies," however, continued to be plagued by numerous points of friction involving India's nuclear aspirations and American attempts to impose the provisions on the nuclear Non–Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on a reluctant India. Post-Cold War Indo–American relations reached an all time low in the wake of India's 1998 nuclear tests and the American decision to impose economic sanctions on India.

Tensions between the United States and India began to ease somewhat following the March 2000 Clinton visit, the first such visit by an American President in 22 years. A much more fundamental transformation in the strategic the relationship took place following the election of George W. Bush as President of the United States. The Bush Administration saw India as a potential global ally against China and has agreed to expand economic, technological, and trade relations; has acknowledged India's nuclear ambitions; and has declared that its policy was designed to assist India to become a global power.

During the period of the Cold War, the United States had sought to forge a chain of alliances from Europe to East Asia for the containment of communist expansion. India, committed to a policy of

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[42]See CSIS "The Changing Face of Russia-South Asia Relations," *South Asia Monitor*, No. 59 (June 1, 2003); and K. Alan Kronstadt, "India—U.S. Relations," CRS Issue Brief for Congress, July 29, 2004, p. 10.

nonalignment, was unresponsive. Pakistan, seeing the opportunity to escape Indian hegemony within the subcontinent, was very interested. In 1954 the United States and Pakistan signed a mutual defense treaty, and in the next year Pakistan was linked to the Southeast Asia defense system through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and to that of the Middle East through the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The United States regarded Pakistan as the eastern flank of the "northern tier," an indispensable link in the containment of Soviet aggression against the Middle East.

Although Eisenhower assured Nehru that the arms supplied to Pakistan would never be used in aggression against India, India regarded U.S. military aid to Pakistan not only as a threat to the peace and stability of South Asia, opening the subcontinent to foreign penetration, but also as a challenge to its own security, for Pakistan commanded easy access to Kashmir and occupied part of the plain upon which New Delhi itself was situated. Even in the improved relations of the late 1950s and the Kennedy years of the 1960s, which witnessed a substantial economic assistance program and the inauguration of military aid to India, India deeply resented the parity accorded India and Pakistan by the United States. India was, after all, a nation far greater in size and population than Pakistan, and in the military sphere Pakistan's effort to secure U.S. arms to match Indian capabilities could only be a source of instability and potential armed conflict. That conflict came in 1965, when Patton tanks were used by Pakistan against India in the Rann of Kutch and later in Kashmir. Even though the United States cut off arms to both Pakistan and India during the 1965 war, a limited supply of weapons to Pakistan was subsequently resumed.

The Bangladesh crisis in 1971 brought Indo-American relations to an all-time low. The United States appealed to India for restraint and, with Pakistan, counseled for a political settlement. Although the American press denounced Pakistani atrocities in Bengal, and members of Congress and many State Department officials urged the White House to exert all its leverage on Pakistan to release Bengal, the administration remained publicly silent. Privately, President Nixon ordered the "tilt toward Pakistan," even when Pakistan's defeat was inevitable. In a final act of futility, the U.S. aircraft carrier Enterprise was ordered into the Bay of Bengal, with the ostensible purpose of evacuating American and foreign nationals at the port of Chittagong.

U.S. action during the Bangladesh crisis has been explained variously as the product of concern that American access to China through Pakistan not be jeopardized; as an attempt to show an old friend and ally gratitude for the American air base at Peshawar; and

as the result of "personality"—Nixon's personal regard for Yahya Khan and his distaste for Indira Gandhi. Whatever reasoning was involved, American interests were ill served. India was forced into increasing reliance upon the Soviet Union, and American prestige and influence in South Asia reached rock bottom.[43]

As the ferment of Bangladesh receded, India and the United States sought to explore the terms of a new relationship. It had already been in the making when so rudely interrupted. The United States, on the understanding that it had no vital strategic interests in South Asia, had assumed a "lower profile." It recognized "legitimate" Soviet and Chinese geopolitical interests in the region, and American concerns were directed toward countering the dominance of any one major power in the area. While Indo-American relations improved, points of tension remained—for example, the establishment of the U.S. naval and air facility on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and the increasing U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean. The Indian government viewed the base not as a response to Soviet naval buildup in the Indian Ocean, but as an invitation to Soviet-American confrontation. This position, embodied in a United Nations resolution, reflected the concern of India and other littoral states that the Indian Ocean be preserved as a "zone of peace," free from big-power rivalries that might affect the political stability of the region.[44]

When the emergency was proclaimed in 1975, the American press denounced Mrs. Gandhi, but the U.S. government had no official reaction and remained noncommittal. President Carter, who had a personal interest in India, sought to reorder American priorities in South Asia, and the Janata victory afforded the opportunity for improved relations. Carter initiated an extensive correspondence with Prime Minister Desai, but the issue of nuclear proliferation soon dampened the relationship. Desai underscored India's commitment to the "peaceful" uses of nuclear energy and its continued rejection of the nuclear weapons option. The United States, however, continued to express concern over India's refusal to sign the nuclear NPT. As a result of the 1978

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[43]For two differing perspectives on U.S. policy in the Bangladesh crisis, see Henry Kissinger, "The Tilt: The India–Pakistan Crisis of 1971," in *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), pp. 842–918, and Christopher Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia," *Asian Survey,* 20 (April 1980), pp. 339–61. On the U.S. role, also see Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession.*

[44]U.S. interest in the Indian Ocean is essentially an extension of strategic concern for the Middle East and specifically for the oil sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf. See Selig Harrison and K. Subramanyam, eds., *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: Indian and American Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act, the United States threatened to terminate sales of enriched uranium for the Indian nuclear power plant at Tarapur, near Mumbai—for which a 30-year contract had been negotiated in 1963—unless India opened all of its nuclear facilities to international inspection. The Indian government declined to do so, while charging the United States with breach of contract. Neither President Carter's visit to India in January 1978 nor Desai's visit to Washington later that year could overcome the differences between the two governments, but the issue became moot in 1982 when the United States and India reached agreement to permit a third party (France) to supply the enriched uranium.

With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the U.S. response of military assistance to Pakistan, U.S. support for Pakistan again became the major source of tension between New Delhi and Washington. India viewed the multibillion-dollar arms packages, with F-16 fighter aircraft, as threatening its own security and as destabilizing to the region. In expressing its concern, however, India was careful not to overplay its hand, and after a low in Indo-American relations in 1980–81, both India and the United States sought to improve relations, to downplay differences of strategic perception, and to accentuate the positive. Indira Gandhi's visit to Washington in 1982 was an important atmospheric breakthrough that was extended three years later with Rajiv Gandhi's 1985 visit to inaugurate the Festival of India in the United States. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the cutoff of American aid to Pakistan in 1990 removed the major obstacle to closer relations, and by the early 1990s, India and the United States looked to significantly improved relations.

The 1990s again took U.S.-India relations on a roller-coaster ride as closer economic relations were buffeted by differences over trade issues, the status of Kashmir, and, most critically, nuclear proliferation. Relations between the two countries plunged in May 1998 with India's nuclear tests and U.S. imposition of sanctions against India as mandated by the 1994 Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act. Sanctions included a ban on military and economic assistance, but, in contrast to earlier decades, direct U.S. aid to India was minimal. The full impact of sanctions was in any case substantially reduced as the U.S., making various exceptions, sought to protect American trade and investment interests in India and to ensure the flow of "humanitarian" development aid from multilateral agencies.

The United States, until the late 1980s, had been India's principal source of foreign aid. In the 1960s, under Public Law 480, the United States provided India some $5 billion worth of food and agricultural

commodities. This involved more than 50 million tons of wheat, and at the program's height in the mid-1960s, one-fourth of the American wheat crop went to India. In the 1970s, through the green revolution, India achieved basic self-sufficiency in agriculture, and direct U.S. economic and technical assistance to India declined substantially. Today, American assistance to India is principally through multilateral international lending agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The United States welcomed the market reforms that India began in 1991, and economics—trade and investment—became an increasingly important component of U.S.-India relations. American economic involvement with India had long been minimal. In 1991, total U.S. investment in India was less than $600 million (not even a quarter of American investment in tiny Singapore), and India accounted for less than one percent of all U.S. trade. The United States, however, loomed large on India's economic horizon as its major investor and number one trading partner. With market reforms and an opening to the global economy, India sought to expand trade with the United States and attract American investment through joint ventures with Indian companies. But India's reforms, though representing a dramatic change in economic policy, are incomplete, and restrictive trade and investment policies remain contentious issues between the two countries. In the early 1990s, the United States, for example, took a hard line against India on intellectual property protection—patents and copyrights—and targeted India for potential trade retaliation if it did not bring its patent laws into line with international standards. Over the decade trade increased, though it remained burdened by high tariffs in India and quotas on certain items in the United States. With India's opening to the global economy, American companies, drawn to the potential of its vast market, looked to India as a target for investment. Over the decade, American investment—from Pepsi and McDonalds to major infrastructural projects like Enron's $2.8 billion power project—increased significantly, but investment in India remains problematic. Lagging economic reform; corruption; bureaucratic red tape; and serious infrastructural problems, especially in power, continue to discourage investment, but political instability and the specter of economic nationalism are perhaps the greatest impediments to investment in India.

During the past decade the explosion of information technology, call centers, and business services has resulted in a massive increase in Indo-American trade. It has also, however, generated congressional uneasiness over the loss of American high-tech jobs.

With the end of the Cold War and efforts by both the United States and India to improve relations, the military in the two nations established closer contact, conducting joint naval exercises, but India remained uneasy about U.S. strategic involvement in the region and especially by U.S. relations with Pakistan and China. The U.S. position on Kashmir is a continuing irritant. Though the U.S. no longer calls for a plebiscite in Kashmir, India regards American efforts to bring India and Pakistan, along with representatives of the Kashmiri people, into discussions for a settlement of the dispute as interference in its affairs. Indeed, even U.S. characterization of Kashmir as "disputed territory" has brought Indian protest.

Of all the issues relating to South Asia, nuclear proliferation was of the greatest concern for the United States, and American efforts to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction—nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles—have been at the forefront of U.S.-India relations.[45] The United States had long pushed India to sign the nuclear NPT, but by the mid-1990s the United States shifted to efforts to "cap" India's and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities and secure their support for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. But American nonproliferation efforts in South Asia were frustrated by Indian and Pakistani resistance, as each moved toward the nuclear weapons threshold. In May 1998, with a series of tests, India declared itself "a nuclear weapon state." The United States condemned India's action and imposed sanctions in accordance with law—as it did against Pakistan two weeks later when Islamabad conducted its own nuclear tests.

For all America's disappointment—and anger—in India's decision to "go nuclear," the United States has now even more compelling interests in stability, democracy, and prosperity in South Asia. Improved relations with India are essential to promoting those goals and to the use of whatever influence it may bring to encourage dialogue between India and Pakistan and reduce the risks of possible nuclear war on the subcontinent. The United States, moreover, has a range of interests in India beyond the issue of nuclear proliferation, and it is imperative that the United States be able to move forward in various areas to sustain a relationship that will surely become increasingly important in the next century. And the two million Indians now resident in the United States will act as a strong and positive force for good relations with India.

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[45]See Brahma Chellaney, *Nuclear Proliferation: The U.S.-Indian Conflict* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993).

American-Indian relations began to improve following the Clinton visit to India in March 2000 and accelerated following the election of the George W. Bush and the September 11, 2001, terror attack on the United States. The Clinton visit marked an especially important turning point in the Indo-American relationship and led to a series of economic, security and nuclear nonproliferation initiatives. Clinton and Vajpayee agreed to institutionalize the American-Indian dialogue that led to a series of high level exchanges between the two countries, the formation of a number of working groups, and several bilateral agreements.

The convergence of interests that began toward the end of the Clinton Administration was accelerated following the election of President George W. Bush. In an effort to counterbalance the growing power of China, the Bush Administration was determined to expand its framework of engagement with India by shifting from a policy of friendship to one of "strategic partnership." The Bush administration moved quickly to remove many of the economic sanctions imposed following the May 1998 nuclear tests; it expanded military and high-tech cooperation with India; it declared its support for India's domestic war on terrorism; and it attempted to remove the perception of an American tilt toward Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir. In mid-March 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited India and declared that the United States was prepared to de-hyphenate its relationship between India and Pakistan and declared that the Americans' goal was to "help India become a major world power in the twenty-first century."[46] Rice's visit was followed in June 2005 by the signing of a 10-year defense partnership agreement and a visit by India's new Prime Minister Manmoham Singh to Washington in July 2005. President Bush and Prime Minister Singh pledged to establish a strategic partnership and end India's nuclear isolation.

The most important change in policy came during the follow-up visit of President Bush to India in March 2006 and the signing of a new nuclear agreement that granted de facto nuclear recognition to India and promised greater cooperation in the development of Indian nuclear technology. The proposed agreement, ratified by Congress in December 2006, declared that the United States would treat India as a nuclear weapons state under the NPT,

[46]See C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); and Ashley J. Tellis, "South Asian Seesaw: A New U.S. Policy on the Subcontinent," *Policy Brief*, No. 38 (May 2005), Carnegie Endowment for International Government, 2005.

would no longer deny India access to American civilian technology, and would authorize India to import uranium to support its nuclear program. India, in turn, agreed to separate its civilian and military nuclear programs and place its civilian nuclear program under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. While some observers have declared this historic agreement to be as symbolic as the Nixon opening to China, others have been highly critical of the agreement and see it as rewarding a rogue nuclear weapons state that would mark the death knell of the NPT. As a result of these criticisms, the agreement encountered considerable opposition among American non-proliferation advocates. The agreement has also generated considerable opposition in India due to the technical constraint it places on India's nuclear program. Despite congressional approval of the nuclear nonproliferation agreement, the inclusion of several conditions by the U.S. Congress means that the agreement still has a long way to go. There is strong opposition in India to most of these conditions, and a final agreement between the two countries now depends on Indian approval.

Despite considerable progress, Indo-American relations continue to be hampered by distrust and a lack of candor. In India the political left remains opposed to closer relations with the United States; skeptics in the media, in academia, and among Indian intellectuals question whether India will get what it wants from the relationship; many fear that relations with the United States will make India more vulnerable to terrorist attacks; and some fear that closer relations with the United States will undermine India's freedom of action and poison relations with the Muslim world. Indian critics also insist that India and the United States differ in their strategic visions; they complain that American decision makers treat relations with India as an afterthought and assign a low priority to the country in their process of foreign policy planning; and they accuse the United States of continuing to live in the shadow of Cold War distrust. The United States, they charge, continues to harbor an adversarial view of India and sees India as a "problem" rather than a close friend. Most important of all, they complain, the United States refuses to treat India as an "equal."

Attempts to forge a durable Indo-American relationship remain uncertain. Issues such as restrictions on the transfer of technology, nuclear and space cooperation, missile defense, and the United States' refusal to support granting India a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council remain as critical obstacles to the development of a strategic partnership. Many critics, moreover, caution that

Indian pretensions to great power status are flawed and argue that India offers very few benefits to the United States as a "strategic partner." India, they insist, will never be a true ally of the United States. The two countries share a very limited congruence of interests; India is plagued by hostile neighbors, sectarian tensions, and political instability; and the country remains entangled in the long-standing Kashmir dispute with Pakistan that could end up dragging the United States into the mess in South Asia. The first crucial test of the potential durability of the relationship will be the fate of the Bush–Singh nuclear agreement of March 2006. Many members of the United States Congress see the agreement as rewarding India for its defiance of international efforts to restrict the spread of nuclear weapons and marking the death knell of the NPT.[47] For India, however, national security is India's paramount concern. Committed to strategic as well as political independence, India seeks self-reliance, knowing that ultimately it cannot rely on any outside protection, nor would such reliance be consistent with its self-image of national integrity. The 1998 nuclear tests and India's declaration that it is "now a nuclear weapon state" must be seen in this light.

THE MILITARY, NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE QUEST FOR SECURITY

The Military

In a large part of the developing world the military has played a prominent role in political life. Coups, both bloodless and violent, have left few new nations free of military intervention. The Indian army, however, has remained remarkably nonpolitical. The explanation does not lie in the character of the military, for with essentially the same traditions, organization, and social background, the army seized power in Pakistan. The most important causes of military intervention are political, and are located in the availability of meaningful channels of political access and of institutions for mediating and resolving conflict. If the political system is unable to respond to increasing participation and escalating demands and at the same time maintain order, the military, cohesive and bureaucratized, may step in.

The Indian Army, numbering over one million volunteers, is the third largest in the world and has a proud and romantic tradition,

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[47]"The Rise of India," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2006), pp. 2–56.

regimental color, and Sandhurst tastes. Morale, having suffered from the humiliation of the Chinese invasion, was bolstered by the heroism of Indian soldiers in the 22-day war with Pakistan in 1965, the stunning victory six years later in the liberation of Bangladesh, and its success in expelling Pakistani forces from Kargil in 1998. Although Indian defense expenditures declined from 1950 to 1961, they rose rapidly in response to the Chinese threat. During the 1990s, India's defense expenditures declined as a percent of GDP to under 3 percent compared to 3.5 percent in the 1980s. From 1982 to 1992 defense expenditures averaged between 14–17 percent of government expenditures. With the end of the Cold War and the U.S. cutoff of military aid to Pakistan, Indian defense expenditures in the early 1990s declined comparatively. In 1997–98 Indian defense expenditures rose sharply from $8.6 billion to $9.8 billion and accounted for 13 percent of the total budget. In 1998–99 they increased again as did Indian expenditures on its nuclear programs following the May 1998 nuclear tests.[48] In 2004 India spent an estimated $16.97 billion, or 2.5 percent of its GDP, on defense.

In India, as elsewhere, however, defense expenditures are often hidden in a variety of budgetary allocations. Military expenditure may thus be considerably larger than official figures indicate. In addition, India received considerable military assistance from the Soviet Union. The defense establishment has gained a powerful position in bidding for scarce resources within the public sector, but as yet the military has not sought greater leverage in political life.

Since the 1970s, Indian strategic doctrine placed increasing emphasis on the use of force. Indian troops intervened in the Sri Lankan civil war in 1987, reversed a mini-invasion of the Maldive Islands in 1988, and became involved in major confrontations with Pakistan over the Siachen glacier and Kashmir. Indian defense outlays accelerated in the second half of the 1980s as India acquired a blue water navy, extended arms purchases with the West, and successfully test-fired its own short-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Increased defense expenditures not only placed an increasing strain on India's domestic budget but also resulted in a series of defense scandals involving the purchase of German submarines and Swedish artillery pieces, which played a major role in the defeat of Rajiv Gandhi in the 1989 parliamentary elections. India's nuclear

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[48]See Ragu G. C. Thomas, *Indian Security Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 211–15; *The Economist* (London), June 6, 1998, p. 41.

program has also begun to create increasing problems for Indian diplomacy with the United States and Russia.

The military plays an important domestic role in its "aid to the civil," that is, military intervention in civil disturbances to restore law and order. Such intervention has increased dramatically over the years, and the army has been called in to quell a series of police and paramilitary strikes; to control ethnic unrest and Hindu-Muslim violence; belatedly, to put down the anti-Sikh riots in New Delhi and other cities in the wake of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination; and to counter terrorism and insurgency.[49] In Kashmir and in the ethnically unstable Northeast (especially Nagaland and Mizoram), the military has maintained a strong presence, and in the 1980s, as terrorism mounted in the Punjab, the military—armed with an impressive array of coercive legislation and ordinance—played a major role in the troubled state's government, stepping in where civil authority had virtually collapsed.

In addition to the Army's continued role in internal security, police and paramilitary forces were expanded enormously during the period from 1969 to 1977. Between 1969 and 1971 alone, central government expenditures for police forces doubled. The units involved included the Border Security Force, the Central Reserve Police, and others organized along military lines, housed in barracks, and subject to military discipline.[50] Stephen P. Cohen, a close observer of the Indian military, writes: "It is certain that the expansion of the police apparatus was partly intended to lessen the need for regular Indian Army units to come to the aid of the civil, although it also gives the central government an enhanced capacity for coercion."[51] While India had the active duty army of 1.1 million in 2005, its paramilitary forces totaled 1,721,586.[52]

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[49]For an enumeration of these instances, see Stephen P. Cohen, "The Military and Indian Democracy," in Atul Kohli, ed., *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 123–28. Also see Sumit Ganguly, "From the Defense of the Nation to Aid to the Civil: The Army in Contemporary India," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 26 (1991), pp. 106–16. The role of the military and paramilitary in controlling domestic unrest is examined more fully in Chapters Four and Five.

[50]See "The Police and Internal Security," in Chapter Five, pp. 251–54 of this text.

[51]Stephen P. Cohen, "The Military," in Henry C. Hart, ed., *Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraised* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976), p. 24. Also see Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, Rev. ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[52]*The Military Balance 2006* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006), pp. 217–245.

The military played no direct role in the 1975–77 emergency, and it was not called upon during the period of emergency rule to inter-vene in civil disturbances. At the time of Mrs. Gandhi's 1977 defeat, there were rumors that she might call upon the Army to secure her position as Prime Minister. She did not, nor is there any reason to believe that the Army would have acted to set aside the results of the election. The Army retains its apolitical stance,[53] but even if it were to overcome its tradition of restraint, a coup would require the concerted action of the five regional commands—no easy task. The military, nevertheless, is an important factor in Indian politics, if only in its potential. Despite the experience of the emergency, there are those within Indian society who remain enamored with authority, order, and discipline, and for whom military rule would be a welcome alternative to democratic politics.

Under the BJP government that came to power in March 1998, India's military profile has increased dramatically. The nuclear tests of May 1998 have generated increased uneasiness in the region and in Asia as a whole, as India continues to press for recognition of great power status equal to that accorded to China. At the same time, the unprecedented dismissal of the naval chief Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat in December 1998 by the Vajpayee government for defiance of civilian authority placed a major strain on civil-military relations.

Nuclear Weapons and Security

In its quest for security, India sought to secure a nuclear weapons "option" from the time China conducted its first tests in 1964 and was recognized as a nuclear weapons power. In May 1974, at Pokhran, in the desert of western Rajasthan, India detonated an underground nuclear device—euphemistically termed a "peaceful nuclear explosion"—and thereby joined the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and China with demonstrated nuclear capability. Resisting pressure from within the Congress Party as well as the opposition, the Indian government announced that it would not build a bomb. India, however, reserved the option to "go nuclear" should its security be threatened. India refused to sign the NPT, which it viewed as discriminatory, and argued that nuclear proliferation had to be addressed comprehensively so as to

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[53]Concern about political interference in the army was raised in 1983 when, for the second time, the seniority principle was violated in the selection of the chief of staff from among the senior generals. See Hargrave, *India under Pressure*, pp. 108–09, and Cohen, "The Military and Indian Democracy," pp. 221–22.

include those nations already possessing nuclear weapons. India's position reflected security concerns, particularly vis-à-vis China, but there was a prestige factor as well: In a world in which "great-power" status seems dependent on having nuclear capability—as reflected in the deference accorded China by the United States—India was unwilling to relegate itself to an inferior international position. Moreover, India's decision to develop a nuclear potential came, in part, as a response to its isolation in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war and its increasing dependency on the Soviet Union.

The 1974 nuclear explosion served to underscore India's preeminence in South Asia, but it also gave impetus to Pakistan to develop its own nuclear capability. By the late 1980s, both India and Pakistan were on the nuclear weapons threshold, and some analysts believed that they were only a "screw turn away" if they did not already have "a bomb in the basement." The ambiguity of their nuclear capabilities and the demonstrated capacity to "go nuclear," should they make the political decision to do so, ushered in what came to be called "non-weaponized deterrence,"[54] a phrase that embodied the assumption—and hope—that capabilities alone would be sufficient to deter both India and Pakistan from going to war and that neither country would feel compelled to deploy nuclear weapons. But the ambiguity itself deepened distrust between the two countries, and India's concerns about China were not addressed. Thus, in 1996, India refused to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and foreclose its right to conduct further tests. And India reaffirmed its objections to the NPT as legitimizing nuclear weapons among the five privileged members of the "nuclear club" while denying the deterrent security they offered to countries, like India, that were not protected by a "nuclear shield."[55]

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[54]The phrase was coined by George Perkovich, "A Nuclear Third Way in South Asia," *Foreign Policy*, 91 (Summer 1993), pp. 85–104.

[55]There is a vast literature on nuclear proliferation in South Asia. Especially valuable are: Stephen P. Cohen, ed., *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia: The Prospects for Arms Control* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991); Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1998); George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb, 1947–1998: Exploding Illusions of the Nuclear Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Samina Ahmed, David Cortright, and Amitabh Mattoo, "Public Opinion and Nuclear Options for South Asia," *Asian Survey*, 38 (August 1998) pp. 727–44. For a succinct analysis of the status of proliferation before the 1998 tests, see Michael Reiss, "South Asia: The Zero-Sum Subcontinent?" in *Bridled Ambition: Why Countries Constrain Their Nuclear Capabilities* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1995), pp. 183–230.

In May 1998, less than two months after the BJP-led government took power, India conducted a series of underground nuclear tests at the Pokhran range in Rajasthan. The five explosions were designed to test nuclear weapons of different yields—from tactical to thermonuclear—and for different delivery systems.

Virtually straight from the BJP platform, the National Agenda for the coalition government had stated that "to ensure the security, territorial integrity and unity of India we will take all necessary steps and exercise all available options. Toward that end we will reevaluate the nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons." Vajpayee announced that the option would be exercised only "if need be," but, in fact, the decision was taken almost immediately upon assuming power, with little consultation, and before any reevaluation of policy by the new government took place. The tests were thus unexpected, but for more than three decades, India had moved systematically toward nuclear weapons power.[56] Indeed, in December 1995, the Narasimha Rao government had planned nuclear tests only to be dissuaded by the United States when preparations were discovered by spy satellites.

Following India's May 1998 nuclear tests, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared in Parliament that "India is a nuclear weapon state." This statement formally ended the ambiguity that had long characterized India's nuclear policy.[57] From the time of its first test in 1974, demonstrating its nuclear capability, India retained the "option" to develop and deploy nuclear weapons should its security require them. Successive prime ministers pursued the program in combination with missile development, but exercised restraint in crossing the nuclear Rubicon. In 1998, in response to what it deemed as a significantly deteriorating security environment, India exercised the option to "go nuclear." Pakistan, with presumed nuclear capability and armed with Chinese missiles, was the immediate concern, but China, a rising nuclear power, was projected as India's greatest long-range security concern.

When the BJP-led government took power, everything was in place to conduct the tests, but the timing suggests that political considerations played at least a part in the Prime Minister's decision to "go nuclear." In forming the government, the BJP had been held

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[56]See Sumit Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II," *International Security*, 23 (March 1999), pp. 148–77.

[57]Statement in Lok Sabha, May 27, 1998.

hostage to extortive demands from alliance partners, and the nuclear tests might be expected to enhance the BJP's nationalist credentials and strengthen its leverage within the coalition. Moreover, with over-whelming public support for the tests, the BJP's prospects for the next elections might be substantially improved. Strategic concerns, how-ever, were surely weighty, and various justifications were offered, sometimes alternatively, as compelling India's decision to exercise the nuclear option.[58]

Among the justifications for the nuclear tests was Pakistan's test-firing in April of its Ghauri medium-range missile, purchased from North Korea and capable of reaching virtually any Indian city with a nuclear warhead. Of even greater concern, however, was the Chinese assistance to Pakistan in both nuclear weapons and missile devel-opment. Especially galling to India was America's "blind eye" to the security threat it faced and U.S. failure, in courting Beijing, to respond adequately to China's support for Pakistan. And, as Vajpayee argued in his letter to President Clinton, China itself was India's major long-term strategic concern.

India's nuclear tests were also—and perhaps most fundamentally—an assertion of national pride, of self-respect, and of its demand to be taken seriously, to be regarded as no less than China among world powers. Prime Minister Vajpayee declared that in becoming a nuclear weapons state, India had taken "its rightful place in the international community." Ironically, by this token, with its own nuclear tests, Paki-stan was to be taken no less seriously.

India's tests were greeted by public opinion polls registering 90 percent support, and opposition parties, unwilling to risk their own nationalist credentials, rallied behind the government's decision. Few voices of dissent were heard anywhere,[59] but as the financial and stra-tegic costs of India's actions began to sink in, there were stirrings of debate about Indian security and nuclear policy. A few voices joined in the judgment widely held by strategic analysts outside India that

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[58]On the case for India's tests, see Jaswant Singh, "Against Nuclear Apartheid," *Foreign Affairs*, 77 (September/October, 1998), pp. 41–52. Jaswant Singh, at the time of the tests, served as Vajpayee's senior adviser on defense and foreign affairs. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott provided a U.S. response in "Dealing with the Bomb in South Asia," *Foreign Affairs,* 78 (March/April 1999), pp. 110–22.

[59]Notable in speaking against the tests was Indian novelist Arundhati Roy, who joined in antinuclear demonstrations and drew attention and controversy with an essay, "The End of Imagination," *Frontline*, August 1–14, 1998, that condemned India's nuclear bomb as "the final act of betrayal by a ruling class that has failed its people."

in crossing the nuclear threshold, India had not enhanced its security, but diminished it, for India now faces a more perilous environment.

International reaction to India's tests was immediate. The United States, Britain, and Japan imposed economic sanctions against India, and throughout the world, there were expressions of fear that India had opened the Pandora's box of nuclear proliferation. Pakistan's nuclear tests, conducted soon after those of India, heightened fears of possible nuclear war between India and Pakistan, by miscalculation or accident, if not by design. Discounting the danger of war, India sees nuclear weapons as the guarantor of peace through mutual deterrence. Whether India's security has been enhanced by crossing the nuclear threshold, however, is deeply problematic. Rather than being more secure, India—politically unstable and economically vulnerable—may now face a more dangerous international environment. Within that environment, India confronts both constraints and imperatives that will shape its foreign policy in the years to come.

India is only beginning to construct a nuclear doctrine.[60] It has demonstrated the capacity to make a range of nuclear weapons, but India has not yet taken the next steps of weaponization and deployment. India denies that the tests will trigger an arms race in South Asia, stating that it seeks only a "minimum nuclear deterrent." But even a minimum deterrent, if credible, will be costly. How many weapons will be required? How and where will they be deployed? Under what circumstances would they be used? What about the system of command, communications, and control essential to reduce the risk of misperception and avert a mistake of staggering magnitude?

The costs of nuclear weapons; a delivery system; and of command, communications, and control systems have not yet been fully reckoned. Indian defense expenditures today account for roughly 2.5 percent of gross domestic product—modest by world standards, though they do not reflect various disguised costs, most notably in the development of nuclear capabilities under civilian agencies.

Despite the breakup of the Soviet Union, most of India's weapons continue to come from Russia. Russia also supplies spare parts and essential components for India's own production of Soviet-designed weapons like the MiG fighter. Both to diversify its weapons sources and to secure the most advanced technologies available, India looked to Western Europe and, cautiously, to the United States. During the 1980s, the Indian military acquired greater high-performance capabilities: In 1988

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[60]See Jasjit Singh, ed., *Nuclear India* (New Delhi: Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, 1998).

it tested the Prithvi short-range missile and, in 1994, the Agni intermediate-range ballistic missile, both capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. In April 1999, India test-fired Angi II, a missile of extended range, capable of carrying a nuclear payload as far as Beijing. India placed new emphasis on economic growth, but the nuclear weapons program will place a heavy burden on the budget and will necessarily take its toll in lost investment for social and economic development. Failure to respond to the basic needs of the people will be a high price to pay for nuclear weapons and the empty prestige that goes with them. Domestic strength—political stability and economic prosperity—is the bedrock of any nation's security, and for all the challenges India faces in its international environment, the greatest challenges to India's security are internal. It faces a secessionist movement in Kashmir; a communal divide between Hindus and Muslims; and, more generally, the rising demands of competing groups in an economy of scarcity, where the challenge is greater economic growth, with equity and social justice.

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