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Volume I of II

The Indian Political Party System: a Basis of Indian Democracy

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Brandeis University

Politics Department

Steven Burg, Advisor

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy**

by

Pamela Jean Venkatesan

May 2001

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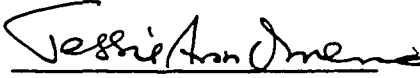
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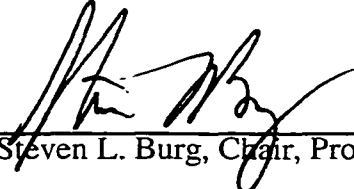
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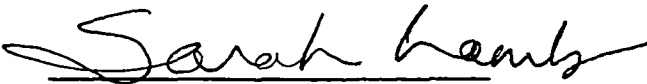
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The perplexing and wondrous puzzle that is India was first introduced to me by my husband, who brought me, as a young bride, to visit his country of birth. Over the years we have returned to visit on a number of occasions, witnessing vast changes over the decades. It was with pleasure that I embarked on a journey of trying to unravel the complexities of what India is and how it will cope with the challenges that lie ahead. With the completion of this dissertation I can only marvel at how much there is still to learn, and realize that my quest has only really begun.

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ABSTRACT

Indian Political Parties: A Basis For Indian Democracy

**A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Brandeis
University, Waltham, Massachusetts**

by Pamela J. Venkatesan

India has been a democracy for almost all its fifty three years of independence. This is a remarkable feat. Few countries escaping from the bonds of colonialism have been able to sustain a democratic system of government for five decades; fewer still that have the wide array of religions, languages, and ethnicities that India has. Compounding this, India is an economically poor country. This scenario does not usually bode well for fostering democracy. However, India has remained democratic in spite of this. How can this be explained?

This dissertation confronts this question by looking at the role of political parties in India. The hypothesis that is being evaluated is that the proliferation of political parties has played a basic role in embedding democracy in India by providing the citizens with the means through which they can voice their discontents and demands, and has increased participation.

The methodology is an analysis of the political party system in India, using secondary sources and data, from independence until 1999, to understand why parties have proliferated, and if the proliferation of parties has contributed to the resilience and entrenchment of democracy.

Preliminary results show that even as the party system has become more chaotic over the last two decades, support for democratic practices has been continually increasing.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The institutionalization of the political party system in a democracy has been viewed by scholars as one of the most important factors in the consolidation and maintenance of a democracy¹. According to theorists who have researched this phenomenon, the party system is one of the means through which other institutions interact, contributing to a country's stability and to the higher probability that democracy will be retained. A party system is distinct from the components of its system (i.e. political parties) and is defined for the purpose of this study as "the pattern of interactions among the parties"².

An *institutionalized* party system is defined as a "stable pattern of interactions among the competing party elites on the one hand, and among these elites and the voters on the other"³. Reconfiguration of parties, frequent switching of elites from one party to another, and the rapid birth and death of parties are symptomatic of an immature or weakly institutionalized party system. Shallow support and poor party allegiance among

¹ See Larry Diamond, Mark F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien, eds., Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xxv. In addition, see works by Adam Przeworski, "What Makes Democracies Endure?", Journal of Democracy (V7, no. 1: 1996); Giuseppe Di Palma, To Craft Democracies (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1990); Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy, (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

² Peter Mair, Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 75.

³ Gábor Tóka, "Political Parties in East Central Europe, in Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies, (Op. Cit.) 97.

the electorate results in high turnovers of governments. High electorate volatility can be indicative of a low degree of democratic consolidation. Weak party institutionalization increases the chances of disintegration due to usurpation of the democratic process and raises the risk that the democratic system itself will break down.

A correlation between party system institutionalization and democracy has intuitive merit. A well institutionalized party system channels competition, communicates to voters issue distinctions, and clarifies ideological distinctions among parties. An institutionalized party system operates through an established set of 'rules' of interaction and competition, within an established electoral and governmental framework. The party system consists of individual parties. An institutionalized party presumably is more capable of implementing a party platform when a specific party is elected into office. Competency in translating promises into policies and programs and then implementing these programs contributes to system effect or efficacy, and this has been regarded as contributing to governmental legitimacy. Regime legitimacy is regarded as a significant aspect in overall political stability. Thus, there appears to be a logical linkage between party institutionalization and democratic stability.

This theoretical construct does not seem to apply to the case of India. India has been a democracy for almost all of its fifty-two years of independence⁴ and continues to plod along the democratic path without the benefit of a well institutionalized party system or an efficacious government. Regime performance has been at best mediocre. Yet the legitimacy of the democratic system and democratic processes has been steadily rising

⁴ Indira Gandhi, then prime minister of India, declared a State of Emergency during the period from June 28, 1975 through January 14, 1977. This nineteen month interlude was the only interruption of democratic governance in India's independent history.

over the decades since independence. After the tumultuous decade from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s, when sectarian violence and communal rioting peppered the political and social landscape, leading many observers to believe that India was about to implode, and the installation of a government that political pundits warned would foment even more social fragmentation, India has, in fact, become **more** stable and more 'free'. According to Adrian Karatnycky, president of Freedom House and coordinator of its "Annual Comparative Survey of Freedom", India, which had been listed as 'partly free' since 1991, returned to the ranks of free countries in 1998, because it had demonstrated "greater internal stability, fewer instances of intercommunal violence, and the peaceful democratic transfer of power to an opposition-led government"⁵. India's ranking on the Freedom House Scale, on a scale from one to seven, with 'one' being 'totally free' and 'seven', not at all free, is two (for political rights) and three (civil liberties).⁶

SCOPE OF DISSERTATION

This dissertation seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge concerned with Indian democratic consolidation and maintenance. It will do so by challenging the theory that the institutionalization of the party system is a necessary component in the establishment and consolidation of a democratic regime. It will be argued that:

- 1) although the relationship between party systems and legitimacy has instinctive merit, it is not empirically borne out in the case of India;
- 2) political parties in India play a basic role in embedding democracy by

⁵ Adrian Karatnycky, "The 1998 Freedom House Surveys: The Decline of Illiberal Democracy", in *Journal of Democracy*, (10.1, 1999, p. 112-125), 112-113, and the 1999 survey, "A Century of Progress", *Journal of Democracy*, (11:1) January, 2000, 192-3.

⁶ 1998-9 Comparative country rankings from Freedom House. Source, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>.

providing citizens with the means, the tools, by which they can voice their discontents, demands and needs;

3) participation itself helps to perpetuate the democratic system. The power to choose between candidates, reject or re-elect incumbents, perhaps even to vie for office, has engendered within the general populace a greater sense of attachment to the process.

4) the inclusionary value of participating substitutes for the legitimization that would otherwise depend on government efficacy.

The arguments enumerated contradict the general body of scholarship that the decline of the Indian National Congress (INC), the dominant party in Indian politics for one hundred years, augurs negatively for Indian democracy.⁷ The INC is frequently credited for the success of democracy in India, and is cited as the variable that distinguishes India from the scores of countries that gained independence at about the same time but succumbed to various degrees of authoritarianism. Instead, it will be argued, the array of parties that has emerged is a reflection of the deepening relevance of

⁷ This is a common theme in discussions on Indian democracy and its continuity, and the references are vast. See especially the early works of Myron Weiner, Party Building in a New Nation: the Indian National Congress (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Rajni Kothari, "The Congress 'System' in India, Asian Survey (4: 12, 1964); Atul Kohli, "From Majority to Minority Rule: Making Sense of the 'New' Indian Politics", Indian Briefing, 1990, Marshal M. Bouton and Philip Oldenburg, eds., (Westview Press, 1990); Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy, eds., Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990); Robert Hardgrave and Stanley Kochanek, India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation (Fort Worth: Harcourt, 1993); Vernon Hewitt, "The Congress System is Dead: Long Live the Party System in Democratic India?", The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, (V.XXVII, no. 2, July 1989). These scholars have written extensively and critically on various aspects of the Congress party and its role in establishing the democratic process into political life in India. Certainly by the late 1980s, and continuing into the mid 1990s, Indian experts had recognized that Congress had deteriorated as a democratizing force, but were concerned that the power vacuum that would evolve from its demise might be filled by extremist or anti-system parties. Because Congress was credited so frequently and so laudably for being the variable that distinguished India from other new democracies that then were unable to maintain democratic institutions, seeing the demise of the Congress party as the center of Indian politics aroused degrees of concern among many scholars as to what would replace Congress.

democracy in a population that is highly diverse and becoming more politically sophisticated.

Additionally, the dissertation challenges the argument advocated by Arend Lijphart that India was a consociational democracy and the breakdown of consociationalism in the late 1960s spawned the erosion of democracy, the rise of sectoral violence and the disintegration of stable governance in India. Instead, the transition of the party system from one-party dominant to multipartyism is endogenous – an expected development in a country that is becoming increasingly democratic. The dominance of the Congress Party in the first two decades of independence, which Lijphart interprets as consociationalism, can persist if, as he puts it, the “followers are relatively passive and deferential”⁸. In a country wracked by social and economic injustices and multiple diversities, having an electorate that remained ‘passive and deferential’ does not seem to be a step towards democracy or towards participatory politics. Therefore, it is the contention of this dissertation that the increasing salience of opposition parties has a positive effect on the democratic process.

In theories that use the western industrialized democracies as their basis of comparison, the underlying presumption is that government exists to perform services and to respond to the demands presented by voters. In India the expectations voters have of their government have generally been unmet, but it is the contention of this dissertation that outcomes are less important than the belief that citizens have input into the process. It will be argued that the increasing viability of regional parties at the national level and

⁸ Arend Lijphart, “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation”, American Political Science Review, (v 90, no. 2, June 1996), 263.

the volatility of the electorate are due at least in part to the increased awareness by the voter of what accountability means and the role of the voter in a democracy can be. Evidence will be offered that suggests that although Indian democracy is under attack by various forces, its complete demise and the adoption of an authoritarian regime is unlikely.

The introduction of numerous parties into the political process and the electoral success of many minor or regional parties have complicated governance. The defeat of the Indian National Congress Party (INC) in the 1996, 1998, and 1999 national elections brought a coalition of parties to leadership and has by most accounts had the effect of even more disjointed policy making and implementation. Frustration at legislative incompetency and governmental inefficiency has eroded support for the government in power, but the reaction of the electorate has not been to discard the democratic system. Instead, ruling parties are voted out of office. Voter volatility reflects dissatisfaction with the leadership, not disgust with the process.

This dissertation poses the following questions:

1. Does multipartyism contribute to the deepening of democracy in India?
2. Under what conditions does multipartyism temper rather than exacerbate political competition?

As a corollary to these questions, an underlying puzzle, how did a single member district/plurality/winner-take-all electoral system produce a multiparty system, will be examined. Because historically, winner-take-all, first past the post electoral systems tend to produce two, or two-plus party systems, the existence of a multi-party party system in India should be explained. To answer these questions this dissertation will concentrate on

the literature in the following areas: the role political parties play in a democratic system; political party system institutionalization and its relationship to consolidation of democracy. These questions have generated these hypotheses.

HYPOTHESIS

In India the proliferation of political parties has contributed to fostering democracy at the mass level by building support for the democratic process and providing avenues for an increasing number of citizens to participate. Whereas the theoretical literature generally regards the proliferation of parties to be destabilizing for both the party system and for regime maintenance, in India, party proliferation appears to provide the channels for expressing the widespread diversities within the citizenry. Regional parties contribute to increased participation and interest in the political process. In India, the states that have strong regional parties are more likely to have higher voter turnout at elections⁹ and, on the state or regional level, a more institutionalized political party system. As voters identify more directly with their role in the political process and their power to affect decision making, their support for democracy and the democratic process increases.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The methodology will be a case study using secondary data. This dissertation will provide analyses of the changes in the Indian political party system spanning the years

⁹ For table showing voter turnout for the 1999 election, see Appendix, Table A-13. This subject and an analysis of the data will be addressed in chapter four.

from independence in 1947 to 1999. Integral to this analysis will be tracing how policies undertaken by the federal government supported regional identifications and formalized the formation of special interest groups. The ensuing competition among factions and the increasing importance of state-based politics kindled the development of regional parties. A correlation between the rising significance of regional political parties and the strengthening of support for democracy will then be developed using voter turnout, public opinion surveys, and the decline of vote banks as the benchmarks. The results show that even as the party system on the national level has become more jumbled and disorderly, there has been growing coherence of the party system at the regional or state levels, with regional or state parties that garner support across castes and classes.

This dissertation is organized in the following format. Chapter two will review and critique the key literature concerning the role and institutionalization of political parties and democratic consolidation theories with regard to party-system development. It will first focus on the question of how vulnerable is Indian democracy at this time. Because the premise of the dissertation is that Indian democracy is stable and becoming increasingly deep-rooted, this chapter will assess the state of Indian democracy now, what are the conditions that may make it vulnerable, and the evidence for the assertion that democracy is becoming more entrenched.

Chapter three will provide an overview of the party system in India, at both the state and national level, at the present time. Some of the structural influences on the party system will then be described: the electoral laws, the federal system of government, the central government's influence over state politics, the constitutional protections and

reservations for scheduled castes/tribes, and the re-organization of states based on language.

Chapter four will trace the history of and development of the Congress Party up to independence. The impact of historical events affected the development of political competition and the environment within which politics operates. Pre-independence India was a patchwork of multiple and diverse interests and contradictions which obviously were not going to be resolved by independence.

Chapter five traces India's political development in four stages: a) the era from independence until 1977 when the first non-Congress party coalition won office at the national level; b) 1977-1984 which saw the collapse of India's first coalition government, reinstatement of the Congress Party and the assassination of Indira Gandhi; c) 1984-1996, the era in which the Congress Party continued to rule but the rise of real electoral challenges becomes salient. Increasing sectoral politics, ethnic and religious violence, and calls for separatism mark this period. In part (d) the dynamics of the last three years will be sketched. During the last two decades India's party system has been undergoing a transformation. This transformation will be discussed. Three national elections in three years, (the third having taken place in October, 1999) attests to the turbulence of the party system at the national level. However, the disarray of the national party system has not eroded public belief in or support for the democratic process. The violence and separatist movements that marked the earlier twenty years have dissipated. Evidence of growing commitment to using democratic means by formerly marginalized groups will be provided.

Chapter six will analyze the changes in the party system, as well as the parties in terms of ideologies, demographics, and inter-party competition. The emergence of real competition at both the national and state levels have forced parties to make alliances in order to be electorally viable. This in turn has resulted in modified ideological stances, pragmatism, and moves toward cooperation among parties. Party systems at the national and the state levels will be compared, and an assessment will be made about the changes: does it appear likely that the party systems at the national and state levels will converge or will they remain distinct from each other, further impeding the development of national parties with national platforms.

Chapter seven will revisit the hypothesis and theories. Do they account for the Indian case or are there are idiosyncratic circumstances in the Indian case that cannot be accounted for in the theories? The chapter will also evaluate the prospects for democratic stability in India. Are the explanations that have been presented for contributing to democratic survival sufficient for sustaining democracy in the future? It will summarize the findings and offer suggestions for future research. An appendix and bibliography will be included.

CHAPTER TWO
Literature Survey and Indian Democracy

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide the reader with the outline of the argument, identify the major concepts that will be used, and synthesize the theoretical literature relating to party institutionalization and its effect on democratization. The concepts will then be evaluated as to the relevance and applicability to India. India will serve as a case study of the applicability of these concepts.

Democracy Defined

The first task at hand must be to define democracy as it will be used in this dissertation. The chore of defining democracy has been undertaken by numerous scholars without reaching a universal consensus. Various schools have stressed democracy as a process, an institutional and structural procedure of formalized competition in order to arbitrate political decisions.¹ Others view democracy as an end in itself, as a means of producing a ‘common good’ or other normative values. The former emphasis lends itself more easily to analysis whereas the latter is subject to “ambiguity and imprecision”, in the words of Samuel Huntington.²

¹ Joseph Schumpeter was instrumental in advancing the procedural definition of democracy; see Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy, (New York: Harper, 1947), chapter 21.

² Samuel Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 6-7. See also Inkeles, On Measuring Democracy (25-32).

For the purpose of this dissertation, the following definition of procedural democracy will be used:

Procedural democracy is defined as the adherence by all players to the 'rules of the game', and enforced across the board, all citizens are included in the game, and all players are subject to the same rules.

The necessity to restrict the definition of democracy to the procedural and to avoid the judgment of determining if India is a 'liberal' democracy or if it has achieved some of the social goals of equalitarianism, questions that are frequently asked by observers of India, will not be addressed in this dissertation. Certainly these are valuable subjects to study, partially because the Indian Constitution explicitly directs that the goals to be sought by any government would be a transformation of Indian society through the power of the government and the fulfillment of basic needs for each of its citizens. Furthermore, the Constitution spells out clearly the Fundamental Rights that are inalienable for all of its citizens and details the methods that are to be used to assure these rights. Thus, the definition of democracy for India could validly be a study of the conformance of the constitutional dictates and the performance of the state. The directives also have had an influence on how the parties themselves have formed, and how these parties have organized themselves into a system. However, for the purposes of this study, these topics will not be explored.

Generally agreed upon criteria of a democratic government includes at the minimum that the government is accountable to the people. This is effectuated through regularly scheduled competitive elections, universal suffrage, and peaceful transition of political power from one party to another. Juan Linz summarizes these criteria as the

legal freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives with the concomitant rights to free association, free speech, and other basic freedoms of person; free and nonviolent competition among leaders with periodic validation of their claim to rule; inclusion of all effective political offices in the democratic process; and the provision for the participation of all members of the political community, whatever their political preferences.³

Robert Dahl established the minimal requirements for a political democracy in his book, Polyarchy, published in 1971.⁴ These requirements are: freedom to form and join organizations; freedom of expression; the right to vote; eligibility for public office; the right of political leaders to compete for support; alternative sources of information; free and fair elections; and institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

A concise interpretation of procedural democracy is also proffered by Adam Przeworski et.al., who use the instrumentalist notion of democracy as the process by which “government offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections. Only if the opposition is allowed to compete, win, and assume office is a regime democratic.”⁵ Przeworski simplifies the concept even further when he states that “democracy is a system in which parties lose elections”. If this minimalist definition is taken to heart then India truly became a democracy in 1977 when the Congress Party lost its first national election, and at the level of the states, the rotation in office between competing parties began a decade earlier than that when almost one-third of the state assembly races

³ Juan J. Linz, The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration, (Baltimore, MD., Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 5.

⁴ See Robert Dahl, Polyarchy, (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1971), 3. For an essay on interpreting and measuring these variables see Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang H. Reinicke, “Measuring Polyarchy”, in Alex Inkeles, ed., On Measuring Democracy: Its Consequences and Conclusions (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 47-68.

⁵ Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi: “What Makes Democracies Endure?”, Journal of Democracy, vol. 7, no 1, (1996), p. 39-53.

resulted in a turnover of power. Before that, even though there were competitive elections, India's plurality electoral system and the superior organization of the Congress Party allowed the Congress Party to monopolize power. Of course Przeworski does not imply that a particular party *must* lose an election, only that the rules of the game allow loss and/or victory by any competitor.

Even the most minimalist definition of democracy must be further 'unpacked' to describe the elements that are necessary to assure that the government is accountable and that free elections are held, and can offer at least the potential that the ruling party may lose. Towards that end, then, two criteria must be satisfied. First, there must be universal suffrage. Second, for elections to be competitive, there must be the rights of free assembly, speech, press, and association. Political parties, voluntary organizations, and interest groups are extensions of the institutional framework through which elections are carried out. India satisfies each of these requirements.

IS INDIAN DEMOCRACY AT RISK?

Conditions that make Indian democracy problematic and the relevance of development theories to the Indian case.

A question concerning India is not only whether it is now a democracy, but rather, will it remain so, and how does it continue to remain democratic when it appears to defy predictions and theories relating to democratic consolidation, stability, perseverance, and development. Therefore it is important to evaluate some of the theories concerned with democratic development and their applicability to the case of India.

On August 15, 1997, India celebrated its first fifty years as an independent and democratic state. This achievement is truly remarkable by any measure. Very few

countries that have emerged from colonialism faced with the gargantuan economic and social inequities characteristic of India have been able to translate independence into more than five decades of relatively stable governance and political freedom for its people. Frequently, the media and scholarly studies have focused on the negative events and the failures that have wracked India rather than laud its singular accomplishment: the maintenance of democratic institutions against the almost indomitable odds that should, theoretically, have doomed India and its democracy.

That criticism and concern should engage any student of Indian development is not surprising. Waves of political, ethnic, religious, and caste violence have engulfed regions within India, and continue to pose a threat to civil peace. Corruption has become so commonplace that at this writing, dozens of separate investigations are being conducted by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) involving officials from the most lofty positions in the central government (including former prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao), as well as many officials at the state level. Environmental degradation has become alarmingly dangerous, affecting the forests, the air, soil, and water supplies. The World Bank estimates that more than 40,000 Indians die from air pollution annually and an Indian's diet contains more pesticide residues than almost anywhere else in the world⁶.

⁶ According to one report, almost 28 percent of the schoolchildren in central Mumbai (Bombay) suffer asthma and emphysema. See *India Today*, (15 February, 1997), 51. Water pollution is equally serious. According to a report in *India Today* (15 January, 1997, pages 104-107), "each of India's 13 major river basins – making up 80 percent of the total surface water and home to nearly 85 percent of the population – is so polluted, ... that bacteria ... counts are anywhere between 20 times and 1000 times over safe levels." (p. 105).

To stimulate economic growth infrastructure must be improved to match the demands of a modern industrial state, but the most basic projects are under-funded, postponed, or ignored. Roads, telecommunications and energy are so neglected that the motor that drives economic growth has been in idle for more than a decade. The backbone of a country is its interstate highway system that allows products to be shipped efficiently and cheaply across country. From 1951 to 1996 the miles of national highways only doubled, but there is sixty-five times more traffic on these highways⁷. Few companies can rely on public energy sources to supply electricity consistently; blackouts are frequent occurrences and limit expansion of old industries and the emergence of new ones. Much of the blame for governmental incompetence has to be laid at the feet of the fractured party system and deteriorating ability of the political parties to work together in Parliament to address the problems facing the country. This is the down side to the proliferation of political parties. Since legitimacy of a regime and governmental competency are closely linked, the question of how democracy can continue to survive in this chaotic and under-performing environment must be examined⁸. But first it will be beneficial to evaluate where Indian democracy stands on the scales that have been suggested by Robert Dahl.

⁷ John F. Kennedy once remarked that “It’s not wealth that built our roads but the roads that built our wealth”. The lack of roads and the costs of additional fuel, repairs of cars and trucks due to bad road conditions, accidents, and the waste involved in transporting agricultural products that rot because of the delays in delivery would save at the minimum twenty million dollars a year. Road building would also enable employment for more than five million people, a significant thrust towards reducing the high unemployment or underemployment of the poorest workers. Information from India Today, (11 January, 1999), 32-35.

⁸ Legitimacy of the government, and of the system itself is surprisingly high in India. Three quarters of Indians rate the legitimacy of the system to be either ‘medium’ or high’, even when ranking governmental efficacy at high, medium, or low. A table giving the ‘Cross-tabulation of Efficacy and Legitimacy’ will appear in the Appendix. Data from Subrata Mitra and V.B. Singh, Democracy and Social Change in India: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of the National Electorate, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), 262.

Robert Dahl's Modern Dynamic Pluralist Society

Elections are essential to a democracy but they occur within a specific environment. If that environment is hostile to democracy it is less likely that democracy can survive. Robert Dahl puts forth the following criteria that contribute to the prospects that a democracy will succeed, or in his phraseology, a modern dynamic pluralist society, (MDP). Dahl asserts that although not necessary or sufficient, “polyarchy has been strongly associated with a society marked by a host of interrelated characteristics”⁹: high levels of income and wealth, as well as continuing high growth rates, of wealth and income; increasing levels of urbanization and therefore, a declining or relatively small agricultural population; occupational diversity; mass literacy, an economic system that is primarily capitalistic; and ‘relatively’ high levels of those factors commonly measured by the Human Development Index (HDI)¹⁰. So highly correlated are these conditions with democracy that Dahl unambiguously states that “probably nothing is more firmly established than the correlation between any of these societal measures and indicators of democracy or polyarchy.”¹¹

Another study, by Mark Gasiorowski and Timothy Power, used statistical analyses to determine the influence of various structural factors on consolidating new democracies in the third world, and their study confirms that socioeconomic variables were one of only three factors that had any significant impact on democratic consolidation. These variables are similar to Dahl’s: economic development, a country’s level of wealth, levels

⁹ Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1989), 251.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. Dahl also lists other conditions that increase the likelihood of a stable polyarchy: civilian control of violent coercion, a homogeneous population (or otherwise, successful management of heterogeneity), a political culture favorable to polyarchy, and no external intervention that would overthrow the polyarchy.

of education or literacy, and the size of the middle class.¹² Factors such as institutional structure, ethnic homogeneity, and party system institutionalization were not found to be statistically significant.

Dahl, as well as a number of other scholars have speculated that the reasons for the correlation between an MDP and democracy are that an MDP disperses power and authority and fosters compromise and negotiation as the means to conflict resolution, and gradually becomes inclusive of all the citizenry. On none of these aforementioned criteria does the case of India appear to be capable of establishing a democratic system of governance, let alone being able to maintain one. That India is an exception to Dahl's expectation is what prompted Dahl to qualify the relationship between MDPs and polyarchies as neither necessary nor sufficient¹³. However, it would still be a useful exercise to analyze how well the fit between the factors and India actually is, and if they should be regarded as relevant.

High Per Capita Income And Wealth

The 'Hindu rate of growth' has been a moniker that was coined to describe the sub-standard rate of economic growth that had marked India for several decades. With growth rates hovering between an average of three and five percent from the 1950s until

¹² Mark J. Gasiorowski and Timothy J. Power, "The Structural Determinants of Democratic Consolidation: Evidence From the Third World", *Comparative Political Studies*, (December 1998) 740-771. Socio-economic factors were most significant along with whether a country experienced high inflation (which had an influence on consolidation before the early 1970s) and third, if a country's neighbors are democratic, which would also increase the chances for a successful consolidation process.

¹³ Dahl, 1989, p. 253. Dahl states that "evidently an MDP is not strictly necessary to the existence of polyarchy. Thus a leading contemporary exception to the general relation between polyarchy and MDP society is India, where polyarchy was established when the population was overwhelmingly agricultural, illiterate, occupationally much less specialized than in an MDP country, and highly traditional and rule-bound in behavior and beliefs."

1990, it barely kept pace with population growth¹⁴. When inflation was factored in, the per capita income for approximately half the population remained pitifully low. At the same time, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of people entering the middle class (300 million¹⁵), and even the numbers of upper class people have increased dramatically, with an estimated ten million now classified as upper class.¹⁶ Much of the added wealth, and the reduction of poverty noted in World Bank and United Nations Development Programme Statistics, has occurred in the urban areas, with rural economic growth and consumption remaining relatively stagnant.¹⁷ Since 1991 and the introduction of economic reforms and increased privatization, the economy has sputtered forth with bursts of higher growth, reaching 6.9 percent, but averaging closer to 5 percent for this decade¹⁸. Annual economic growth rates vary enormously within India, with some states

¹⁴ Economic growth per annum was 3.1% from 1951-1979, amounting to an annual rate per capita economic growth of one percent. India: A Country Study, (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996) 298-9. See also Census of India.

¹⁵ The term middle class, as used in India, is neither as affluent nor as 'homogeneous' as is commonly associated with the term when used in the West. When it is used in India it has been suggested that it refers to 'someone who has a bicycle and a sewing machine'. Depending on what it refers to can alter the figures also. If income is the variable, then perhaps only about 100 million people are middle class. If occupation is the identifier, then the figure more closely approximates the 300 million cited in the text. According to the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER), using the purchases of wrist watches as a measure, 550 million Indian households are part of the 'consuming class' (The Economist, 11-5-94, page 9),; although this figure is exaggerated (according to The Economist), there has been a marked increase in consumption by the majority of Indian households since the mid 1980s.

¹⁶ These numbers are given in India: A Country Study fifth edition, (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office: 1996), 301.

¹⁷ See Gaurav Datt, "Has Poverty Declined since Economic Reforms?", Economic and Political Weekly, (December 11-17, 1999). Dutt's analysis shows that there has been no sharp increase in intra-sector inequality in the period from 1979 to 1997; however, rural inequality has remained stable, at .285 in 1974 and .295 in 1997, but urban figures have increased, with an index of .307 in 1974, and the 1997 index at .36.

¹⁸ According to The Economist, growth rates of 6-7% "will take too long to raise India's masses out of poverty; growth at 9-10% a year, sustained for a generation, would work wonders". GDP may have quadrupled in forty years (from \$86.9 billion in 1960 to \$357.2 billion in 1997), but this rate has been dwarfed by most of its Southeast Asian neighbors, as well as by Pakistan (\$8.3 to \$49.5 billion). The Economist, "Survey of India", 22 February, 1997, 5). For a study on how economic growth reduces poverty for the poorest 40% of the population, see Michael Roemer and Mary Kay Gugerty, "Does Economic Growth Reduce Poverty?", Harvard Institute for International Development, March 1997. (www.harvard.edu/projects/caer/papers/paper05.htm).

registering remarkably high increases (e.g., Gujarat, with 7.5%) and some with almost no growth (e.g. Bihar, 1.1%, and Uttar Pradesh, 1.2%).¹⁹ Economic inequality among states has steadily increased over the last two decades, from a Gini Coefficient rating of 0.152 in 1980 to 0.233 in 1998-99,²⁰ showing uneven development within the country. Overall economic inequality within India, as measured by the Gini Coefficient, is stated to be moderate, at .035 (on a scale of zero to one, with zero exhibiting no inequality)²¹.

The evaluation of the economic development characteristic on Dahl's list is harder to interpret. Since a robust middle class is deemed invaluable in democracies, the Indian middle class, being larger than the entire population of the United States, would certainly bode well for India if this characteristic had predictive import. At the same time, a vast proportion of population is impoverished. With a population of approximately a billion people, it is estimated that at least one third of them live below the poverty line²². This proportion has been declining, especially in the last decade. In 1983, official figures estimated that about 45 percent of India's population was impoverished, but by 1997, this figure had been reduced to 34 percent.²³ India's inability to relieve the vast poverty suffered by so many of its citizens has been its greatest failure, but has not resulted in class warfare or revolutionary zeal (at least not yet). Rather, parties and social

¹⁹ See Table 14 for table listing annual rates of growth for fourteen states. Data from India Planning Commission, <http://planningcommission.nic.in/stanfors2000.htm>).

²⁰ Ibid. See Table 15, for more specific data.

²¹ The index of economic inequality, as measured by the Gini Coefficient, varies from study to study. The World Bank has figured the index to be 0.35, (<http://www.worldbank.org-data>). The figures for India are similar to those of the United States. ²¹ (<http://planningcommission.nic.in/stanfors2000.htm>).

²² The UNDP places the figure at 550 million. The actual figure is not readily ascertainable, and is always only an estimate, depending partially on the specific definition of poverty and how one extrapolates from a sample to a population. Somewhere between half and three quarters of the population lives in extremely marginal conditions. The population living below the poverty line (set at \$1 per day PPP) is 52.5 percent of the population. "Human Poverty Profile Index", UNDP, 1998. See <http://www.undp.org>.

²³ Data from India Planning Commission (<http://planningcommission.nic.in/stanfors2000.htm>).

organizations have been emerging to represent the interests and needs of the impoverished masses.²⁴

Urbanization and occupational diversity

India is still primarily agricultural, with three-quarters²⁵ of its population living in villages. Migration to the cities has resulted in India having twenty-four cities with populations over one million people, and more than forty percent of the urban population lives in cities with over 750,000 residents. But increasing urbanization has not necessarily been a sign of more sophisticated or 'cosmopolitan' citizens. The bulk of the urban dwellers are still manual laborers.

Almost sixty-five percent of the labor force is employed in agriculture²⁶. Most agricultural workers either do not own any land, or own only a plot of land too small to sustain a family. About 30 percent of India's GDP is derived from agricultural production, fishing, forestry, and mining which are categorized as primary industries, related to agriculture.

Occupational diversity in India has certainly increased as economic modernization has taken place. Industry and services now employ thirty-five percent of the work force, an increase from twenty-five percent in 1970²⁷. The caste system in India has been one of the factors in confining groups of peoples to specific occupations but as urbanization expands, the constraints of caste become less restricting. Laws against discrimination based on caste have been enacted and affirmative action programs have opened up

²⁴ This will be dealt with in chapter 4.

²⁵ Data in this section is extracted from the 1991 Census of India as well as UNDP. In 1995 26.8% of the population were categorized as urban dwellers.

²⁶ UNDP, "Profile of people in work force", (<http://www.undp.org/hdro/work/htm>.)

²⁷ Ibid. Approximately than 70 % of GDP is generated from this sector.

previously closed avenues for low caste peoples to attain education and training to qualify for, as well as actually get, jobs. The reality is, however, that caste still plays a predominant role in occupational opportunity. Caste is highly correlated with education and class and low caste persons are still underprivileged, receiving appreciably less education and remaining rooted in poverty.

Literacy

Only half of the Indian population is literate. When analyzed more closely for gender and regional differences, the literacy rate shows extremely uneven development. According to the 1991 Census of India statistics, the all-India literacy rate is 52 percent, but the all-India rate for females is only 39 percent, and for males, 64 percent²⁸. A state by state comparison also shows enormous divergence. In Table one, presented on the next page, shows the literacy rates by state, as well as the breakdown by gender. The states of Bihar and Rajasthan have the lowest literacy rates in India, with overall literacy rates of only 38 percent, and female literacy less than 23 percent for Bihar and only 20 percent for Rajasthan. In contrast, the state of Kerala shows virtually no difference between literacy rates for males and females, and its overall rate of 90 percent compares favorably with some of the world's more advanced economies.

²⁸ Census of India, 1991 (accessed through www.censusofindia.net/cendat/datatable14.html.) A table showing the actual state by state comparisons, and the variance between rural-urban literacy is available in the Appendix. (Table A-1).

TABLE 1
LITERACY RATES IN STATES²⁹

STATE	Literacy rates in %	Literacy rate Males	Literacy rate females
Andhra Pradesh	52.2	64.1	39.3
Arunachal Pradesh	41.6	55.1	32.7
Assam	52.9	61.9	43.0
Bihar	38.5	52.5	22.9
Goa	75.5	83.6	67.1
Gujarat	61.3	73.1	48.6
Haryana	55.8	69.1	40.5
Himachal Pradesh	63.9	75.4	52.1
Kerala	89.8	93.6	86.2
Madhya Pradesh	44.2	58.4	28.8
Maharashtra	64.9	76.7	52.3
Manipur	59.9	71.6	47.6
Meghalaya	49.1	53.1	44.9
Mizoram	82.3	85.6	78.6
Nagaland	61.6	67.6	54.7
Orissa	49.1	63.1	34.7
Punjab	58.5	65.7	50.4
Rajasthan	38.6	55.0	20.4
Tamil Nadu	62.7	73.7	51.5
Uttar Pradesh	41.6	55.7	25.3
West Bengal	57.7	67.8	46.6
ALL INDIA	52.2	64.1	39.3
all India rural	44.7	57.9	30.6
all India urban	73.1	81.1	64.1

The widest variance in the figures is in the urban-rural literacy rates. The states with the lowest literacy rates also have larger proportions of rural residents, as well as a greater proportion of Scheduled Tribes³⁰. When literacy rates and State Domestic Product (SDP) figures are compared, there is a strong, positive, correlation between the two indexes.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. See Table A-8 in Appendix.

High literacy rates reflect several significant developments that bode well for democracy. First, literacy and formal education are tightly linked. Formal education is a socializing experience as well as an educational one, developing a community ethos and breaking down particularism and parochialisms. The relationship between education and political competency has been well established for decades³¹, providing citizens with the rudimentary tools to understand their political and social rights, as well as the skills with which to evaluate, interpret, and respond to political information.³² Subrata Mitra found that in India “formal education has systematically enhanced the legitimacy of the electoral process; the individual’s sense of efficacy goes up with education; and, the confidence of individuals in politicians also increases”.³³ According to a survey conducted by the Centre for Developing Societies, citizens with at least a primary school education are almost twice as likely to believe that their vote has an effect, that elections are essential to good government, and that people can influence government. The numbers continue to increase with further years of education.³⁴ These findings correspond with the study that Robert Dahl did on voters in New Haven, Connecticut, where political efficacy and increased education are positively correlated.³⁵ Henry Rowen analyzed the inter-relationship of education with the freedom rating assigned by the Freedom House and,

³¹ See for example Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba The Civic Culture, L.W. Milbrath, Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?,

³² Children who are in school are obviously not laboring in fields and factories, another benefit of formal education. There are a number of excellent studies that have equated child education with massive societal changes ranging from lower birth rates, infant mortality, to the breakdown of extended families. See John C. Caldwell, Theory of Fertility Decline, (New York: Academic Press, 1982).

³³ Subrata Mitra, “Politics in India”, Comparative Politics Today: A World View, sixth edition, eds. Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., (New York: Harpers Collins, 1996) 686-7.

³⁴ Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, India, National Parliamentary Survey, Data Unit, 1971; See Table 1 in appendix for “Impact on Education on Legitimacy and Efficacy”.

³⁵ Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1989), 290.

using regression analysis, shows that “an additional year of schooling in a population improves the freedom rating of a country an average of 6.6 percentage points.”³⁶ The effect of education on income and thus, economic growth, can explain part of the reason why educational levels are so integral to the spread of democracy.

In India, the effects of education are not as pronounced as they are in Western democracies, and have also been decreasing over the last two decades as illiterates have become more mobilized through political parties. Although fewer illiterates admitted that they had been approached directly by candidates during election campaigns (74.7% stated they had had ‘no exposure’ versus 42.2% college graduates who had had had no exposure³⁷), and are less apt to believe that their votes have an effect on the political process³⁸, the illiterates are as likely to vote as their more educated fellow citizens.

Regional differences notwithstanding, illiteracy rates place India in the lowest quartile on any scale.³⁹ For example, in regard to schooling, figures for literacy, for attendance, for teacher/pupil ratios, and even the numbers of educational institutions

³⁶ Although the Freedom House ranks political and civil rights on a metric from one to seven, Rowen converted these to a scale from one to one hundred. See Henry S. Rowen, “The Tide Underneath the ‘Third Wave’”, *Journal of Democracy* (6:1, January 1995, p 52-64), 59. For a thorough discussion on what the Comparative Survey of Freedom measures and how the ratings are derived see Raymond Duncan Gastil, “The Comparative Survey of Freedom: Experiences and Suggestions”, (21-46) in *On Measuring Democracy: Its Consequences and Concomitants*, Alex Inkeles, ed., (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991). See also the writings published by Freedom House at its web site: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>.

³⁷ Data from Subrata K. Mitra and V.B. Singh, *Democracy and Social Change in India*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), pages 94, 141.

³⁸ According to survey results, 47.0% illiterates believe their votes affect the political process, versus 79.6% college graduates who believe their votes are important. Ibid. See Appendix, Table A-9 in Appendix.

³⁹ Literacy rates vary from state to state, and, obviously, from urban to rural areas. However, overall, adult literacy rates for India are 51.2 percent, compared to 69.7 percent for ‘all developing countries’ and 48.1 percent for ‘least developed countries. Sub-Saharan Africa has an average adult literacy rate of 55.9 percent, almost ten percent higher than India. “Human Development Index” *UNDP*, 1998.

actually existing are in part fabricated and certainly are distorted.⁴⁰ The data collected and thus used as a measurement over-represent the actual numbers of schools, of attendance, and so forth. In rural areas, less than half of the girls (but three-quarters of the boys) have ever attended school at any time, and much of the attendance that does occur is either seasonal or sporadic. In some regions, even the teachers fail to show up in the classroom. Literacy is lower than the dismal figures show, as much of the population that is considered literate, based on conjured attendance rates, have actually had so few years of education, have been so poorly taught, their tenure in school has been so disrupted into disjointed time frames, and have had so little reinforcement in keeping their literacy skills current after leaving school, that their ability to actually read or write has been dissipated. If education is the major responsibility of government then India has failed, especially in the area of primary education. It is generally believed that to achieve any advancement in literacy and basic skills, at least six percent of the gross domestic product should be earmarked for education⁴¹. India presently spends less than four percent of its GDP in this area, a figure below that of most of Sub-Saharan African

⁴⁰ The information in this paragraph is taken from three sources: The Economist (Country Survey, India: 22 February 1997), 17-21; The Economist, "Education and the Wealth of Nations", 29 March, 1997 (15-16, and 21-23); and from the "India Literacy Project" (ILP), a volunteer organization associated with the eradication of illiteracy in India. Their findings confirm that from 1986-87, seventy-five million children between the ages of six and fourteen had never entered school, forty-three percent of those who attend school drop out before the fifth standard (grade), and fifty-eight percent drop out before the eighth standard. The Indian Constitution sets the eighth grade as the minimal level of education for children. And, although India declares that educational institutions are universally available throughout the country, more than 200,000 villages have no educational facilities whatsoever. These are mainly located in desert or mountainous areas, and the tribal regions, but the lack of even rudimentary facilities contribute to the utter poverty and backwardness of this portion of the population. See The Beacon, (volume 3, number 12, May 1996). Source: Internet. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines literacy as the capability to read forty words per minute, write twenty words per minute, and to calculate two digit arithmetic.

⁴¹ The Economist, 22 February, 1997. Both the BJP and the INC have pledged in their 1999 election manifestoes to allocate 6% of GDP to education. (See Appendix for Manifestoes).

countries, earning India the “dubious distinction of one of the countries that spends the least for education.”⁴² Furthermore, rather than emphasizing primary education first, three-fourths of most of the funds that are allocated are spent on secondary and university level schooling. The actual *share* of the education budget appropriated for elementary education is less than was spent in the 1950s. Thus, the criteria of high literacy rates and universal education are not met in the Indian case.

In spite of the expectations that literacy has a positive impact on voting and political participation, India once again fails to conform to the general pattern. Education appears to have little effect on whether a citizen is likely or not to vote. Over the past thirteen national elections, illiterate citizens have been increasingly exercising their right of franchise. In the 1999 election illiterates were as likely to vote as their educated neighbors, were as likely to have attended at least one political rally and/or campaigned for a candidate, and almost as likely to believe that their votes matter⁴³.

Capitalism

India can be categorized as capitalist, albeit with strong socialist tendencies. The Constitution of India was envisioned as a vehicle to bring about social change but the Constituent Assembly avoided formalizing economic socialism in the final draft. Instead, as Granville Austin observed, the Assembly members assured themselves that the constitution be “framed so as to allow the nation in the future to become as socialist as its citizens desired or as its needs demanded.”⁴⁴ After independence the official platform

⁴² N. A. Karim, *The Hindu* (9 April, 1996).

⁴³ See *Frontline*, “Election Analysis: Participatory Upsurge of the Oppressed”, (V16, Issue 24, Nov 13-26, 1999; and “Election Analysis: The Turnout Factor” (Volume 16, Issue 22, October 23-November 5, 1999).

⁴⁴ Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, (Bombay, India: Oxford University Press, 1972), 43.

called for government ownership of essential industries such as heavy manufacturing, steel, mining, transportation, telecommunications, and, by 1970, insurance and banking.⁴⁵ After the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the economic policies of the government began a shift away from public to private sector development, but the pace has been slow.

In 1991 the government under Narasimhan Rao began privatization in earnest, partially because the economic picture in India at that point was so bleak. The last decade has seen gradual transfer of government ownership to private parties, although the government still holds shares or controlling interests in most of these transferred companies. The same decade has seen an effort to curb excessive tariffs, taxes, licensing requirements and subsidies but the Indian economy is still highly regulated. The public sector is still the largest non agricultural employer in the country and government regulations tightly control a private company's capability to fire or lay off employees. As far as the 'degree of liberalism' of the economy is concerned, even with the increasing role of the private market in the 1990s, the Heritage Foundation⁴⁶ ranked India at 3.80 out of a scale of ten, a poor grade in terms of capitalism and a figure that contributes fodder to the argument that it was the socialist path of development undertaken after independence that has retarded economic development.

⁴⁵ Indira Gandhi moved the country onto a much more socialist path, nationalizing all banks in 1969 and increasing government controls on all industries, curtailing further monopolies and undermining the private sector by increasing the numbers of licenses necessary to operate businesses, curbing imports for companies, controlling currency transfers, and using nationalized bank loans to force compliance with her economic policies.

⁴⁶ The Heritage Foundation in conjuncture with the Wall Street Journal conducts a survey each year on the extent of economic freedom each country exhibits, and publishes this information. See 2000 Index of Economic Freedom, by Bryan T. Johnson, Kim R. Holmes, and Melanie Kirkpatrick (2000).

India is a country that continues to score near the bottom on measurements for human development⁴⁷. According to the 1998 UNDP report, India ranks in the ‘low human development’ sector, at 139 out of 174 countries measured. This ranking has scarcely changed in the ten years that UNDP has been calculating this measurement. The HDI includes three factors, adult literacy, life expectancy, and standard of living (GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity, PPP). Literacy, as discussed above, is lower than most sub-Saharan African countries. Life expectancy in India has increased to sixty one years, infant mortality has been halved since 1960, to seventy-three per thousand (1996 figure), but of the toddlers under five, more than half are under-weight, thereby increasing the numbers of children who die before their fifth birthday to 111 per thousand. Sanitation, potable water, and access to basic health services are improving but still fall short of need⁴⁸. In terms of human development, India has made substantial improvements over the past fifty years, and especially in the last twenty-five, but still lags behind most of the world. Population growth has diluted gains. It has been said about India that the good news is that a smaller percentage of the population lives in abject poverty than did at independence, but the bad news is that now more people live in poverty than existed in India at independence. Few of the other forty-three countries that share the ‘low human development’ category with India could be categorized as

⁴⁷ The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) ranks countries according to the Human Development Index (HDI), Gender-Related Development Index (GDI), and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). These figures are from the 1998 report. Life expectancy is 61.6 years, about equal to ‘all developing countries’ (61.8) and well ahead of the ‘least developed countries’ and Sub-Saharan Africa (50.4 and 50.0). “Human Development Index” UNDP, 1998.

⁴⁸ These figures are also from UNDP: “Child survival and development” and ‘Human poverty profile index’.

democracies, and even fewer of them have escaped violent civil wars and decades of authoritarian rule.⁴⁹

DEMOCRATIZATION THEORIES

Economic Growth as a factor

Even the most optimistic interpretation of Indian social and economic development depicts a country that is unlikely to sustain a democratic government. Certainly Dahl acknowledged that it was an exception to his hypothesis. Other quests for commonalities among stable democracies have looked at economic development as the most important variable. For a number of democratic theorists, economic growth is still considered the single most important variable in the survival of democracy. Adam Przeworski, et.al., found in their study of 135 countries that democracy survives in countries that experience economic growth. Noting that

once a country is sufficiently wealthy, with per capita income of more than \$6000 a year, democracy is certain to survive, come hell or high water. And while international factors as well as political institutions are important for the durability of democracy in less affluent countries, economic performance does matter: indeed, democracy is more likely to survive in a growing economy with less than \$1000 per capita income than in a country where per capita income is between \$1000 and \$4000, but which is declining economically. Democracies can survive even in the poorest nations if they manage to generate development, if they reduce inequality, if the international climate is propitious, and if they have parliamentary institutions.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Larry Diamond, in "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered", American Behavioral Science, (V 35, No. 4/5, March/June 1992, 460-486), finds a stronger correlation between a country's HDI/PQLI and its likelihood of being a democracy than its per capita income/GDP. India's low HDI rating, but democratic government, is obviously an exception to this correlation.

⁵⁰ Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, Josse Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi, "What Makes Democracies Endure?", Journal of Democracy (7.1, 1996, pages 39-55), 49.

Indian per capita income is now above the \$1000 mark, and is growing⁵¹, albeit slowly, even with the rate of inflation often eroding per capita income growth. But income distribution is still very skewed, leaving half the citizens living in squalor. Because most of the poor do not own farm land, they do not partake in the subsidized programs that benefit the landowners and relatively well-off farmers. For the most part, the poverty programs have ignored their plight, either through incompetence of the administrators or through the interference of the local elites who redirect resources to their own benefit. One of the challenges of government is to energize economic growth in areas that will benefit the half of the population that has excluded from both the Green Revolution and the technological revolution.

Political Development Theories And Democracy: Modernization Theory

Early modernization theories equated economic development with setting the stage for political and social development. Modernization and development theories developed in the 1950s hypothesized that economic growth would eventually translate into political development, social reform, institutionalization, and 'nation'-building. The studies of the 1960s-70s, based in part on empirical observations, recognized that the presumed harmony and linearity postulated by the liberal developmentalists simply did not, and probably could not, exist. Conflict was, if not inevitable, then at least a probable consequence of change. A variety of approaches emerged to explain modernization and development processes, emphasizing different variables, phases, crises, stages of

⁵¹ According to the UNDP, in 1995 India's real GDP per capita (PPPS) was \$1422, a 2.5 percent growth in the years 1980-1992 (from 0.4 in the period from 1970-1980) Source: <http://www.undp.org/hdro/trends.htm>.

development, and categorizing achievement (or lack of it) as signs of progress⁵². But a commonality among the theories was that economic development and at least a modicum of equitable distribution of resources (land/wealth/income), a certain level of literacy, the institutionalization of political participation and gradual mobilization was central to underpinning a democratic, and stable, political system⁵³.

Cultural and social variables were not ignored by the early developmental theorists, but a prevailing optimism about the mutability of culture and the propensity of a society to adopt 'modern' (i.e. Western?) characteristics, if the proper formula of institutional and economic incentives were in place, informed much of the literature. Myron Weiner suggested that development theories tended perhaps to pay "too little attention to the values and attitudes that underlay the economic development strategies chosen by the governing elites" and to "overemphasize the political outcomes of economic changes."⁵⁴ These lapses could account for the relatively poor conformance between theory and reality, at least in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁵² The theory of the stages of economic development is expressed most eloquently by Walt W. Rostow in his numerous books and articles, especially see The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) and Politics and the Stages of Growth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971). Also, see Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Comparative Politics: A Development Approach, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966); David Apter, The Politics of Modernization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); C.E.Black, The Dynamics of Modernization (New York: Harper &Row, 1966); A.F.K. Organski, Stages of Political Development (New York: Knopf, 1965); Lucian Pye, Aspects of Political Development, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966); Sidney Verba, "Sequences and Development", in Leonard Binder, et.al., Crises and Sequences in Political Development, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

⁵³ See Robert Dahl, Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Myron Weiner and Samuel Huntington, eds., Understanding Political Development, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987); Dankwart A. Rustow, A World of Nations: Problems of Political Modernization, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1967); Crawford Young, The Politics of Cultural Pluralism, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976).

⁵⁴ Myron Weiner, "Political Change: Asia, Africa, and the Middle East", in Understanding Political Development, Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington, eds. (Harper Collins Publishers, 1987), 60.

Political modernization is distinct from political development, and modernization does not necessarily lead to political development, as Daniel Lerner aptly notes⁵⁵.

Political development relies on an “open-ended increase in the capacity of political man to initiate and institutionalize new structures, and supporting cultures, to cope with or resolve problems, and to absorb and adapt”⁵⁶ to changing conditions.

A.H. Somjee⁵⁷ also examines development theories and finds them lacking in explanatory value. Aptly recognizing that these theories were developed in the Western, industrialized world and reflective of the specific social, historical, and economic experiences of Europe and the United States, Somjee criticizes the theories as invalid and inadequate to explain the wide variety existent in the developing world. As an alternative to abandoning the theories, he instead proposes to expand them to include ‘political capacity’, Somjee’s target is the people – what is their political capacity? According to Somjee, the adoption of Western legal and political institutions by developing countries has not brought about the commensurate political capacity that Western citizens enjoy because “the process has been short-circuited in the developing countries. ... (N)ew political institutions in such countries were established in advance of the growth of a commensurate political capacity to operate, sustain and utilise them in order to enhance individual and social development.”⁵⁸ In Western countries, the longevity of their development processes gradually introduced and expanded political capacity, achieving

⁵⁵ Daniel Lerner, “Toward a Communication Theory of Modernization”, quoted in James A. Bill and Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., Comparative Politics: The Quest for Theory, (Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co.: Columbus, Oh., 1973), 76.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ See A.H. Somjee, Development Theory: Critiques and Explorations (St. Martin’s Press: NY, 1991) and Political Capacity in Developing Societies (St. Martin’s Press: NY, 1982).

⁵⁸ Somjee (1982), page x.

capacity continuously with broadened participation. Modernization was supposed to accelerate the process in the developing world, as the experience and knowledge already reaped from Western experiences could be utilized. The barriers to political capacity can be institutional or social. In a democratic state the institutional barriers would not be formal, although there could be latent and inherent barriers that effectively limit citizen participation and effectiveness. In India, the greatest barrier is social. Ascriptive attributes (such as caste) that close avenues for participation, ignorance of the potential power that participation can wield, and interest groups that serve only (or primarily) sectoral interests erode capacity.

The breakdown of the ascriptive barriers has been the aim of social activists, but it has been in the realm of politics that the greatest strides have been made. The rise of political parties that more closely reflect social, economic, and caste characteristics have allowed politics to be more meaningful in the participants' lives. As the voter has become more sophisticated the narrow bonds of caste-based parties has begun to erode and provide more options for a voter to choose between. That the process is slow and not linear has contributed to the flux in voter loyalty and more volatility. The incongruence between development theories that stressed economic growth and those that stressed modernization of society have not been resolved.

Political development approaches that burgeoned in the 1960s and 1970s fell into disrepute in the next decades, criticized by a wide body of scholars⁵⁹ and displaced by

⁵⁹ See Howard J. Wiarda, Ethnocentrism in Foreign Policy: Can We Understand the Third World? (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1985); A.H. Somjee, Parallels and Actuals of Political Development (London: MacMillan, 1986); Claudio Veliz (ed), Obstacles to Changes in Latin America (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) and Politics of Conformity in Latin America, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

new theoretical approaches. Although these theories were temporarily discredited and discarded, their essential correctness has re-emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in various forms as more recent evidence begins to support the old presumptions⁶⁰. The same decades brought about a remarkable series of events: the transition to democracy by formerly authoritarian states.. With the economic miracles associated with the South East Asian states of Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and more recently with Thailand and Malaysia, movements towards democratic practices are gradually taking root. Wiarda writes, almost gleefully, that the discredited developmentalist approach has redeemed itself, and that although the Lipset and Rostow schools of development theories “were wrong in the short run, they may still prove to have been correct in the long run. That is, although there is no necessary, automatic, or causative connection between development and democracy, there are tendencies, correlation, and long-term relationships that cannot be denied.”⁶¹ In the transformation of development theories from the (too often) ethnocentric and Western-oriented paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s came new theories to explain how democracies emerge and how they become entrenched.

One approach that has been used to explain democracy in divided societies is consociationalism, a method of power sharing that is the subject of much of Arend Lijphart’s research. In 1996 Lijphart directed his focus on the case of India to expand the

⁶⁰ The correlation between capitalism, open markets, and economic growth with political pluralism and democracy has been broadly recognized in the last fifteen years; see Peter C. Berger, The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions about Prosperity, Equality, and Liberty, (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Larry Diamond, “Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered”, American Behavioral Scientist, (Volume 35, no. 4/5, March/June 1992, pp 450-499).

⁶¹ Howard J. Wiarda, “Concepts and Models in Comparative Politics: Political Development Reconsidered – and its Alternatives” in Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives (eds. Dankwart Rustow and Kenneth Paul Erickson, (Harper Collins: 1991), 46.

applicability of consociationalism as a democratization model. Lijphart credits a consociational arrangement in India as the driving force behind democratic deepening. Lijphart's argument and interpretation of India's political and party systems needs to be examined carefully in the case of India.

Lijphart's Consociational Argument

Arend Lijphart asserts that

India has had a power-sharing system of democracy during its almost fifty years of independence, and an especially full and thorough form of it during its first two decades, displaying all four of the essential elements of power sharing as clearly as Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Lebanon, Malaysia, and the other well-known examples of consociational democracy.⁶²

According to Lijphart, India manifests seven, or possibly eight, conditions that support the establishment and maintenance of a consociational democracy. Lijphart delineates the factors that favor a consociational democracy, and the conformity of India to each of these factors. In order of importance, these factors are:

1. A divided society with no clear cut majority which can undermine power-sharing. Although India has a preponderant majority of Hindus, the Hindus are so internally divided that there are, in fact, only minorities within Indian society.

2. Little socioeconomic difference between the various groups, or, if there is a considerable difference, then this is balanced by the poorer group having more political power (as with the Chinese v the Malays in Malaysia). India's socioeconomic disparities are as great, or greater, within each group than between them, therefore, India conforms to this condition easily.

⁶² Arend Lijphart, "The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation", American Political Science Review (Vol. 90, No. 2, June 1996), 266. The following section is a summary of his argument.

3. A manageable number of groups that will allow for negotiations to be carried forth without too great an amount of complexity. Lijphart admits that this is a condition that cannot be fulfilled in India. India's vast numbers of languages, religions, castes, and interest groups make India a poor candidate in this specific aspect. [The only area where India receives a failing rating].

4. The array of groups are approximately the same size, providing for a balance of power between the various groups. Since India has no single dominant group this factor also fares well for consociationalism.

5. A small population favors consociationalism. India's large population can be regarded as 'small' in that the population is divided into states and regions that localizes conflict and generally deflects violence from spilling over into other regions. Central authority is thereby not endangered.

6. The unifying role of external security threats has been favorable for India, first with the independence movement that melded India into a single entity, and then the wars with China and Pakistan that underlined these unifying effects.

7. Particularism is subordinated by overarching loyalties; the Indian National Congress unified a discordant country and constructed a nationalistic fervor that overcame regional or localistic identities. The partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan at independence removed the most daunting challenge to a single 'nationhood'.

8. With disparate but geographically concentrated groups, federalism can provide a measure of autonomy to particular groupings. In India, the division of regions into linguistically specific states satisfies this condition.

9. Patterns of interaction must include compromise and accommodation; the INC

as a nationalist movement and subsequently as a ruling party have incorporated these behaviors in arbitrating differences.

Lijphart concedes that India's 'consociationalism' was not deliberately instituted and thus is a much more 'haphazard' and incremental form of consociationalism, but nonetheless retains enough of the basic features that India must be categorized as a consociational government. He admits that the first two decades of Indian statehood were the most 'clearly' consociationalist but maintains that, even though in weakened form, it has continued to underlie the foundation of governance up to 1996 (when he wrote the article). In addition, he correlates the increase of violence and sectoralism of the 1980s and early 1990s with the decline of consociationalism.

Lijphart explains that the weakening of consociationalism is due to four factors: 1) Indira Gandhi's centralization of power and the resulting hierarchical organization of Congress; 2) further centralization of the federal system; 3) pressure for standardization of personal laws and special status for Kashmir; and 4) movement towards a multiparty system. These trends jeopardize consociationalism and therefore, in the mind of Lijphart, democracy itself. Accordingly, independent avenues of participation undermine democracy. Lijphart faults the broadening of participatory politics to the non-elite as a threat to the arrangements that elites have carefully crafted:

As many scholars have pointed out, the 1960s marked the beginning of mounting democratic activism by previously quiet groups, especially the middle peasants. The resulting pressures for more decisive and less consensual government action have prompted greater concentration and centralization of power, especially in the Congress Party and the federal system. After the late 1960s, as a result of greater mass mobilization and activation, power sharing became less strong and pervasive, evidenced by the centralization of the Congress Party and the federal system, the decline of the

Congress Party's electoral strength, the attack on minority rights, and the rise of the BJP.⁶³

When this statement is examined critically it shows that Lijphart holds the view that popular participation exerted pressures on the Congress elites to 'act, don't talk', and the elite reaction was to centralize power, reorganize Congress, and dismantle the federal system.

This argument does not address the basic question of what factors brought about the 'democratic activism'. If we grant to Lijphart that the first two decades of Indian independence constituted a *form*, or semblance, of consociationalism, then the consociational system of governance either does not perform sufficiently well to satisfy the 'previously quiet' groups, or does not, in fact, represent them at all, and therefore, they responded through a democratic framework by becoming mobilized and participating. Lijphart's assumption in his appraisal of Indian politics is that consociationalism was working the way he intends the model to perform, that is, that a cadre of elites actually represented particular interests and that those interests were being satisfied through a conciliatory and adaptive process of arbitration. Instead, elites in the 'grand coalition' did not represent groups per se, and did not consult them as to what their needs were. The objective of the Congress Party was to modernize India, develop its economy, and improve the lot of the millions of impoverished people. But it also had to deal with the multitude of domestic and international crises that befell the country. In order to achieve any goals as well as remain in office, programs and policies had to be acceptable to and accepted by the various elites. Consensual politics did play a part in the

⁶³ Lijphart, 266.

early days of government. However, it also meant that few programs that threatened the status, the livelihood, or the dominance of the traditional elites could, or would, be acted upon. The paradox of consociationalism is that it requires *elite* cooperation. It is no real surprise if the first two decades of independence consociational tendencies were apparent.

The difference in India and the Western models that Lijphart is familiar with is that the elites in the West may actually represent actual group interests, and that the groups themselves acknowledge these leaders as their representatives. At no time in the first few decades did the elite in India represent any of the groups that were later to engage in 'democratic activism'. The power of the pseudo-consociational model for the first decades of Indian nationhood is that it established a stability in governance, relied on democratic institutions, and that, perhaps because of, but certainly in spite of, its failures, it laid a foundation that could absorb the shocks and assaults of a real democratic system of participation in the future decades.

Another point that must be made against the consociational model is the lack of success it has had in democratizing countries. In the 1999 Freedom House Survey, Adrian Karatnycky rates countries as to their "comparative measures of freedom". The non-Western (non European) countries that Lijphart credits as being consociational, with the exception of India, are ranked low on the freedom scale, none being listed as 'free'. On a scale of one to seven, with one being the most 'free' and seven, not free, India measured two for political rights and three for civil liberties, and thus a rating of 'free'. Of the nine countries described as consociational, according to Lijphart, not a single one was labeled free.

TABLE 2
FREEDOM HOUSE RANKING OF COUNTRIES
(SELECTED COUNTRIES)

	PR	CL	LABEL
Columbia	4	4	partly free
Gambia	7	5	not free
Kenya	6	5	not free
Lebanon	6	5	not free
Malaysia	5	5	partly free
Nigeria	4	3	partly free
Sri Lanka	3	4	partly free
Suriname	3	3	partly free
Venezuela	4	4	partly free
India	2	3	FREE

PR= political rights; CL= civil liberties; labels are 'free', 'partly free', and 'not free'.

Consociational democracy may not be the factor that accounts for this dismal record, but it also does not appear to be the mechanism that has strengthened democracy in these countries.

India's democracy has deepened due precisely because of the competitiveness and turnover of government. Di Palma remarks that democracy's strength lies in the emphasis on process – the “competitive political market giving contestants fairly equal chances to affect and share in outcomes”⁶⁴, not in determining fixed outcomes. Consociationalism tries to eliminate the competitiveness of politics and substitute ‘negotiated’ outcomes. This is paternalistic, even if well meaning. India's downtrodden have already suffered too much from paternalism.

⁶⁴ Giuseppe Di Palma, To Craft Democracies, (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press), 41.

In effect modernization/development theories were replaced by democratic consolidation theories. The quest to find out what makes some democratic systems last while others crumble apart or are overwhelmed by similar circumstances that appear to exist in the stable democracies has lured scholars for decades. Consolidation theory seems to be the latest approach in the long search.

Consolidation Theories And Party Development

Consolidation theories seek to find commonalities that democracies share that aid them in withstanding the onslaughts that might tip the scale towards breakdown of the democratic regime. The focus of consolidation theories is on the democratization of new regimes that have replaced authoritarian governments with elected civilian governments. After this transitional stage, the tasks confronting these new regimes include establishing legitimacy, effective institutions and a functioning government that can pursue goals and implement them. When these goals are met then the democracy is 'consolidated'. Consolidation is the more difficult of the two processes. After the 'waves' of democratization had swept over countries, many of these new democracies succumbed to forces that made democracy unsustainable. What were the elements that would 'consolidate' the democracy? Rather than the stages of development, the preconditions, the economic factors in themselves, the consolidation theorists started looking at various factors. Institutions themselves are a primary focus: the system of government selected⁶⁵ [presidential or parliamentary or hybrid] and the electoral

⁶⁵ A lively and ongoing debate between which system augers more favorably for democracy has been pursued by a number of political scientists. See Juan Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism", The Journal of Democracy (Winter, 1990) ; Donald L. Horowitz, "Comparing Democratic Systems" Journal of Democracy, (Fall 1990).

system⁶⁶ [plurality system or proportional representation or variants of them]. The institutions are relevant because of how they connect to the electorate and how they interact to resolve conflict. Much attention has been paid to the effects of institutional design on accountability and legitimacy. Thus, the role of political parties has attracted renewed interest.

Party systems are a vital conduit of information and approval [or disapproval], thus becoming a subject of study to evaluate how consolidated a democracy is. Political competition is structured around parties. By analyzing how parties compete gives insight into how formal or informal rules and interactions guide and control behaviors between and among politicians, elites, and the people. Consolidation theorists stress the importance of formal adherence to rules and view a greater congruity of behavior [practices] with the formal rules to reflect a more consolidated democracy. Philippe Schmitter views this consolidation of “an acceptable and predictable set of rules for political competition and cooperation”⁶⁷ as necessary to assure that the democratic regime does not undergo a “lingering demise”⁶⁸ that may not violently overthrow the regime but will relegate it to the netherworld of an unconsolidated democracy. An unconsolidated democracy floats between autocracy and democracy, holding elections but producing a pre-determined winner, or producing winners without the capacity to govern effectively.

⁶⁶ Volumes have been written about the different advantages and drawbacks of various electoral systems. Arend Lijphart, Quentin L. Quade, and Guy Lardeyret engage in a debate in *Journal of Democracy* (Vol. 2, Winter, 1991 and (Spring, 1992).

⁶⁷ Philippe C. Schmitter, “Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy”, *Journal of Democracy*, (April 1994, vol. 5 no. 2: 57-74), 58.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

Consolidating democracies is a two-pronged process involving the institutionalization of processes that, first, allows the regime to function in a democratic way, and second, increases the capacity of political leaders to resolve the social and economic dilemmas that threaten to overwhelm their country. In essence, consolidation refers to the likelihood that the democratic regime will continue to endure, to remain democratic. Stability is the paramount objective, involving stability of the specific interactions and processes and providing for an expected and continuing game operating under the established rules, within the same venue, and subject to the same constraints under which previous games were held.

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan define a consolidated democracy as “a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives has become, in a phrase, ‘the only game in town’.”⁶⁹ This implies that the elite as well as the masses accept that formal rules exist, that these rules govern how competition is structured, and that the outcomes of the competition will be respected by all competitors. Future opportunities to challenge these outcomes, in the form of new elections at a set interval, keep the losers in the game and curb their inclinations to overthrow the present winners. The assurance that the electoral game will continue into the distant future makes losing a contest only a temporary setback. Without this expectation the losers may choose not to acknowledge or allow to stand the results of the election.

⁶⁹ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Toward Consolidated Democracies”, Journal of Democracy, (April 1996, vol. VII, number, 2, pages 14-33), 15.

Guillermo O'Donnell agrees that democratic consolidation occurs "when elections and their surrounding freedoms are institutionalized"⁷⁰ but questions the value of this definition in actual cases. What real use is this definition when it tells us very little about how and when this criterion has been met? In effect, he argues that the definition is teleological, that too frequently the essence of consolidation is that when a regime is stable and the players accept the rules, then it is consolidated. When this is not the case then it is not consolidated. What purpose does this serve, how do we measure the degree of consolidation, and what degree of consolidation is necessary or sufficient to assure that the regime will not become 'deconsolidated'?⁷¹ O'Donnell notes that the polyarchies of India, Italy, and Japan, along with several Latin American countries do not conform to the contours set forth by consolidation theorists. These are democratic (or polyarchic) countries that practice an especially pervasive form of 'particularism' or 'clientalism'. Particularism and clientalism are corruptions of the formal and universal rules that are the legal and accepted means of competition and governance. These practices, which include nepotism and patronage, undermine the authority and legitimacy of a regime and relegate the majority of the citizens, who are not privy to the special favors, to a position of second class citizenship, a position that saps them of an equality of their civil and political rights. Thus, for O'Donnell, the concept of consolidation in the cases of new democracies is too often a hollow shell that fails to look at the ways in which these formal rules and behaviors are in actuality followed and practiced. He suggests that consolidation theories suffer from a lack of a common standard for measuring

⁷⁰ Guillermo O'Donnell, "Illusions about Consolidation", *Journal of Democracy*, (April 1996, volume VII, number 2, pages 34-51), 37.

consolidation, of falsifying the theory, and thus, the significance of the theory itself. Furthermore, although he does not assert it in so many words, the concept of consolidation suffers from the same inherent ethnocentricity and inapplicability that the development theories were accused of being⁷². Because consolidation theories hold the Western democracies up as the model to be followed or at least to eventually mimic, they relegate democracies that are not ‘consolidated’ into the same category as non-democracies. The theory is too oriented towards ‘stages’, another developmentalist theory⁷³ that could not be applied empirically and instead, countries were categorized rather haphazardly.

His evaluation is criticized by Richard Gunther et al⁷⁴. These authors separate the two aspects of a political regime into first, whether it fulfills the requirement of being ‘fully democratic’, as prescribed by the procedural definitions set forth by Juan Linz and Robert Dahl. Secondly, consolidation theorists must look at whether or not it adheres to the ‘stabilization, routinization, institutionalization, and legitimation’ requirements of a consolidated democracy. These are the ‘attitudinal dimensions’ of the theory that cannot be excluded or preempted by fulfilling the first criteria. They set the bar a little lower than some other scholars, only demanding that “the regime has sufficient support and

⁷¹ See Guillermo O’Donnell, “Illusions and Conceptual Flaws”, *Journal of Democracy* (October 1996, Volume VII, no. 4), 160-168.

⁷² Ibid., see pages 46-7 in particular. O’Donnell cautions us that we should be searching for answers that can be applied to the “polyarchies that are institutionalized in ways we dislike” because they may never be a mirror image of the Western European democracies. Still and all, they do operate as polyarchies and many are very stable in regard to the kind of political system they have adopted.

⁷³ Dankwort Rostow was the prime architect of the ‘stages of development’ theory, writing in 1960 and modifying it in 1971. It was later acknowledged that most countries frequently inhabit several stages at the same time, often depending on what specific elements are being examined.

⁷⁴ Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Hans-Jurgen Puhle, “O’Donnell’s ‘Illusions’: A Rejoinder”, *Journal of Democracy*, (October 1996, Volume VII, no. 4,p.151-159).

resilience to be able to survive and remain stable in the face of serious challenges.”⁷⁵ Of course there is no operational criteria set forth that allows one to determine what that ‘sufficient support’ amounts to or when it is reached. The logic behind these arguments is valid: when elites or different segments of the population cannot agree on basic institutional arrangements of the state structure, or a consensus cannot be reached on core values and directions for the state and its role, then there is a greater likelihood that the electoral process itself will not suffice to keep the regime democratic. Therefore, unless there is an underlying support and agreement on not only the rules but the whole array of governmental institutions, the regime cannot be considered consolidated and will be more apt to disintegrate either through violence or more gradually, through an erosion of the democratic process. Countries in which widespread particularism is a common practice delegitimizes democracy by excluding those without access to special privileged relationships and perpetuates inequalities. Discontent and resentments will, over time, undermine the legitimacy as well as the stability of the regime.

Although these assertions seem to be logical, they have little empirical validity. As O’Donnell points out, the **informal** structures of interaction and contestation are not only ‘important and pervasive’ in the three important ‘exceptions’ (i.e. Italy, Japan and India) of consolidation theory, but these three countries have very lively and stable regimes⁷⁶. This does not mean that incorporating formal rules and moving towards more universality and less particularism/clientalism would not be beneficial. Rather, O’Donnell recognizes that many of the informal rules and practices are embedded in the society itself, in how the social, economic, and political relationships evolved historically,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 153.

and how they have adjusted to the new institutional structures. These informal practices co-exist with the formal rules. Although there is no guarantee that the formal sphere will, in time, triumph over the informal, an analysis of the oldest democracies have shown that the movement towards more universalism and less particularism gradually occurs as more people begin to be included into the formal processes and demand a more level playing field.

This is where political parties begin to play an important part in democratic consolidation. Inter-party and intra-party competition can be influenced by formal as well as informal rules. Parties are the backbone of democratic systems. A party “is *the* modern institution for structuring and aggregating individual preferences along those lines.”⁷⁷ How parties set about competing for support and competing for office is determined in part by what rules regulate their participation, what the electoral system is that translates votes into seats (power), and how voters respond to party practices (i.e. reward them by re-election or punish them by voting for alternative parties). Consolidation theory places a high premium on a structured, institutionalized party system. An institutionalized party system directs competition and interests into democratic channels for resolving differences. Therefore a stable party system is an important cog in the formal machinery of consolidated democracies.

⁷⁶ O’Donnell, *op.cit.* (October 1996).

⁷⁷ Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies, (Baltimore, Md.,: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 58.

IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Numerous writings have extolled the significance of political parties in a democracy. As early as 1942, E. E. Schattschneider stated that the “development of modern democracy is founded on the political party”⁷⁸ and most theorists have agreed in one form or another. J. Ronald Pennock says that “party systems are the common characteristic of democratic regimes,” and Robert Dahl adds that the “existence of political parties in a system is a major criterion of democracy.”⁷⁹ The political party acts as “an intermediary between the citizens and the government (and) provides an alternative pool of political leaders and public policies. By vying for power through regular elections, the political party provides the dynamic of modern democracy.”⁸⁰ Political parties are the prerequisite for modern democracies because the competition for power and the structuring of that competition takes place within the format of the political party.

Atul Kohli, one of the most keen observers of Indian politics notes that the inferior party organization and voter volatility have hurt the institutionalization of both the Congress Party and the numerous opposition parties, and thus have robbed India of having a more effective democratic government.⁸¹ **Effective** governance depends on strong parties. Having an effective opposition holds the majority party in check (because it poses a real challenge to the governing party) and at the same time forces the majority party to develop strategies that will appeal to more voters and bring more citizens into the

⁷⁸ E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1942), 1.

⁷⁹ Robert Dahl, Pluralist Democracy in the United States (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967), 203.

⁸⁰ The-fu Huang, “Party Systems in Taiwan and South Korea”, Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies, (Larry Diamond, et.al, ed.) 137.

⁸¹ Atul Kohli, “Indian Democracy: Stress and Resilience,” Journal of Democracy 3 (January 1992): 52-64.

political process. Ineffective governance contributes to voter volatility and puts pressure on the parties to conform to voters' expectations. This is seconded by Gabor Tóka. "Electoral volatility is often argued to be the primary independent variable that motivates party elites to act either in accordance with or in disregard of democratic values. At the same time, volatility is the most important indicator of the degree of a system's stability."⁸²

What exactly is a political party? Ramesh Kumar tersely defines them, stating that "political parties are power-oriented organizations".⁸³ Sartori defines a political party as "any political group that presents itself at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office."⁸⁴ Peter Mair asserts that parties are the crucial link between citizens and the state, their legitimacy being derived through mass popularity.⁸⁵ Max Weber has stated that the term "will be employed to designate an associative type of social relationship, membership in which rests on formally free recruitment. The end to which its activity is devoted is to secure power within a corporate group for its leaders in order to attain ideal or material advantages for its active members. These advantages may consist in the realization of certain objective policies or the attainment of personal advantages or both."⁸⁶ Weber's definition is surely a realist view: altruism may play a part in an individual's decision to seek political power but usually that is tempered, at least over time, with 'personal advantage'. In the case of

⁸² Gabor Tóka, "Political Parties in East Central Europe", Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies, 93.

⁸³ Ramesh Kumar, Congress and Congressism in Indian Politics (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1993), 5.

⁸⁴ Giovanni Sartori, Parties and Party System: A Framework for analysis, Volume 1, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 64.

⁸⁵ Peter Mair, Party System Change, 34.

⁸⁶ Max Weber as quoted in Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings, Bernard E. Brown and Roy C. Macridis, (Orlando, Fl.: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 199.

India numerous examples of politicians' search for the spoils of political power trumping the search for common welfare abound. Thus, not only is corruption a fact of life, but party defection a common occurrence. Party defection destabilizes party institutionalization and fragments the party system.

Parties originated in Great Britain in the eighteenth century. Early attitudes towards parties, especially in the United States, viewed parties as organizations that were antithetical to democracy because they create and formalize factions. Alexis deTocqueville declared that "(p)arties are an evil inherent in free governments"⁸⁷, and differentiated between 'great' and 'small' parties. Great parties are the lesser of the two evils since they voice 'lofty purposes' and have 'nobler features'. Small parties are fraught with dangers, 'selfish' and sinister. "They glow with factitious zeal; their language is violent, ...the means they employ are as disreputable as the aim sought."⁸⁸ But opposition to parties eroded in the face of reality. Parties were recognized as the only means by which to aggregate interests effectively. James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, writing under the name *Publius*, asked if it could "be presumed that at any future septennial epoch, the State will be free from parties? ...Such an event ought to be neither presumed or desired; because an extinction of parties necessarily implies either a universal alarm for the public safety or an absolute extinction of liberty."⁸⁹ In a practical sense, there are really no other meaningful ways of organizing opposition to government, providing a forum for competition and holding government accountable. In the ideal

⁸⁷ Alexis de Toqueville, Democracy in America, J.P. Mayer, ed., (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 174.

⁸⁸ DeToqueville, 175.

⁸⁹ James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, The Federalist, (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 346.

sense, parties can be the single most important link between groups, the people and the government, reaching out to the masses for support and new sources of strength, and, if backed by the majority of the electorate, coordinates the multifarious functions of the government in order to achieve coherently stated aims. A minority party gives like-minded individuals and groups an opportunity to rally their forces, develop a program, and prepare for the day when power might be wielded or at least shared.⁹⁰

In developing countries parties play similar roles, but are still frequently at the stage of 'small parties' deplored by deToqueville. In new countries, the movement that achieved independence frequently evolves into the primary political party, dominated at the onset by elites. The party faces obstacles in its attempt to modernize the society without undercutting the traditional elites; to incorporate into the process illiterate and unsophisticated peasants without losing all control over the process; and to expand the civil rights of individuals while still safeguarding the group demands that bubble forth. Too often the inability of the party to perform all these complex and antagonistic tasks proves impossible and the dominant party decides to squelch all opposition and rule without allowing opposition parties to challenge their authority. Hence, they have traded democracy for governability, and often end up with neither. In India, this has not occurred. The dominant party allowed competition, however reluctantly, with a result that a multitude of parties exist and compete and win elections.

Party development in Western Europe arose differently from post-colonial states. In Western Europe parties can be identified by their right-left ideological orientations, reflecting the pattern of cleavages in those societies. According to Seymour Lipset and

⁹⁰ Brown and Macridis, 201.

Stein Rokkan⁹¹, urban-rural interests, worker-employer interests, and values and cultural identities were the three most common differences that resulted in party development. In Western Europe the nature of cleavages evolved more gradually, frequently as a by-product to economic and social changes that occurred during the early decades of the twentieth century. Myron Weiner sees new political parties developing as a result of crises of integration, legitimacy, and participation. Emerging, new social groups demand, under the changing social conditions, a place in the system, representation that is meaningful to them, and frequently that means new political organizations.⁹² In a system that already has institutionalized parties the accommodation of new groups or a new party may not be as disrupting as in a system that is still evolving.

The parties that evolved in the post colonial world had as a basis, first and foremost, the ousting of the colonial government. Even if ideological or cultural cleavages were significant factors in the society, these were often suppressed temporarily to be able to cooperate in achieving the primary objective, the ouster of the foreign government. This cooperative and accommodating truce was not to be long lived. In many states the party that 'won' independence became the party that won the first election. Opposition to the 'independence party' was frequently branded as 'anti-national'. Because of this, party development in developing countries was unlike that in Western Europe. Theories that use Western political parties as a yardstick of institutionalization in developing countries are unlikely to see much corroborative evidence in the developing world.

⁹¹ Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives, (New York: The Free Press, 1967).

What are party systems?

Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson write that “a party system consists of a set of political parties operating within a nation in an organized pattern, described by a number of party-system properties.”⁹³ The conundrum is to identify exactly what these particular properties are, and there is little agreement among scholars as to the merit of including certain attributes or excluding others. A party ‘system’ is more than a collection of parties, including the inter-relationships of the parties themselves and the organization of the rules, restraints, and patterns. There are several factors that have to be included. Sartori insists that first and foremost the numbers of parties that are ‘relevant’ must be identified.⁹⁴

The numbers of parties that are ‘relevant’, or ‘effective’ as Taagepera and Shugart refer to them, is necessary to determine because “pure two-party systems have markedly different characteristics from systems that clearly have many parties.”⁹⁵ It is not just a matter of counting parties by assigning a cut-off percentage necessary in order to be counted as a party. Some small parties have greater weight or influence; some parties may have little value in the system either as coalition partners or as effectual agents of

⁹² See Myron Weiner, “Political Participation: Crisis of the Political Process” in Crises and Sequences in Political Development, Leonard Binder et.al., eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 159-204).

⁹³ Jan-Erik Lane and Svante O. Ersson, Politics and Society in Western Europe, 3rd edition, (London: Sage Publications, 1994) 175.

⁹⁴ Sartori writes extensively on parties and party systems. See especially Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

pressure. How parties are determined to be relevant affects the numbers of parties in the 'system'.

Secondly, the electoral system must be included in any study of a party system. Electoral systems affect party development, and the nature of the party system itself. Numerous studies have been conducted in regard to the electoral system and whether it is causal or merely contributes to the number of political parties a country has⁹⁶. Maurice Duverger's early work found that the number of political parties in a country is highly correlated to its electoral systems. Duverger postulated that a single member district, first past the post (plurality) system tends to produce a two or two plus party system. Proportional representation systems have multi-party systems. Lipset and Rokkan questioned this deterministic outcome and suggested instead that political parties are a product of the numbers and cleavages existing in the society as a whole. Deviating from Duverger, their research showed that in highly divided and ethnically diverse societies, a multiparty political system would most likely result regardless of the electoral system. The adoption of a proportional representation electoral system frequently was the result of an already proliferating party system.⁹⁷ The electoral system in India is a straight

⁹⁵Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, Seats and Votes: the Effects and Determinants of electoral Systems (1989). P. 77. See chapter 8, "The Effective Number of Parties", 77-91. For counting parties Sartori offers a different method. See Parties and Party Systems, *ibid.* (p. 300-319).

⁹⁶ A few of the more widely read books on this subject are: Maurice Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State, (1964); Richard S. Katz, Democracy and Elections, (1997) and A Theory of Parties and Electoral Systems, (1980); Arend Lijphart, Electoral Systems and Party Systems, (1994); Douglas Rae, The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws (1971); Lijphart and Bernard Grofman, Choosing An Electoral System: Issues and Alternatives (1984) and Electoral Laws and their Political Consequences, (1986); Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, Seats and Votes: the Effects and Determinants of electoral Systems (1989); and the classic, by John G. Grumm, "theories of Electoral Systems", Midwest Journal of Political Science, II, no.4 (November 1958: 357-376).

⁹⁷ Lipset and Rokkan, *Op. Cit.* see chapter 1, (1-56).

plurality, single member system, with some reserved seats for specified segments. That this electoral system has produced an extreme multi-party system gives credence to Lipset and Rokkan's thesis that multiparty systems arise from the cleavages in the deeply diverse societies.

No analysis of the party system is complete without at least a rudimentary examination of the cleavage lines existing within the party system: what is the basis of the cleavages, how ideologically distant the parties are from one another, and whether new party formation is based on emerging group preferences, on realignment, or on splintering due to personalistic politics. In other words, what is the basis of the party structure, and what is the inter-relationship between these parties.

An institutionalized party system implies that parties themselves are institutionalized. Institutionalized parties were considered to be necessary for political stability in the view of Samuel Huntington⁹⁸. An institutionalized party system organizes competition, mobilizes voters and channels participation. There are several measures of party system institutionalization, the simplest one being the average age of the various parties. If the average age is low, then there is a rapid birth and death or reorganization of parties, thereby making voter identification with a party, party accountability, and efforts at consensus building much more problematic. Gabor Tóka also includes age as a measure of party system institutionalization and adds the following variables: party

⁹⁸ Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven CT.: Yale University Press, 1968). See chapter 7, 397-461.

organization, fragmentation, how parties and interest groups interact, as well as how actual policy differences between parties structure electoral competition.⁹⁹

Faced with these stark examples of inefficacious governance, one would expect to find a population that abjures the present political system, a country ripe for revolution. Instead, India remains committed to democracy, its people embracing the tenets of a democratic system and believing in the legitimacy of free elections, and practicing this right to vote whenever possible. The May 1996 national election saw more than sixty percent of the eligible electorate voting¹⁰⁰. Furthermore, in an extensive and carefully conducted survey conducted by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), and India Today in August, 1996, designed to “vivisection the political mind of India”¹⁰¹, the results confirm a *growing* support for a democratic system, as demonstrated by the statement posed: “Governance is better without parties and elections”. In 1971, the same statement found forty-three

⁹⁹ Gabor Tóka, “Political Parties in East Central Europe”, Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies, (93-134).

¹⁰⁰ More than 360 million people out of 600 million eligible voters (an average 62 percent turnout) are estimated to have participated in the 1996 election, according to the *Election Commission*. This figure alone is remarkable, but when it is coupled with the fact that ‘eligible’ or registered voters encompass all possible voters, it is even more extraordinary. Unlike in the United States, voters do not self-register, but are registered by the state automatically. Voter turnout in rural areas frequently runs as high as eighty percent and municipal, village and state election turnout is invariably higher than national election turnout, almost always in the neighborhood of 80 percent in all regions. Voter turnout is remarkably high in a country where there are many physical obstacles to voting: distance from polls, high temperatures, long lines, and sometimes, violence. The 1996 election took place over three days, entailed a staff of 4.5 million civilian employees and 1.5 million police to guard the polls, distributed among 900,000 voting booths. Fourteen thousand candidates vied for 543 seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house). Poll turnout has ranged from 55.3 percent (1971) to a high of 64 percent in 1984. These figures are from M.S Gill, chief of India’s Election Commission, in a speech presented for the International Forum for Democratic Studies and reproduced in “India: Running the World’s Biggest Elections, in Journal of Democracy, 9 (January 1998: 164-168), 166.

¹⁰¹ India Today, 31 August, 1996, 31. For the complete article, see pages 28-43.

percent of the population disagreeing, but in 1996, sixty-nine percent disagreed. Another survey that queried voters found that eighty-six percent of them rejected the idea that “a government without elections, parties, or legislatures” was a preferable system.¹⁰²

Although the 1996 elections saw the Bharatiya Janata Party (the BJP – a party that is frequently associated with Hindu nationalism) win a plurality, the survey revealed that sixty-three percent of those polled (including sixty percent of the Hindus) believe that “government must protect the interests of the minorities” (only eight percent disagreed). And sixty-five percent believe that political violence is ‘improper’ in the pursuit of goals (as opposed to thirty-nine percent in 1971); only thirteen percent answered that political actions which may lead to violence is proper (twenty-six percent answered yes in 1971). Greater sophistication among the voters has also become evident. Almost half of the voters decided on their candidate during the elections, only a quarter (but a third of the women) admitted being ‘guided’ in their decision, and fully half of the respondents disagreed that their votes should mirror the voting pattern of their caste or community (up from thirty percent in 1971). These findings bode well for the future of a democratic regime. However, the public’s contempt for their elected representatives, for political parties, and for governmental organs such as the bureaucracy and the police point to serious flaws in the ways in which democratic processes are operating¹⁰³.

¹⁰² See M.S. Gill, [who is chief of India’s Election Commission] “India: Running the World’s Biggest Elections”, a speech delivered at a meeting on “India’s Democracy at Fifty” sponsored by the International Forum for Democratic Studies in Washington, D. C., on 24 September 1997, and reproduced in Journal of Democracy, 9 (January 1998: 164-168), 165.

¹⁰³ The same survey (fn3) includes an ‘index of popular trust in institutions’, and out of a score of 100 possible points, representatives received 40, political parties 39, the bureaucracy 37, and the police, 28. The highest ranking institution was the election commission, with a score of 62. (p 32).

Alternatives to democracy are also a factor in determining whether a country will remain democratic or not. One alternative that has offered itself to and been adopted by many of the former colonial countries is military rule. That the Indian military has been under close civilian supervision and this civilian control is further subject to the rules of law and the democratic process bodes well for sustaining democracy. Several opportunities have arisen where the military could easily have either played a much greater 'advisory' role and one specific instance where the prime minister attempted to engage the military in sharing power. Each time the military rejected expanding its role beyond the common defense of India. The military has been critical of government demands that it takes a larger part in controlling civil strife and mob violence, suggesting instead a build up and greater professionalization of the civil police.

The 'strength and resilience' of Indian democracy has been remarkable, given the formidable odds against its continuance. Atul Kohli explains its perseverance by pointing out "how solidly entrenched democratic norms and habits have become. There are very few routes to political legitimacy in India today that do not involve victory in open elections."¹⁰⁴ He adds that the reservoir of experienced leaders and the growing body of new-comers provides a continuing stream of present and future leaders that have learned the tactics of running for office, campaigning, compromising, as well as having had experience in actual governing.

What Factors Portend The Continuance Of Indian Democracy

There are some very encouraging signals that portend the continuance of a stable

¹⁰⁴ Atul Kohli, "Indian Democracy: Stress and Resilience" *Journal of Democracy*, 3, (Jan. 1992:52-65), 63.

democracy in India. First, the growth of the middle class has been steadily rising. At least one hundred and fifty million people are described as middle class. Some estimates suggest as that as many as three hundred million people now are middle class.¹⁰⁵ The existence of a substantial middle class in Western countries has been viewed as highly significant in entrenching democracies, and thus, India's expanding middle class population can be regarded as a positive trend. But, as noted earlier, democratic entrenchment has not been dependent on economic development.

Second, the 'information age' has arrived in India. The numbers of televisions¹⁰⁶, radios¹⁰⁷, and even computers has grown, even within the poorest villages. Newspapers have both increased in variety but also have expanded their circulation.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the numbers of journals and newspapers in the local and regional vernacular, dialect, or language have also grown. Being able to read, listen to, and watch news and attain information from a variety of sources allows opinions to be circulated, debates to be

¹⁰⁵ Shashi Tharoor addresses this figure in his book, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1997). He presents the results of a survey conducted between 1986 and 1994 by the National Council of Applied Economic Research in New Delhi that found that "India's consumers could be divided into five classes, not three: the very rich (6 million people or 1 million households), the 'consuming class' (150 million, or half the conventional estimate), the 'climbers' (a lower middle class of 275 million), the 'aspirants' (another 275 million who, in America or Europe, would be classified as 'poor'), and finally the destitute (210 million)." [page 281]. This NCAER study set the 'consuming population' between 168 and 504 million people. (p.282). According to this study only the richest are in the market for 'Western' goods, thereby not being the lucrative market that is sometimes lauded in similar studies. Regardless of whether most of this enormous population has the means to purchase foreign-manufactured articles, when looked at from a political point of view, the increase in the middle class population has important ramifications.

¹⁰⁶ At least 36,500,000 television sets are in use, and 274 television stations. (Data from *European Year Book*, 1998. Other sources give the numbers of TVs at over 50 million, but television ownership continues to increase rapidly. The UNDP lists television ownership at 61 televisions per 1000 people. [<http://undp.org/hdro/info.htm>]. In poor villages there is often only a single television set but it is common for large groups to gather to watch a broadcast.

¹⁰⁷ Radios are widely available; all but the most destitute families own at least one. Furthermore, there are over one hundred radio stations. Source: UNDP (www.undp.org/hdro/info.htm).

¹⁰⁸ The 1993 estimation is that there are more than 3,805 major daily newspapers published in India with a combined circulation of 18, 295,388. This does not include weekly journals or the profusion of small local newspapers. Figures are from *Europa Year Book*, 1998.

undertaken, criticisms to be levied and issues to be disseminated. Even with high illiteracy print journalism has an effect, but the widening availability of television and radio has brought public affairs into the purview of most citizens. The broader the sources for information and the larger the audience, the more problematic it is for any single ideology or elite to control or manipulate information.

Although government ineptitude and frequently, corruption, seems to define Indian democracy, the fact that this information is regularly and critically reported makes possible reform more likely. The only period of government censorship (during the 'Emergency') was only partially successful at controlling information. The government does control the media to some extent, through the state run Doordarshan television agency, and All India Radio (AIR) operates most of the radio stations, but in the last three years there has been progress made towards privatizing the electronic media. Control of the media is increasingly problematic as satellite television has been proliferating and now more than thirty-five million people access foreign news programs regularly. The internet has also made inroads, especially among the rich and middle classes, although only about one percent (a 1995 figure that has surely increased in the last five years) have regular access to computers.¹⁰⁹ The picture is not entirely rosy, however, as violence does occasionally erupt when journalists report on controversial issues. The Freedom House survey on Press Freedom, 1999, only gives India a 'partly free' rating, with a total

¹⁰⁹ Internet users are increasing, in 1995 listed as 10.76 per 1000 persons.
<http://www.undp.org.hdro/info.htm>

score of thirty seven, where 'free' scales range from zero to thirty, partly free from thirty-one to sixty, and not free, from sixty-one to one hundred.¹¹⁰

Fourth, civil society has been expanding. The numbers of grassroots organizations arising to alleviate social injustices, to protect the environment, to empower the poor, to demand justice has been increasing in the last two decades.¹¹¹ Activists have challenged the government, the local powers, and brought grievances to the courts. They have been catalysts of change as well as stalwart supporters of civil and human rights.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a pride, tempered with realism, about the state of India's democracy. In 1997 the Lok Sabha, (the lower house of the Indian Parliament), published a full report called Fifty Years of Indian Parliamentary Democracy: 1947-1997 that critically examined the economic, political and social progress that India has made in its fifty years of independence. In a review of the book, Satu Limaye comments that it "is difficult to imagine the government of any other country, no matter how democratic, offering such a frank and even dour assessment of itself on an occasion as traditionally celebratory as a fiftieth anniversary. The very act of issuing such a report testifies to India's pained self-awareness and lack of complacency, both of which may be sources of the country's strength."¹¹² An evaluation of India's

¹¹⁰ The Freedom House Press Freedom Survey, 1999, scores four different criteria for both print and broadcast media. The first is 'laws and regulations that influence media content' (0-15 for each); second, 'political pressures and controls on media content' (0-15); third, 'economic influences over media content' (0-15); and fourth, 'repressive actions', such as killing journalists, physical violence, censorship, self-censorship, and arrests (0-5). India received scores of 1,12,3, and 2 for broadcast, and 2,5,8, and 3 for print, a total of 37. Source: Freedom House (<http://freedomhouse.org/pfs99/reports.html>).

¹¹¹ See Arthur Bonner, Averting the Apocalypse: Social Movements in India Today, (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 1990).

¹¹² See Satu Limaye, Book Review: India's Cold-Eyed Introspection [a review of Fifty Years of Indian Parliamentary Democracy, 1947-1997, published by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1997], in Journal of Democracy, 9, (July, 1998: 166-170), 166-7.

democracy for the legislators must include not only civil and political liberties, but progress towards economic and social equality and opportunity. The candor with which this official document recognizes the limited progress India has made in these latter two arenas, and its recognition that “if democracy fails to bring substantial social and economic development, or brings it only in highly uneven ways, democracy itself will be at peril,”¹¹³ demonstrates that democracy in India is not merely a facade but a commitment and a work in progress.

¹¹³ Ibid., 168.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INDIAN PARTY SYSTEM AND STRUCTURAL INPUTS

INTRODUCTION

For the first three decades after independence the Indian political party system had been categorized as one- party dominant. The Indian National Congress [also INC, or Congress] was the party that won most elections at both the national and state levels with a plurality of the vote. Congress was an ‘umbrella’ party, a ‘party of consensus’, according to Rajni Kothari and W. H. Morris-Jones¹. This ruling party was comprised of factions that competed within the margins of the INC, was representative of wide and diverse populations and ideologies, and absorbed dissident groups and mediated their concerns. Opposition parties have always existed within the political system but for several decades the de facto role of opposition parties was to affect policy making by being “parties of pressure”, not genuine alternatives to the ruling party. Their

¹ The concept of the Indian political party system as a particular system of dominance that absorbed opposition and operated through consensus building was derived from the scholarly observations of these two men. These ideas are presented in their, by now classic, writings: Rajni Kothari, “The Congress ‘System’ in India”, Asian Survey (December 1964, 1161-1173), and later in his more fully developed argument, Politics in India, (Little, Brown and Co., 1965), “Form and Substance in Indian Politics”, Economic Weekly (April-May 1961, 846-63), and “The Congress System Revisited: A Decennial Review” in Asian Survey, (14, December 1974) ; Wyndraeth H. Morris-Jones, “Parliament and Dominant Party: The Indian Experience” In Parliamentary Affairs (v. 17, Summer, 1964); “Dominance and Dissent: their Interrelations in the Indian Party System”, in Morris-Jones, Politics Mainly Indian, (Orient Longman: Madras, 1978). Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy have also written astutely on this subject. See “The Congress and the Indian Party System”, Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics: Volume 1: Changing Bases of Congress Support, eds. Sisson and Roy, (Sage Publications: New Delhi, 1990).

existence assured that the ruling party would be responsive, responsible, competitive and accountable by providing a “latent threat”² that it could be replaced by the opposition. The Congress Party was a political party *system* in itself.

The Congress Party attained and retained its dominant position for several reasons. First, the INC was the major organ of the independence movement, establishing its credentials in the struggle against the British, forging bonds with a wide spectrum of the population, and sharing with other activists a credibility and cohesion that then was translated into governing prowess. Second, the party had superior organizational skills which extended from the highest realm of government down to the village level in almost every state of India. This enabled the INC to recruit and train future party members. Third, Congress was composed of an internal hierarchy that was democratically elected at each level, providing avenues for upward mobility within the party ranks to competent and loyal party workers. This further legitimized the process, as well as legitimating the structure of the INC. Fourth, Congress, as the most electorally successful party,³ attracted politically ambitious opposition leaders into its fold by its pragmatism,

² Kothari calls this the *latency factor*, which is a vital part of the system “so that there is always available an identifiable group or groups which can be called into action for the preservation of competition and external control.” These two elements, the parties of consensus and the parties of pressure distinguish the Congress ‘system’ from one party systems, and yet, even though there is no alternation of power it is still a competitive party system. (1964), 1162.

³ Because of India’s electoral system the INC, which received only 44 - 47% of the popular vote, the INC still won at least 73% of the seats in the Lok Sabha, as well as control of almost every state legislature (60% or more seats). The 1967 election saw a drop in the popular vote to 40.8%, but it still held on to a majority in the Parliament with 55% of the seats. See David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, India Decides: Elections 1952-1995 (New Delhi: Books and Things, 1995) p. 28.

allowing different views to be expressed and mediated within the party itself. And finally, it was adept at using state largesse and resources to bestow patronage, distribute aid, and provide opportunities to party loyalists as well as to attract new members. Funding for government programs and economic development was allocated through the local INC organizations, reinforcing the power and status of the party and party personnel as well as reinforcing the nexus of the party with the state.

During the first twenty years of INC governance, the Congress Party could be viewed as a 'coalition government', a centrist organization of an array of parties under the collective title of the INC. Internal conflicts, broad agendas, arbitration of differences, and assignments of portfolios based on defusing defections from the reigning 'coalition' marked the practices of the INC in both its capacities as party and government. Under the able and astute leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru this 'governing coalition' of the INC was able to maintain dominance.

Circumstances had begun to shift in the mid 1960s. One of the most significant changes was a forty-five percent increase in the size of the electorate, from 173 million to 216 million, in fifteen years, during the period from 1952 to 1967⁴. These new voters were more politicized and more mobilized than earlier

⁴ J.C. Aggarwal and N.K. Chowdhry, *Elections in India: 1952-96* (New Delhi: Shipra Publications, 1996), Table 1.1, p.3. The numbers of voters has continued to increase of course, now standing at 620 million (1999). The largest increase took place in a five year period, between the 1984 and 1989 elections when the 62nd Amendment to the Constitution lowered the voting age to eighteen, increasing the number of eligible voters by twenty percent. More than one-third of the voters are between the ages of eighteen and thirty. (Data from the Electoral Commission).

voters, having grown up in an environment where democracy and accountability were more commonplace, diverse interests and demands began to be articulated, and where Congress' status as sole 'heir' to leadership had begun to be questioned. The 1967 election results saw Congress retain control in the Lok Sabha, but with a far smaller majority of seats, losing seventy-eight seats.⁵ More importantly, it lost control over more than one-third of the governments in the states.

The period after 1977 saw, for the first time, the loss of Congress at the national level, a widening of competition, as well as the realization that opposition parties actually could, and would, win elections. The party system had undergone a change that became more evident throughout the next seven years. Regaining electoral dominance in the 1980 and 1984 elections did not alter the fact that the party system had been irrevocably altered⁶. To this day there remains an underlying predilection among some observers of Indian politics that this change is perhaps only a temporary blip, an aberration that will correct itself when Congress reorganizes itself. This is an erroneous assessment. The changes in the party system are due to structural changes, a broadening of democracy, and a weakening of institutional safeguards. The party system is in transition.

⁵ Ibid., p.26 (table 2.13).

⁶ See James Manor, "Party Decay and Political Crisis in India", The Washington Quarterly, (Summer 1991) 25-39.

This chapter will sketch the prevailing situation among the parties, describing the party system at the state and national levels at this time. It will then present five structural influences that have had an impact on party development: the electoral laws, the federal system of government, centralizing powers of the national government, the reorganization of states based on language, and the reservation provisions for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes [SC/STs].

THE PARTY SYSTEM

Description of party system at the state and national levels at this time.

There have been three elections in the last three years, the most recent election having been concluded in October 1999. The May, 1996 election saw more than twenty-seven parties elected to the Lok Sabha, in March, 1998, thirty-nine parties, and in October, 1999, thirty-eight parties⁷. Both the 1996 and 1998 governments that were formed depended on fickle allies to achieve a majority. In the 1998 election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) eked out a mere 180 seats (out of 545) and with its pre-election allies (ten parties holding seventy-one seats), was able to cobble together enough other MPs to form a government after the 1998 election. The government fell on April 23, 1999, only thirteen months after it had been seated. The 1999 election produced a clearer picture, even though there were a similar number of parties elected. This is due to the pre-election alliances that were crafted by the BJP and the regional parties. Needless to say, the party system in India is confusing and complex.

⁷ The numbers do not tell all the story, however. For one thing, in the 1996 election the Left Democratic Front (LDF) was a temporary coalition that formed a single 'party' for this particular election so the numbers are not quite so disparate as they appear. Second, there were, in addition, at least nine 'independents' elected without party affiliation. Third, at least half of the small parties that won in 1996 did

India's party system has been labeled a one-party dominant system⁸, arguably an accurate categorization until the early 1990s, if one only considers the party system at the national level. Giovanni Sartori challenges this description as confusing a dominant party with the idea of a system. According to Sartori, "the notion of dominant party establishes neither a class nor a type of party system"⁹ Sartori instead prefers the term predominance to distinguish the dominant party from a hegemonic one. He argues that predominance as a classification of party systems is more useful a conception because it recognizes the existence of, the legitimacy of, and the potential electorability of other parties. Even if there is no actual rotation of power, there is competition and antagonism between the major and minor parties. Thus, a predominant-party system can be classified as such when

to the extent that, and as long as, its major party is consistently supported by a winning majority (the absolute majority of seats) of the voters. It follows that a predominant party can cease, at any moment, to be predominant. When this happens, either the pattern is soon re-established or the system changes its nature, i.e., ceases to be a predominant party system.¹⁰

not win again in 1998, thus even more parties are or have been represented in the Lok Sabha. Incumbency is a handicap in India.

⁸ Maurice Duverger first introduced the term dominant party in 1951, defining it as thus: "A party is dominant when it is identified with an epoch; when its doctrines, ideas, methods, its styles, coincide with those of the epoch. ... Domination is a question of influence rather than strength. It is also linked with belief. A dominant party is that which public opinion believes to be dominant. ... Even the enemies of the dominant party, even citizens who refuse to give it their vote, acknowledge its superior status and its influence; they deplore it but admit it." *Political Parties* (London: Methuen & Co.: 1964), 308-9.

⁹ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 195.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

His definition clearly would put India, up until the 1977 electoral victory of the Janata coalition, into the predominant party classification. After the Janata coalition government collapsed in 1979, Congress again came to power, with an almost landslide win, thereby, in the view of observers at that time, 're-establishing' the former party system. That was to be short-lived, however. Instead, a new pattern has begun to emerge, but one that is still in flux.

Rakha Saxena terms this transition as the evolution of politics from "dominance to chaos"¹¹ According to Saxena, the first three post-independence elections were contested between a unified Congress and a disunited opposition that came from the same elite group, therefore "their programme [sic] and perception of problems and future were the same."¹² Since then the party system seems to have been moving towards a multi-party system at the national level as the opposition has become more radicalized, expansive, diversified and discordant, and the Congress party, both as party and as 'system', has unraveled.

A multi-party party system may, however, be only the first step in the transitional phase that could be moving towards an assemblage of national and regional parties that align themselves into two, or perhaps three 'fronts', each of the fronts competing on ideological differences. Sudha Pai sees this pattern developing, noting that the "central feature of the 1998 elections is the emergence of a bipolar situation at the center

¹¹ Rekha Saxena, Indian Politics in Transition: From Dominance to Chaos, (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1994).

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

supported by regional parties.”¹³ The two major national parties won slightly over fifty percent of the vote (the BJP at 25.59%, and Congress at 25.83%). Although there is a movement towards bipolarism it is optimistic to believe that the party system will undergo this transformation in the near future. At this writing the prospect of continued fragmentation and the ensuing unstable coalition governments seems unavoidable. Indeed, there are many observers¹⁴ who believe that the party system is becoming more fragmented and atomized. Sartori describes an atomized party system as “a highly fragmented pattern in which parties are mostly a facade covering loose and shifting coalitions of notables. In this stage the party system is still evanescent qua system: parties have no real platform, hardly a national spread, no centralized or coordinated organization, and even less anything resembling a stable organization.”¹⁵

Part of the definition of a system is that changes in one part of the system effects changes in another section. It is the *interaction* of the various components that characterize a system. A party system is part of a wider system, the political system, that serves as the environment within which the party system operates. This environment constrains choices and provides incentives (as well as disincentives). A party system is thus, in part, a product of the norms, rules, limitations and capacities of the institutions through which the parties interact.

¹³ Sudha Pai, “The Indian Party System Under Transformation: Lok Sabha Elections 1998” Asian Survey (v38, no.9: September 1998) p 836.

¹⁴ Journalists, both Western and Indian, are the most likely to seize upon this observation. However, most Indian specialists have noted the profusion of parties with a certain amount of alarm. See for example, Atul Kohli, James Manor, Paul Brass, Lloyd J and Suzanne H. Rudolph, and Mahendra Prasad Singh. (citations in bibliography).

¹⁵ Giovanni Sartori, “European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism” in Political Parties and Political Development, Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, eds. (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1966) 167-8.

Structural constraints reinforce the incoherence of the party system. The scattering of weak parties widely dispersed throughout the political spectrum results in weak coalitions, frequent turnover of governments, and a rejection of incumbents. Changes that have occurred and are still occurring in India's party system are symptomatic of the upheavals that have been taking place in the social realm as more underprivileged, low-caste, and rural peoples are being brought into the democratic system. Rajni Kothari, a noted political scientist in New Delhi, warned that "we are in a process of massive social change. In the short term this will lead to a degree of anarchy and instability as the forces from below begin to assert themselves."¹⁶ The first casualty of this upheaval was the INC and at this stage the rest of the party system is adjusting to the new opportunities available to vie for power.

Distribution of parties along a left-right continuum is at best an approximation, at worst an exercise of futility. The national parties issue party manifestos, but the similarities between these manifestos are greater than their differences. On the surface, ideology is often touted as the basis of party formation, but, as the Economist notes, "India's political parties do not disagree deeply about ideology"¹⁷. Other observers have also noted the trend towards "ideological centrism"¹⁸. Table 2, on the next page, shows the major issues in contention in the 1999 election, and the stand that four national parties have taken

¹⁶ Rajni Kothari, quoted in The Wall Street Journal, (10 May, 1996), 1.

¹⁷ The Economist, 1 May, 1999, 38.

¹⁸ This term is used by Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "India in 1998: the travails of political fragmentation", Asia Survey (Jan-Feb 1999, 39,1), 163.

on these issues. As can be seen, there is not wide divergence between the two major parties, the BJP and the INC.

TABLE 3
Comparison of Issues in Election Manifestoes for Major National Parties¹⁹

ISSUE	BJP	CONGRESS	CPI	CPM
Economy	Continue reforms and liberalization but with Swadeshi emphasis (preference for Indians and Indian development)	Liberalization and reforms to continue and to be expanded. Limit bureaucratic impediments to development and growth	Reverse the policy of liberalization	Reverse the policy of liberalization, economic independence from imperialist capitalists;
Foreign Investment	Preference to overseas investors who have domestic partners; MNCs not to be allowed in non-durable areas.	Foreign investment welcome. MNCs not discussed.	Foreign investment and MNCs to be permitted in high tech areas.	Allow for direct foreign investment in high tech areas; regulate capital flows to benefit overall economy
Role of the Public Sector	Public sector to be confined to areas of national security issues, infrastructure. State support to aid private development	“Strategic redefinition” of the role and scope of state involvement; continue state investment in infrastructure, high tech areas, security and strategic areas.	Private sector has a role but state is responsible to uplift the poor. Socialism is backbone of the Indian constitution.	.
Federalism	‘Partnership’ of Centre and States. Devolve power to local units (panchayats)	Panchayati Raj – support development and expansion of and empowerment of local governments	More autonomy for local and state governments	Federalism, and especially local governments (panchayats); increase role of government in achieving social equality
Uniform Civil Code	Develop and enforce a uniform civil code.	Retain the rights of communities to determine their own civil codes. Will not support amendments to change the personal laws.	Does not specifically address the uniform civil code or personal laws issues.	No specific use of the terms uniform civil code or personal laws.
Women	Supports amendment reserving 33% seats for women	Supports amendment reserving 33% seats for women	Supports equality for women (and all minorities).	Supports equality for women (and all minorities).
Foreign Policy/ Defense	Combat readiness; nuclear deterrence option; regional cooperation.	Combat readiness; nuclear policy to be reworked. Regional cooperation, look at increased autonomy for J&K.	Non- alignment, anti-US imperialism; against India’s nuclear program; regional cooperation.	Non- alignment, anti-US imperialism; against India’s nuclear program; regional cooperation.

¹⁹ The information has been distilled from the 1999 party manifestoes. The manifestoes for the parties is provided in the Appendix. Source: constructed from information provided in party manifestoes.

Alliances within and between parties are frequently made, broken, ignored, or bartered with as avenues for attaining greater power and based on electoral calculations. Party defections have been reduced but not eliminated due to a 1985 Anti-Defection bill that outlawed party members from accepting ‘bribes’ (usually ministerships) for switching parties²⁰.

Trying to describe the units of the party system can be a Herculean task. Parties splinter, disappear, re-emerge, absorb other parties, form ‘fronts’ (which also join with other ‘fronts’), fracture again, change names²¹. Parties with indistinguishable platforms abound, taking on different names in different states or districts, but unwilling to merge into a single party. At various times they have joined pre-election coalitions for the purpose of defeating another party but these marriages of convenience suffer from incompatibility, internal bickering, and dissolve within months. When opposition parties do successfully cooperate they have been able to unseat the major party. At the national level ‘Fronts’ have been

²⁰ Defections were rampant prior to passage of the bill, (which then became the 52nd Constitutional Amendment), with more than 2700 recorded from 1967 to 1985. In one year alone (1967-8) 16 state governments fell because of defections. “The typical pattern was to lure legislators away from a ruling party in a state, sometimes with cash but usually with the promise of a ministry in a new government. Of the 438 legislators who changed parties during this period (1967-8), 210 were rewarded with ministerships.” Robert L. Hardgrave and Stanley A. Kochanek, India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation, fifth edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 262-3. See Appendix for copy of the anti-defection law.

²¹ For example, in the state of Kerala, seven different Congress parties appear on the ballot: Congress (I) [the national party]; Kerala Congress (Mani); Kerala Congress (Jacob); Kerala Congress (Pillai); Congress (S); Kerala Congress (Joseph); and Congress (T). except for the Congress(I), these others are splinter parties or factions of the national party. In the state of Tamil Nadu the most important state party, the DMK, has three competing factions, the DMK itself, the AIADMK, and the MDMK; there are also three Congress parties, the Congress (I), the Congress (T), and TMC, the Tamil Maanila Congress headed by former Congress leader G.K. Moopanan. Data from Elections in India, 1992-1996, (p 83). The UF (United Front, composed mainly of the Janata Dal) has allied with the NF (National Front) or the LF (left Front, mostly Communist Parties).

created prior to an election, combining like-minded parties, issuing a common party manifesto, and campaigning as a single unit, with the sole purpose of deposing the major party (Congress) twice (1977, 1989). In 1996 the United Front, a coalition of thirteen parties and supported from the outside by Congress(I), formed a government after the plurality winner, the BJP, was unable to garner enough votes but this was not a pre-election alliance.

The 'Index of Oppositional Unity' (IOU)²² was developed by David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy to gauge how unified the opposition is, and compares the measurement with the results that the opposition achieved in the election. The strategy in creating a unified opposition has taken two tacks: parties temporarily coalesce under a single banner (for example, the 1977 Janata Party) or by a pre-election agreement of 'seat adjustments', in which formerly rival parties allocate which seats each of them will compete for, and they do not contest against each other for these seats.

There are five prominent national parties as well as several other parties that have been prominent in the 1990s. In addition there are Fronts, coalitions of national and state parties that compete nationally but may only have salience in

²² The measurement was developed to ascertain the unity of the opposition (the 'split-factor') from the 'swing factor', the change in the popularity of a particular party. Their formula is as follows: IOU = vote of the largest opposition party, divided by the sum of votes of all opposition parties, multiplied by 100. The result can vary between zero and one hundred; the higher the number, the greater the unity of the opposition. The fate of Congress has been directly related to the IOU factor. In a FPTP electoral system the IOU plays an especially important role. For example, in a single state, Rajasthan, when the IOU was 90, INC lost every seat. Two years later, in 1991, the IOU dropped to 74 and INC, which only received seven percent more of the vote (from 37 to 44 percent), won 13 out of the 25 seats.

See Butler, et.al., *India Decides*, op.cit., chapter 4.

several states. National parties are those parties that are registered in at least four states. Table 4 shows the left-right orientation of the parties.

NATIONAL PARTIES *major parties

- *Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
- *Communist Party of India (CPI)
- *Communist Party of India [Marxist] (CPM)
- *Indian National Congress [INC(I)]
- Janata Dal (JD) [the JD performance in the 1999 election precluded its continuing status as a national party]
- Samata Party (SAP)
- Samajwadi (Socialist) Janata Party (SJP)
- United Front (UF) is comprised of CPI, CPM and JD

Table 4
NATIONAL PARTIES ON A LEFT-RIGHT CONTINUUM

LEFT							RIGHT
	CPM	CPI	SJP	SAP	JD	INC(I)	BJP
	Left Front/National Front/UF						

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL PARTIES²³

Support for various parties has been in flux, especially in the last decade. The major 'centrist' party, the Indian National Congress (I) has been losing ground among some of its core supporters since the 1980s, but still attracts the broadest array of voters, cutting across caste, class, religious, social, and ideological lines. Its's support base has been eroded by regional or state parties, as well as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The following table (Table 5) shows the social bases of support for some parties.

²³ The parties will be discussed more thoroughly in subsequent chapters.

TABLE 5
Social Bases of Political Parties 1998 (in percent)

Background Characteristic	INC	BJP	United Front	BSP
Gender				
Female	28.0	29.5	19.6	2.9
Male	26.5	36.3	18.7	3.0
Locality				
Rural	27.9	31.8	19.6	3.1
Urban	28.2	36.3	17.7	2.4
Age				
Up to 25 years	24.4	35.0	17.8	4.3
26-35	27.5	33.9	18.6	2.6
36-45	27.4	32.4	20.5	2.6
56 and above	28.2	32.0	21.5	2.2
Education				
Illiterate	29.1	28.9	18.3	4.0
Up to middle	26.9	34.3	20.8	2.4
College, no degree	25.7	36.5	19.1	1.8
Graduate plus	21.5	42.5	16.6	1.6
Occupation				
Unskilled	34.6	23.0	21.4	4.1
Agricultural	26.2	26.2	24.5	4.5
Artisan/skilled	26.9	30.6	23.1	2.1
Cultivator (<5 acres)	21.7	32.8	18.3	3.1
Cultivator (>5 acres)	31.1	41.9	10.8	2.0
Business	26.2	37.9	21.5	1.5
White collar/professional	24.3	39.6	15.7	1.0
Caste				
Scheduled Caste	29.6	20.9	22.2	11.2
Scheduled Tribe	41.9	25.6	11.6	0.4
Other Backward	22.5	34.6	21.0	1.6
Upper Caste	28.1	38.5	17.4	1.1
Religion				
Hindu	25.6	37.4	17.4	3.0
Muslim	35.1	6.8	34.4	1.3
Christian	42.1	9.1	18.6	0.4
Sikh	21.9	39.8	18.0	10.2
Other	39.5	19.7	3.9	10.5
Economic Class				
Very Poor	27.3	27.1	23.7	2.7
Poor	27.4	31.8	19.0	3.3
Middle	26.9	37.3	16.6	2.7
Upper	28.3	38.9	14.3	1.9
All India Average	27.3	32.9	19.2	2.9

Source: Subrata K. Mitra and V.B. Singh, *Democracy and Social Change: A Cross Sectional Analysis of the National Electorate* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), 134-5.

CENTRIST PARTIES

Indian National Congress (INC)_

The INC encompasses a wide swath on the political spectrum. It has undergone numerous splits, defections, organizational changes, and policy switches. Originally quasi-socialist, Congress advocated social justice, destruction of the caste system, and equality for women. Since the 1980s it has moved towards liberalizing the economy, a policy that was accelerated in 1991 under the PM Narisimha Rao. Indira Gandhi was the heir to the party label, INC, or Congress(I), the 'I' standing for Indira²⁴. The other breakaway Congress parties are not referred to as INC in the literature but as Congress with a parenthetical initial. Congress touts itself as a moderate, secular, liberal party that can represent the down-trodden as well as middle classes. This depiction has been more rhetorical than actual in the last two decades. Much of its support base formerly came from the a broad cross section of the population, (and to some degree still does), Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, (SCs/STs), Other Backward Castes (OBCs), Muslims, as well as the middle class, but the rise of regional, state, and caste-based parties has eroded much of its support. Chapter four will examine the Congress party in greater detail.

²⁴ Congress (I) became the 'official' Congress Party in July 1981, as decreed by the Supreme Court. Thus, it retains the right to use the INC label also. Nevertheless, it still is usually referred to as Congress (I) in the literature in order to differentiate it from the old INC party.

JANATA DAL And The UNITED FRONT/NATIONAL FRONT

The Janata Dal (JD), a left-center party, was, until the 1998 election, the primary partner in the United Front. The JD's number of seats fell from forty-six in 1996 to six in the 1998 election, and zero in the 1999 election, practically wiping out the party in four states where it had its base support among the 'other backward castes' (OBCs). Its 1999 performance removed the party from the Election Commission's designation as a national party. However, its importance in the evolution of the party system necessitates its inclusion in the discussion of major parties in this section.

The predecessor to the JD, the Jan Morcha Party, was formed by V.P. Singh after his split from Congress in 1987 and in 1988 the JMP joined with other centrist parties to form the JD. Later that year three large state parties came on board to form the National Front. A pre-electoral alliance with both the BJP (a right wing party) and the CPI/CPM (Left Front) enabled the JD to win enough seats to form a minority government. Disputes quickly doomed the government, and it fell in less than a year when the BJP withdrew its support. A faction of the JD, which had split prior to the no-confidence vote, became the new government with the support of Congress. It lasted only four months. The JD was reincarnated as part of the United Front after the 1996 election. The plurality winner, the BJP, could not achieve a majority in the Lok Sabha so an ad-hoc alliance was quickly hatched. This government lasted less than two years, under

two different prime ministers. The JD is in a shambles. In the 1999 election the Janata Dal failed to win even a single seat.

Left Parties: CPI, CPI(M), CPI (M-L)

The Communist Party of India was founded in 1924 to organize industrial workers and form trade unions. Banned by the British colonial government until 1943, the party functioned underground and had little success in organizing workers. The party split in 1967 into two parties regarding cooperation with the Congress. The CPI chose to support Indira Gandhi's Declaration of Emergency; the new party, the CPM would not. The CPI, a more moderate party, continued to support Congress, was pro-Soviet, anti-Chinese (because of the Chinese-Indian border disputes), and more pro-capitalist. Because of the CPI's support for the emergency, its credibility fell across the country. It has had wide but shallow support throughout India, and has been in a holding pattern for the last three decades, reaping about three percent of the vote in most national elections.

The CPM was a more revolutionary and radical wing, leaning towards China and Maoist thought but has also moderated, though it still is more an activist oriented party and believes in rural development and decentralization. The CPM has ruled in the state of West Bengal since 1977 and in the last decade has courted foreign investment and MNCs to invest in the state. Both communist parties are part of the Left Democratic Front in Kerala, a state-wide Front, which has been in and out of power since 1957. Both parties have different alliances with several state parties to compete in state elections. In 1989 and 1991 they

both joined the National Front (now called the United Front). They are both members of the Left Front, a national coalition party, that includes the Forward Bloc, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), and the Janata Dal.

The CPI(M-L) is not really a political party, but a movement. It was the most extreme of the Communist organizations, a splinter CPM group that supported the Naxalite uprising (in northern Bengal). Joining other pro-Naxalite and extremist groups, the CPI(M-L) was formed in 1969. Its credo includes revolution, armed conflict, terrorism and abetting peasant rebellion. Insurrection rather than politics absorbed most of its energies. Its political counterpart became the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP).

The Communist parties have been ideologically the most consistent, although their manifestos have tempered through the years. The support for the LF comes almost entirely from the poor and very poor, and cuts across caste, as long as they are poor and rural. The UF (United Front) consists of so many parties with regional and state identities that the generalization of its supporters is less clear cut. For the most part it appeals mostly to very poor to middle class voters of low caste, or Muslim, where the message is less class-based than the LF, but emphasizes social justice and personal dignity.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The party colors of the BJP are saffron and green, saffron associated with holy ascetics, green with India itself. Its party symbol, the lotus, also has religious

symbolism, and is superimposed on the saffron section of the BJP flag. The BJP is a conservative, Hindu nationalist party that has been the major challenge to the Congress party in the 1990s.

The BJP is an outgrowth of a parallel nationalist movement that evolved in the early 1920s and, unlike most of the other political parties, was never associated with the Congress party. Its origins came from a more militantly nationalist group, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which was at odds with the pacifism of Mahatma Gandhi and the accommodative policies of the Congress. Until 1951 when the Jana Sangh party was founded, the RSS had remained fairly aloof from politics. The Jana Sangh allied with the Janata Party in 1977 and became part of the short-lived government. In 1980 the Jana Sangh left the Janata Party and formed a new organization, the BJP, and left behind some of the old rhetoric and ideologies. Attempts at moderation failed to be rewarded in voting booths, and a new strategy was devised by the next party president, L.K. Advani. Renewing its association with the RSS, the BJP used the superior organization of the RSS to capitalize on the mounting communal tensions that were brewing throughout India. *Hindutva* became its rallying call. The word is a catchall phrase that encompasses religious, moral, ethical, and cultural attributes that distinguish India and 'Indianism' from other peoples, rationalizes the unity of India as a 'nation', and, according to the BJP, serves as the foundation of the Indian state. In contrast to the 'secular' rhetoric of the Congress party, the BJP advocated 'positive secularism', a term that is meant to convey the idea that Indian civilization has common values and mores that should be inculcated

throughout the population. Part of this campaign is to reverse the special status that Muslims enjoy in Jammu and Kashmir, as well to enact a uniform civil code that pertains to all Indians (including the Muslims who were given legal rights to determine their community's civil and personal laws, *shari'a*). The 1980s and early 1990s were years of communal rioting, sectoral violence, and polarization. In addition, this period was fraught with massive corruption and a weak economy. The BJP found a niche and exploited the rampant tensions. Its strategy was discredited when a backlash developed after the Babri Masjid debacle²⁵.

The BJP fortunes at the polls had remained stagnant and it lost elections in a number of state elections. Realizing that *Hindutva* had attraction to only a limited proportion of the electorate, it began to emphasize issues with more mass appeal. Anti-corruption and social programs took center stage as the BJP began its foray into other states, especially the South, where, for the first time, it won seats. Its support base has broadened from being a party almost entirely of upper castes and Brahmins and now attracts an increasingly diverse collage of villagers, the middle classes, OBCs, and even a small number of Muslims²⁶. In 1996, its meager plurality Lok Sabha victory (with its allies) gave the BJP president, A.B.

²⁵ In December, 1992, the Babri Masjid (mosque) in Ayodhya, UP, was destroyed, sparking a week of rioting, looting, and killing that left several thousand people dead and massive property damage (much of it Muslim-owned).

²⁶ Main support still comes from the higher castes (40%), but the increase in support among the other groups is growing. OBCs (24%), SCs or Dalits, (13%) and STs or Adivasi (18%), and Muslims only 2%. Caste has an effect on class, and there is some movement towards class voting. Support from the rich and middle classes (regardless of caste) still make up the bulk of BJP votes (67%), while poor (21%) and very poor (14%) account for only one-third. Indian Election Commission, 1998. See Table 5.

Vajpayee, the prime ministership for thirteen days. In 1998 new elections were again held, and this time Vajpayee's government lasted a full year. He was once again appointed PM when elections were concluded in October 1999, and the BJP and its allies won a larger margin of seats.

THE FRONTS

In addition to the array of parties there are 'Fronts', which have been alliances between varying numbers of parties, either with or without similar ideologies or manifestos, that combine in order to defeat the larger challengers such as Congress or recently the BJP. Thus, there have been the National Front, the Left Front, the Third Front, the United Front, and so forth. Even the Fronts have combined to form another Front. Most Fronts have dissolved in short order, rarely lasting throughout an entire term of the Lok Sabha, and are reconstituted with other fragments before the next election. These Fronts conspire to offer a viable alternative to a voter but internal contradictions and personality feuds make any long term alliance untenable, or at least has, up to this writing.

Fronts are electoral machines, not a true attempt at trying to merge disparate parties into a single organized party with a hierarchy of leadership and cadre. The maneuverings for position, for ministerships, for prime ministership, has doomed the few Fronts that have won elections. In 1977, the first elections after the Emergency, the Janata Party formed a pre-election coalition to challenge the candidature of Indira Gandhi. By 'uniting' under a single symbol and competing as a single bloc, the collective Janata Party was able to defeat the INC

(297 to 154 seats). The coalition lasted less than thirty months (from March 1977 to August 1979) and had two different prime ministers, Moraji Desai and Charan Singh. The disunity of the coalition as well as the power fights within the bloc destroyed the prospect of continuing as a unified bloc, and the January, 1980 election was a sweep for the INC (353 seats). A second attempt at a unified opposition government was in 1989 when the National Front succeeded in winning power at the Centre. The experiment lasted less than two years. The United Front, consisting of fifteen parties, was able to form a government with the outside support of Congress(I) in 1996 after the BJP, which won a scant plurality, was unable to muster a majority in the Lok Sabha. In-fighting toppled first one, then a second Prime Minister, and the United Front finally succumbed as new elections again had to be called after less than two years. Realization that the major party is the prime beneficiary of a disunited opposition has been the impetus for parties to join together (albeit only temporarily).

OTHER 'PARTIES' OR INDEPENDENTS

To further complicate the party system, there are numerous independent candidates, as well as parties referred to as 'other' in election results data, because they are often only a 'party' consisting of a single candidate. Although these two categories are not 'national' parties, they sap the vote from major parties and make the party system less coherent. Individuals can run without any party affiliation whatsoever. The only requirement for being placed on a ballot is the payment of a 'security deposit', a sum of money that will be forfeited if the

candidate amasses less than one-sixth of the total vote in a particular constituency. The security deposit was originally levied in order to deter frivolous candidatures, but gradually became such a meager amount that few candidates were discouraged from participating.²⁷ The logistics of having such an array of candidates poses innumerable problems for the Election Commission (EC), but one specific problem is providing enough symbols for each candidate. In a country where approximately half the population is illiterate, parties are given a symbol by which voters can identify the party on the ballot. Little more than one hundred symbols have been registered by the EC, so when non-registered parties are to be placed on the ballot, no approved symbol is available, and these are listed as 'Independents'. Until a party wins two consecutive elections it is regarded as an 'independent' party and not given formal validation as either a national or a regional party.

'Independent' or 'other' members to the Lok Sabha usually have won between five and ten percent of the seats but that number had been rising in the 1990s. In the 1998 election, non-national parties forty percent, (220 of 540) of the seats were won by small parties with less than thirty members, most with less than ten.²⁸

²⁷ When a candidate filed his or her nomination, a deposit of Rs 500 (\$12) for national elections, and Rs 250 (\$6) for state assembly elections was required. This was the same fee that was levied in 1952. This paltry sum, small enough in 1952, became no deterrent whatsoever. "The percentage of candidates forfeiting their deposits has increased sharply over the years, from between 30 to 40 per cent in the first three elections to 81 per cent in 1989." It continues to rise as more independents compete; independents are the most likely to lose their deposits, and in the last four elections between 98.8% and 99.9% have lost deposits. Information from *India Decides: Elections 1952-1999-5* (p. 366-7). The security deposit was raised in 1996, taking effect in 1998, having an immediate impact on the numbers of candidates.

²⁸ David Frawley, "The Elections in India and their Portrayal in the Media", p 5 (www.indolink.com/analysis.)

The average numbers of candidates per constituency had also increased steadily since 1952²⁹. For example, in the state of Madhya Pradesh 1300 candidates competed for forty seats in 1996, but the record was set in the 1996 state Assembly race in one district in the state of Tamil Nadu where 1033 candidates competed for a single seat³⁰. Over the years, the greatest increase was in the numbers of independent candidates (from an average of 1.1 in 1952 to 7.2 in 1991). Changes in the deposits required by candidates has finally curbed the growth in the numbers of independent candidates.

STATE AND REGIONAL PARTIES

India's party system is two-tiered: the national parties and the state or regional parties play parts in both national and state elections. State and regional parties are categorized as such because all of their electoral support comes from within the state (or region) itself. The states themselves are responsible for registering state-based parties. The importance of state parties in the 1990s has taken on larger significance as they have become an increasing presence in the Lok Sabha. Either as pre- or post-election coalition partners state parties have had an enormous role in determining what party becomes the government at the Centre. The transformation of the party system from a predominant system to a multi-party system has also been one that has shifted from a national party base to a state or regional based party system. Each state has at least two parties competing regularly for state office as well as national office. One of these two

²⁹ The average number of candidates per Lok Sabha seat was 3.8 in 1952, 26.3 in 1996. Elections in India,

parties is frequently a national party, with the second major contender being a state party. When Lok Sabha and Assembly elections run simultaneously the state and national party systems overlap and are affected by the issues most important to the voter at that time. Which party or which system benefits from the simultaneous election has varied.

The concurrent elections of Assembly and Lok Sabha candidates was routine prior to 1971. In the 1967 Lok Sabha election the Congress Party strength fell from a high of seventy-three percent of the seats to less than fifty-four percent. Although retaining a slight majority the Congress Party position was far less secure. Defections from the party were becoming commonplace and with such a small majority Congress was vulnerable for the first time. At the same time, Congress began to lose elections in the states, losing almost half of the Vidha Sabha (state parliaments) elections. Furthermore, in 1969 Indira Gandhi orchestrated a split in the Congress Party³¹, dividing the old guard from her and her minions. Thus, the slight majority the INC had eked out in 1967 was eroded further. Indira Gandhi's response was to delink state and national elections by calling for the early dismissal of the parliament and new elections in order to isolate local, regional, and state issues, as well as individual party leaders at the

(p.83).

³⁰ The district cited is Periyar. Information is from Elections in India, 1952-1996 (p.83).

³¹ There is a wide array of literature about the split in the Congress Party and the 1967/71 elections. See especially James Manor, Myron Weiner, Paul Brass, and Atul Kothari. Later works have been much more discriminating and analytical than early writings, which were, for the most part, deluded by the charismatic charms of Indira Gandhi and attracted to the way she had re-invigorated the political process. The effects of her strategies and manipulations had not had time to percolate throughout the system or the country, providing perhaps an excuse for some of the exaltations showered upon Indira. See for an example of the latter, Suresh K. Tameri, The Wonder Elections 1971, (Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1971).

local or state levels that were amassing personal followings, from having a negative impact on INC electoral fortunes. Banking on her personal charisma and populist campaigning slogans as well as the separation of local and national issues from the voters' choices, she gambled that the early elections would bolster the electoral fortunes of the new Congress party. Her strategy was successful and her new party, the Congress(I) surged back to victory with a two-thirds majority.

The long term ramifications to the party system may not have been predictable when Indira Gandhi set forth to assure Congress(I) victory. De-linking state and national elections also 'de-linked' the national party from the local party organizations, providing space in the party system for other parties to fill. According to scholars³² a party is more apt to become institutionalized and coherent when it infiltrates all layers of a political system. A party system is less integrated when elections are not synchronized. Niou and Ordeshook assert that party labels are more important to voters and thus, to politicians, when there are simultaneous elections. In comparing the integrated party system of the United States with the party system in Canada that is not only sharply segregated between national and provincial parties but also riven with 'contentious bargaining' among and between the elites at both levels, they speculated that two factors are critical: simultaneous timing of all levels of elections, and a plethora of elected offices to

³² John M. Carey, in his study of institutional design and party systems and the effect of electoral cycles for legislatures and the executive, found that effect of the electoral cycle is significant. Voters tend to "cast straight partisan ballots for both president and legislature when elections are concurrent; as a result, parties running strong presidential candidates are rewarded in the legislature." "Institutional Design and Party Systems", *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies*, 76. The converse is also true. In an integrated party the candidates at all levels are more likely to 'sink or swim' en masse. Also, see Emerson M.S. Niou and Peter C. Ordeshook, "Designing Coherent Government", *Ibid.*, 164-170.

be filled. In describing the reasons for an integrated party system in the United States, Niou and Ordeshook have suggested that

the critical characteristics of integration are demonstrated: 1) elections simultaneously fill a great many public offices; 2) a local organization facilitates the election of party candidates to local offices; and 3) local elections coincide with the election for a singularly visible national office, the presidency. In an election in which voters confront scores of candidates about whom they know little, a candidate's essential appeal is his or her party affiliation and the fact that this affiliation is shared by more visible candidates. Even when local and national issues do not coincide, the fates of a party's candidates cannot be wholly separated. The multitude of candidates for local office rely on the few national political figures to give meaning to the party labels that direct voters, who know little else about local candidates. At the same time, no presidential candidate ... has had the resources to mobilize voters as effectively as existing local party structures.³³

Although their observations pertain to a presidential system, the effect of a symbiosis between national and local party systems has relevance in a parliamentary system also. The delinking of the national and state elections in India had a long term and profound effect. Saxena unequivocally declares that

the most significant outcome of the 1971 election was the creation of an independent arena of national politics, disassociated from the politics of regions: the states. All subsequent elections have since reinforced and strengthened this tendency. The result was that the factors which were considered important in the pre-1971 election in judging the nature of parliamentary election or predicting its outcome, such as party identifications and issue orientations among the electorate or the caste-community calculus and ethnic compositions of constituency, grievances or even perceptions of socio-economic interests of different groups in the electorate had lost their primacy.³⁴

State and regional parties: A description

³³ Ibid., 167.

³⁴ Saxena, op.cit., 21.

State parties are more difficult to consign to a specific classification.

Mahendra Prasad Singh notes that, “classifiable along more than one axis, state politics in India defy any easy typology.”³⁵ Depending on the state or the region parties mobilize different segments of the population. Local issues predominate in state elections. Caste, religion, occasionally class, can be the magnets that draw support but these are rarely the only variables that are salient to voters. Issues can be important, but voters have learned that rhetoric and performance are not highly correlated. When polled, voters cite economic issues as the greatest influence on their choice of candidates³⁶. Party loyalty is decreasing as voters judge candidates on individual performance. Incumbency is frequently an impediment³⁷. Voters are also highly susceptible to charisma and image, and in some states movie stars have galvanized massive support³⁸.

Although there is a proliferation of parties and a horde of individuals competing for each seat a two-party system seems to have emerged or is emerging at the district level. Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman have found that the effective number of parties at the district level has stabilized at around two.

³⁵ Mahendra Prasad Singh, Asian Survey (April 1992), 304.

³⁶ Pre-election poll, India Today, March, 1999, February, 1998.

³⁷ According to M.S. Gill, India’s Election Commissioner, there is only a twenty-four percent probability of a ruling party winning the next election. “India: Running the World’s Largest Elections”, Journal of Democracy, (9:1, 1998, pages 164-168),167. Pratap Mehta found that in state governments since 1987, “less than fifteen percent of incumbent administrations have been returned to power”. “India: Fragmentation Amid Consensus”, Journal of Democracy (8:1, 1997, pages 56-69), 57. Although this ‘volatility’ is frequently viewed as destabilizing the party system, a comprehensive study by Peter Mair has concluded that the causes of, and effects of, electoral volatility vary from one case to another, but frequently reflect a more open and pragmatic process and government. See Mair, Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), *passim*.

³⁸ Most notably in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. For a well researched article on the role of a film star that founded the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu and served as its Chief Minister for fifteen years, see M.S.S. Pandian,

According to their research, “third-party candidates have received more than 20% of the vote in only 15% of the Indian constituencies since 1957. ...two parties tend to gather a vast majority of the district votes ... but in many periods the same parties are not present in all districts”³⁹. The two parties that are most dominant at the state level vary from state to state and region to region, precluding the emergence of a two party system at the national level. The pattern that is emerging in the states is a parallel party system that is beginning to dominate the national party system. The national parties that either rule in the states or join in alliances with state parties transmute into modified forms of the state parties.

The following table (4) depicts the states and their respective parties.

”Culture and Subaltern Consciousness: An Aspect of the MGR Phenomenon”, in State and Politics in India, Partha Chatterjee, ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 367-389.

³⁹ Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman, “Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States”, American Political Science Review, (June 1998, v92, no.2), 332.

TABLE 6

STATES AND THEIR MAJOR RULING PARTIES: APRIL 1999

Bold type denotes prominent state party. *Star denotes the present ruling party.

State	Major State Parties [Ruling Party(*)] (April 1999)
Andhra Pradesh	Telegu Desam* , Congress(I)
Arunachal Pradesh	Arunachal Congress(M)*
Assam	Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)* United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), Congress(I)
Bihar	Janata Dal, BJP, Samata Party , CPI, JMM, Samajwadi Party*
Gujarat	BJP*, Congress(I)
Haryana	Haryana Vikas Party (HVP)-BJP (Coalition)* , Haryana Lok Dal Party (HDLP)
Himachal Pradesh	Himachal Vikas Party (HVP)-BJP (coalition)*
Jammu&Kashmir	National Conference* , BJP, Congress(I)
Karnataka	Janata Dal* , BJP, Congress(I), Karnataka Congress Party
Kerala	Congress(I), CPI (M), CPI, Muslim League , Kerala Congress(M), RSP, Janata Dal Fronts, LDF*
Maharastra	BJP*, Congress(I), Shiv Sena
Manipur	Congress(I), Congress(K)*
Meghalaya	(Congress(I)*, Independents
Madhya Pradesh	BJP, Congress(I)*, BSP, Congress(T), MPVC
Nagaland	Congress(I)*
Orissa	Congress(I), BIJU* , Janata Dal, Samata Party
Punjab	Akali Dal-BJP (coalition)* , Congress (I)
Rajasthan	BJP*, Congress (I), Congress (T)
Sikkim	Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF)*
Tamil Nadu	DMK* , AIADMK , Congress (I), Tamil Maanila Congress, CPI
Tripura	CPI(M)*
Uttar Pradesh	BJP*, Samajwadi Party , Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) , Congress(I), Congress (T), RSP, Forward Bloc, CPI.
West Bengal	Left Front*, CPI (M), Congress(I), RSP, All-India Forward Block*

There are a total of 428 registered⁴⁰ parties at the states level, most of which are small and confined to a small geographical area. As indicated in the section on national parties, these small parties or individuals who seek office erode the party system by siphoning off support for more organized parties.

STRUCTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

The new country of India, and its party system, was influenced by four structural constraints that were agreed upon at the time of independence, and fifth, the redrawing of state borders, that was adopted a decade later . These ‘rules of the game’ had been agreed to by the elites, overwhelmingly Congress Party members⁴¹, during the last stage before independence, and were formally included in the constitution. The Constituent Assembly (India’s first legislature) wrote the constitution and approved it on January 26, 1950. John Carey notes that “institutional design shapes both the broad nature of political party systems and the behavior of individual politicians within parties (because the) formal rules

⁴⁰ A registered party differs from a ‘recognized’ party. Any party can (and must) register with the Election Commission, but recognition requires that it has been actively involved in political activity for at least five years or it has won at least four percent of the votes cast in the state for either the state or national parliament (excluding the votes cast for a candidate that has lost his/her deposit). Parties are recognized on a state to state basis. Butler, et. al., India Decides, p21.

⁴¹ Although the drafters of the Constitution were mostly from the Congress Party, it strove to be representative of as many interests, ideologies, and opposition views as possible. Austin writes that “[T]he Constituent Assembly was a one-party body in an essentially one-party country. The Assembly was the Congress and the Congress was India.” (p 8-9), Granville Austin, The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation . Eighty-two percent of the Assembly were Congress people (p. 10). Because there was not universal suffrage for election to the Assembly only 28.5% of the population could select members for this very significant Assembly. However, even if the bulk of the population had not participated directly in the elections, the interests and ideologies of a wide spectrum of peoples were represented, according to Austin. Nehru in particular addressed this concern: “the Congress has within its fold many groups, widely differing in their viewpoints and ideologies. This is natural and inevitable if the Congress is to be the mirror of the nation.” (quoted in Austin, from Nehru’s book, Unity of India, p 139.)

determine”⁴², the way societal interests are represented and how power will be apportioned. The specific rules that have had an impact on the development of the political parties and the party system are the following: electoral laws, a federal system of government, centralized powers, special provisions for peoples referred to as the ‘scheduled castes and scheduled tribes’, and the redrawing of states based on language. The effects of these structures will be discussed in the following section.

ELECTORAL LAWS

India adopted the British electoral system along with its parliamentary system: a single vote, single member constituency, plurality system. Debate over whether to elect representatives through proportional representation (PR) was considered briefly as an alternative to reserving seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and providing for separate electorates for Muslims. The debate was, in fact, short lived. The Constituent Assembly rejected PR as too complicated to either administer or for illiterate voters to understand. More importantly, it was incompatible with the parliamentary system according to Dr. Ambedkar, the most notable ‘untouchable’ in the Assembly, who warned that PR would produce “an effect of fragmentation, and that the successful working of cabinet government demanded a majority party. India must have a stable government to maintain law and order.”⁴³ A plurality electoral system would be much more likely to produce a majority system. The idea that there would not be a single party

⁴² John M. Carey, “Institutional Design and Party Systems”, in Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies, (Diamond et.al, eds.) 69.

⁴³ As quoted in Granville Austin, op.cit., 153.

majority forming the government was never contemplated, let alone addressed. Granville Austin surmised that the reason the British plurality system was accepted so easily was because the Congress Party was “so overpowering and all-pervasive (that) it did not occur to its leaders that one day the party might not be in a majority.”⁴⁴ Fragmentation of the party system occurred in spite of the electoral system, but the results would probably have been much worse if PR had been adopted. Giovanni Sartori surmised that “were India to switch to PR, it is a safe conjecture that it would quickly become one of the most fragmented, if not atomized, of all known party systems.”⁴⁵

The electoral system has long been considered to be an important factor in influencing, if not determining, the numbers of parties in a party system. According to Maurice Duverger, “the simple-majority single-ballot system encourages a two-party system with alternation of power between major independent parties.”⁴⁶ He tempers this statement, however, with the caveat that this is only a ‘fundamental tendency’, and “other aspects of the life of the nation such as ideologies and particularly the socio-economic structure”⁴⁷ are the most decisive influences in influencing party systems. A number of esteemed political scientists have researched and analyzed the effect that electoral systems have on party systems⁴⁸ and reached various conclusions, many of them dealing

⁴⁴ Granville Austin, in an interview with Hasan Surror in The Hindu, 16 March, 1998, 14.

⁴⁵ Giovanni Sartori, “The Influence of Electoral Systems: Faulty Laws or Faulty Method?”, in Electoral Laws and Their Political consequences, Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart, eds., (Agathon Press: New York, 1986), fn. 22, p.68.

⁴⁶ Maurice Duverger, Political Parties, (London: Methuen & Co., 1967), 205.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See especially Richard S. Katz, A Theory of Parties and Electoral Systems (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Katz, Democracy and Elections (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Douglas W. Rae, The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Arend Lijphart, Electoral Systems and Party Systems, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart, eds., Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences (New York: Agathon Press, 1986); Arend Lijphart and Bernard Grofman, Choosing and Electoral System (New

with the questions concerning the **fairness** of representativeness and the effects on inter- and intra-party competition and cooperation. Plurality systems do seem to produce fewer major parties, over time. Proliferation of parties is attributed to a variety of factors of which the electoral system is only one. Proportional representative systems usually do result in a greater number of parties, but these are due to pre-existing cleavages that already exist; PR is often a result of already proliferating parties (with the subsequent demands to change the electoral system to PR) even within the FPTP system, not a cause of proliferation. And, although PR may more adequately represent groups or ideologies, a single-member plurality system is more apt to foster compromise and moderation, at least at the district level while PR systems discourage them.⁴⁹ But, according to Richard Katz, plurality systems “discourage dealing with difficult problems” and can “frequently undermine the capacity of the government to take effective action.”⁵⁰

In India, the first past the post electoral system has produced highly skewed results, with, in one instance, a candidate winning an election with barely twenty-three percent of the vote⁵¹. The electoral system certainly did produce artificial majorities in the Parliament during the era of Congress rule. The system may encourage the emergence of a two-party system but very little study has been done on whether, when

York: Praeger, 1984); Vernon Bogdanor and David Butler, eds., Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁴⁹ Katz, *Ibid.*, (1980), 122.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ In 1991 Congress won a seat in UP because its candidate, with 23.2% of the vote bested the next closest candidate who had 22.2%; the next four candidates won 20.7%, 16.9%, 8.1% and 9.0%. Butler et.al., India Decides, p.27. This is an aberration but with so many candidates frequently the margin of victory is very small.

there is not a two-party system (or predominant one-party), this may actually promote the proliferation of parties. The strategy for a party in a winner-take-all system, especially if a single party has a hard-core, loyal following, even if small, could be to fragment the opposition so much that a winner will either emerge through default, or be viewed as the Condorcet⁵² choice. Suffice it to say that electoral systems do affect the strategies and interactions of the parties. The distortion between seats and votes in the plurality system has been well documented⁵³ and is not the purpose of this study.

The Election Commission

The sanctity of the electoral process was so important to the Constituent Assembly that they included provisions in the Constitution⁵⁴ that the control and supervision of elections be vested in an independent body, non-partisan, with nation-wide authority, and the power to countermand results of specific races when corrupt means were employed and to disqualify candidates who engage in corrupt practices. In the 1980s and early 1990s ‘booth capturing’, where hired thugs either prevented persons from voting, stuffed ballot boxes, or intimidated voters, mushroomed. In these cases there were new polls held within a day or two, with police protecting the polls. The Election Commission has, for the most part, been unsullied by the corruption and laxity that taints many of the other institutions. Under the chairmanship of T.N. Seshan the commission

⁵² “A Condorcet candidate is a candidate who can defeat every other candidate in a pairwise contest with each.” Stephan J. Brams and Peter C. Fishburn, “Some Logical Defects of the Single Transferable vote”, in Choosing an Electoral System: Issues and Alternatives, Arend Lijphart and Bernard Grofman, eds., Op. Cit., p. 150. A criticism of the plurality electoral system is that it is almost always deficient in assuring the selection of the Condorcet winner. See William H. Riker, “Electoral Systems and Constitutional Restraints”, in the same volume (p. 103-110) and Richard Katz, Democracy and Elections.

⁵³ The literature on this subject is vast. See for example, Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, Seats and Votes (1989); Richard S. Katz, Arend Lijphart, and Douglas Rae.

⁵⁴ Articles 324-329.

became much more aggressive in overseeing elections⁵⁵. Although there are cases of illegalities, elections in India have received high marks for their fairness. Some corruption has occurred as M.S. Gill, the chief of the Election Commission acknowledges, but he states, “these inadequacies do not affect the overall outcome of elections, either at the state or the national level. Unfair practices at the local level may affect the margin of victory in some cases, or perhaps the outcome of the voting in a few constituencies, but they do not affect the nature of the overall electoral verdict. Those who govern do so because the voters chose them.”⁵⁶

Unlike in the United States, all eligible voters are automatically registered for elections⁵⁷. Obviously there has been an increasing numbers of eligible voters as India’s population reaches close to a billion people; the increase from 173.2 million eligible voters in 1952 to 620 million in 1999 has made elections procedurally complicated. Turnout has increased over the years, although it has varied from election to election. The record high reached almost sixty-five percent (in 1984), but it averages around 58 percent. Table 7 shows the size and turnout figures for the thirteen national elections.

⁵⁵ Decisions made by Seshan and his co-committee members include forbidding announcement of new welfare measures by the ruling party after the poll dates have been scheduled, disallowing the government officials from using government aircraft to campaign in, investigating all complaints by voters or parties of abuses, and so forth. See “Knights in Shining Armour”, The Hindu, (3 June, 1996) 16.

⁵⁶ M.S. Gill, “India: Running the World’s Biggest Elections”, Journal of Democracy, (9.1 [1998], 164-168), 166.

TABLE 7
TURNOUT FOR LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 1952-1999

YEAR	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999
Electorate in millions	173.21	193.65	217.68	250.60	274.09	321.17	363.94	400.10	499	514	593	606	620
Total Seats	489	494	494	520	519	542	527	542	543	543	543	543	543
Poll percentage	45.7	47.5	55.4	61.3	55.3	60.5	56.9	65.1	62	61	57.94	61.97	59.99

source: compiled from data from the Indian Election Commission

Male turnout has been greater than that for females, but that disparity has gradually been declining, from an average of approximately twelve percent in the past to about eight percent in the last two elections. This differential varies from state to state, with some states seeing more women than men voting. Rural turnout⁵⁸ has seen the greatest increase, reflected in the increasing numbers of agriculturists that are elected to the Lok Sabha, reaching a high of 44.14 % in the 1989 election.

Because of the seriousness with which the election commission takes its responsibilities it makes sure that there are at least five monitors at every polling place. In the 1996 general election there were more 900 thousand voting booths⁵⁹ staffed by more than five million individuals. No voter must travel more than four kilometers to

⁵⁷The Election Commission does a house to house canvas, listing every voter, then posts the lists so it can be verified by the public. India is in the process of issuing voter identity cards to each voter to curtail voter fraud.

⁵⁸ In 1999 rural turnout averaged 81.1%; semi-rural was 80.8%; urban turnout was only 52.3%. Data from Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, Center for the Study of Developing Societies, in "Interpreting the Mandate", *Frontline*, V16, Issue 22 (October 23-November 5, 1999).

⁵⁹ The following information has come from ACE Project, <<http://www.aceproject.org>> and from the Election Commission of India home page at <<http://www.eci.gov.in>>.

vote. The logistics of carrying out an election is expensive (\$200 million in 1996) and time consuming as many of the monitors must be re-deployed from region to region. Therefore elections take place over a period of several days. Paper ballots⁶⁰ are marked with both the candidate's name and party symbol. Another refinement to the electoral laws declared that the first positions on the ballots were to be allocated to candidates from recognized parties, an advantage and incentive for formalized parties.⁶¹

FEDERALISM

The federal system in India has become increasingly important in the last decade. The system has three tiers: the central government (the 'Centre'), states, with their own legislatures called Vidhan Sabha (legislative assemblies), and local governments. The states are divided into districts [for a total of 476 districts], districts are subdivided into *tehsils* or *taluqs* (blocks), comprising hundreds of villages, and villages have *panchayats*.

The Constituent Assembly made the decision early on that a strong central government was paramount to counteract the centrifugal momentum that could undermine the Indian state. Political unity had to be forged through the powers of a strong government. It was believed that economic development and social justice could best be directed through centralized policies and centralized enforcement. Having inherited a professional civil service that could administer policies contributed to the

⁶⁰ The 1996 election consumed 25 thousand tons of paper. In 1982 battery-operated voting machines were introduced (many rural areas have no, or sporadic electricity) but the use of them was challenged in the Supreme Court, which disallowed their use. In March, 1992, the Constitution was amended (Amendment to the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951), [source: Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, internet location: <http://mpa.nic.in/append>] to allow voting machines to be used, but the batteries that operated them were dead and had to be re-manufactured. The switch from paper ballots to Electronic Voting Machines (EMVs) began during the 1999 election.

⁶¹ Agarala Easwara Reddi and D.Sundar Ram, "Administering Clean and Fair Elections in India", (310-23).

utility of having centralized control. However, the enormity of regional variations within the country made a federalist type arrangement necessary to provide a semblance of autonomy for the states. Because of the overwhelmingly center-oriented focus of power in India's federal system it is labeled a 'prefectorial federal system' according to H.M. Rajashekara⁶², a quasi-federalism that doles out states' rights sparingly. Indian federalism does lack the constitutional authority and autonomy of some other federal systems, but the last decade has seen a movement towards greater state power, albeit the states are still heavily dependent on the central government for revenues and state initiatives can be derailed by center intervention.

The governmental framework is slightly modified from the British parliamentary system, installing an indirectly elected President with ceremonial as well as some substantive powers to serve as the head of state. Although the president is, on paper, the chief executive, most of his powers are practiced only with the consultation and approval of the Council of Ministers, thereby vesting most of the authority and power in the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and thereby the Parliament. The Parliament is bicameral, with the lower house, the House of the People or Lok Sabha, the more important of the two chambers. The Lok Sabha is directly elected by the people. The proportion of seats from each state is determined by the population of the state. The upper house, the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) represents the states and is composed of representatives elected by the state Assemblies. The central government also includes an independent judiciary and a civilian controlled military.

⁶² H.M. Rajashekara, "The Nature of Indian Federalism: a critique" *Asian Survey* (37:3, March 1997, p. 245-254).

The paramountcy of the central government was clearly delineated in the Constitution⁶³. At the same time, there was little doubt that the vast diversity, let alone size, of India prompted the framers to provide states with some degree of autonomy, separate legislatures, and high courts. The institutional design of each state is modeled after the central government, a parliamentary system with a ceremonial head of the state (the Governor), a Chief Minister who heads the Legislative Assembly, with his or her Council of Ministers, and a unicameral or bicameral legislature. The Governor is appointed by the President of India, and serves at the President's pleasure. The Governor's role increases extraordinarily if a state is put under 'President's Rule' (see section below, page 106-7). At that time the Governor becomes the chief executive. Under normal circumstances, the Chief Minister is the head of state government. The CM heads the ministries. The numbers of ministers vary but have, in the last two decades, increased exponentially as ministerial positions have been expanded to lure party members to defect, or to accommodate coalition party members. In 1997 Uttar Pradesh had ninety-three ministers under the BSP-BJP coalition government.

The third tier in the federal system is the local and district level, a network of panchayats⁶⁴. Article Forty of the constitution provided for panchayats in the institutional hierarchy but they were designated as one of the 'Directive Principles', non-binding, non-enforceable guides for states to aspire to. The constitution consigned the

⁶³ Granville Austin traces and analyzes the debate between the Nehru and Gandhi factions over central versus local controls, see especially chapters one and two, op.cit.

⁶⁴ The network includes layers from village to several villages to districts, *zila parishads*; this entire system is called *panchayat raj*, or "rule of village councils and other rural local bodies". Paul R. Brass, The New Cambridge History of India: The Politics of India since Independence (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 119.

formation, makeup, and powers of the panchayats to the discretion of the states. Small scale decentralized units of government had been a Gandhian vision. Conceiving of village rule as a superior means to effect social change and bring democracy to the people, Gandhi advocated for the most decentralized government possible. Panchayats were traditional units of village governance, institutions that were controlled by and for the dominant caste in the village itself. The primary task of the traditional panchayat was to maintain caste purity, mores and rituals as well as discipline miscreants. Gandhi envisioned, as an alternative to centralized government, a 'transformed', democratic panchayat system that would instead be representative of the whole village polity because it would be elected by the entire population of the village but would have the moral and societal authority to invoke positive change in an environment that still harbored the simplicity and the cultural richness of India. Democracy and social change would thus be a 'bottom up' evolution that would reflect the basis of Indian rural life.

The framers of the constitution rejected the idea that villages would be able to transform themselves. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar spoke for much of the Assembly when he scorned the notion, commenting that the village was "a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and communalism."⁶⁵ At the same time they rejected the notion that India had little need for a centralized government, opting instead for a more centralized government with the role of panchayat governments left up to the states to determine⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ B.R. Ambedkar, in Granville Austin, The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1966).

⁶⁶ See Austin, *ibid.*, pages 26-39.

Panchayats were merely hollow institutions until West Bengal and Karnataka devolved power and resources to them in the early 1980s. The panchayats became even more widespread and relevant after the seventy-third Amendment was passed in 1992, giving constitutional status to them, and provided for regular elections to them, supervised by the states electoral commissions. Further laws have guaranteed that women, scheduled castes, and/or scheduled tribes will be represented in the panchayats because of the extension of reservations for these groups to these institutions⁶⁷. Judith Brown, writing in the mid 1980s when the panchayats were only beginning to evolve into more modern, representative, and accountable units, nevertheless recognized the beneficial potential that panchayats promised:

...it seems indisputable that the new institutions of rural self-government and elections to them have helped to educate the Indian villager politically – to convince him of the value of his vote, and to link him to political parties who play an active role in elections even though this arena of democracy is meant to be party-less. Furthermore they provide a new and valuable political arena for young men and those from aspiring but not dominant village groups and act as a recruitment and training ground for people who go on from village politics to the higher levels in the system and even to state level. Panchayat raj, for all its limitations as a mechanism for social and economic development, has become part of the infrastructure of India's democracy.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ All states except Bihar now have panchayat governments, increasing the numbers of elected representatives in all of India from approximately 5000 (Members of Parliament as well as Member of the Legislative Assemblies, MLAs) to **three million**, one million of which are women. Reserved seats for the scheduled castes, tribes, and OBC (other backward castes) constitute from twenty to fifty percent of the seats, depending on the state. See Mani Shankar Aiyar, "Money for Empowerment", *India Today*, 10 August, 1998, p 27.

⁶⁸ Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: the Origins of an Asian Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 363-4. While lauding the access that rural people were becoming exposed to, she was well aware that the panchayats had notoriously been associated with elite domination, writing that they have tended "to become vehicles for prosperous peasants to increase their dominance in rural society and their grip on scarce resources and services, while the token low caste representatives can do little to ensure an equitable spread of development funds and facilities." (ibid.) Many villages are still in this transitional stage, but in the fifteen years since this was written there has been further progress towards what she found 'indisputable' in 1985.

The initial spread of panchayats came in non-Congress states “where they have been used as instruments for establishing alternative rural power bases for non-Congress parties”⁶⁹, such as in West Bengal where the Communist Party (M) controlled state politics, although in Congress controlled states they were useful instruments for distributing patronage and reinforcing the status quo of upper castes. In recent years the legitimacy of panchayats has been rising as they have begun administering and overseeing development programs.

The interactions between as well as within the multilayered system of politics complicates the task of understanding the party system⁷⁰. The balance of power has shifted back and forth between the different layers, and since the late 1970s no single layer commands the stage. During Indira Gandhi’s rule there was a vast centralization of government. Chhibber and Kollman, in a quest to account for changes in national party systems over time, analyzed data and found that periods of high political and economic centralization positively correlated with a contraction of the national and state party systems, decreasing the numbers of effective parties on both levels, and tipping the power equation to the national level⁷¹. Their conclusions, that a high degree of centralization of power affects candidates’ strategies and voters’ incentives to “abandon locally competitive but nationally noncompetitive parties”⁷², does not probe into the methods used by Indira Gandhi to centralize power and undermine the regional parties. Many of the tactics adopted by Mrs. Gandhi were flagrant abuses of democratic processes and can

⁶⁹ Brass (1990), p. 120.

⁷⁰ See Paul Brass, “National Power and Local Politics in India: A Twenty-year Perspective”, State and Politics in India, Partha Chatterjee, ed., (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 306.

⁷¹ Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman, op.cit.

⁷² Ibid., 329.

more valuably explain party system change than policy decisions. This argument will be developed in Chapter four.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT POWERS

The Constitution of India provides the central government with the power to suspend the civil liberties of citizens during a state of emergency, when proclaimed by the President. The proclamation may only remain in effect for two months unless it is extended by both houses of the legislature. Three threats to the country are delineated as justifying a state of emergency, including 1) external aggression or war or internal disturbances, 2) a constitutional breakdown in either the central government or in a state, or 3) a threat of financial collapse in the country or state. Conceived as a means of providing extra-constitutional powers to the central government in times of crises, the emergency provisions have been used twice in reaction to external factors (in 1962 during the border war with China and in 1971 during the war with Pakistan which resulted in the independence of Bangladesh). As a reaction to 'internal disturbances', the emergency provisions have been invoked only once on the national level, and for a purpose quite contrary to the intentions of the founding fathers: to secure Indira Gandhi's position as prime minister (see Chapter four).

However, the use of the emergency powers on the state level, known as President's Rule [Articles 278 and 278A], has been a frequent ploy that has been used and abused by most of the Prime Ministers⁷³. President's Rule is a means of dissolving a

⁷³ The most egregious abuse of President's Rule was practiced by Indira Gandhi who imposed it forty-one times; during the first twenty years of independence, under the prime ministership of Nehru and Shastri, there were only ten calls for President's Rule. Other prime ministers have also imposed it: Morarji Desai

state government, at the behest of the state's governor (although this action is often initiated by the governor at the urging or even direct order of the prime minister), that is incapable of maintaining law and order, protecting citizens, or is circumventing the constitution. It is proclaimed by the president and is in effect for a period of six months, although the Parliament can extend it for another six months (repeatable for up to a total of three years). Government functions and powers are then transferred to either the president or to the Parliament. When the crisis in the state has been resolved, either through new state elections or arbitration, the President's Rule is vacated. As a safety valve President's Rule has been a necessary tool in the Union government's arsenal to restore order to a state that has succumbed to violence and chaos. However, the use of President's Rule as a means of affecting state level politics has also been the underlying reason for some prime ministers, and became the primary reason for invoking it during the two tenures of Indira Gandhi.

It is the use of President's Rule as a political tool that is relevant to this study. Because President's Rule has been used to destabilize opposition governments and deflate state level politicians and their support base, this has had an impact on the stabilization of the party system. (See Chapter four).

(eleven times), Chaudhury Charan Singh (five times), Rajiv Gandhi (eight times), V.P. Singh (twice), Chandra Shekhar (four times), and Narasimha Rao (nine times).

Reservations for SC/STs

India's caste system has profound impact on its political as well as its social and economic development. Approximately eighteen percent of the Hindu population (or sixteen percent of the Indian population) are 'out-castes' or 'untouchables', the lowest strata of the caste system. The untouchables were designated as a scheduled caste⁷⁴ during British rule and were provided a set number of seats on the provincial councils in 1933. Untouchability was abolished in the Constitution (Article 17) but was not legally enforceable until the passage of the Untouchability Offences Act in 1955 which spelled out discriminatory actions and provided for penalties. The term scheduled castes is more commonly used to denote the former, or 'ex-untouchables', and in the 1990s the mobilization of the SCs has evolved into a political group that prefers the term *Dalits*, a term meaning 'oppressed'.

Scheduled tribes (STs, about eight percent of the Indian population) are indigenous peoples (sometimes called Adivasis) that constitute 573 recognized communities throughout India, although there are major concentrations of STs in only a few states. STs have also become mobilized in order to benefit from government policies, reservations for legislative seats, jobs, education, and to protect tribal lands.

Article 330(2) of the Constitution provides that scheduled castes [SCs] and scheduled tribes [STs] will have reserved seats in the Lok Sabha, in proportion to the numbers of SC/STs in the country. These seats are distributed to the states that have the

⁷⁴ The Government of India Act of 1935 established a list of special benefits and protections for the lowest caste members, duly termed 'Scheduled Castes' because of the attached 'schedule' listing the castes that were included.

highest concentrations of SC/STs (See Table 7, next page). Out of 543 elected seats, 79 SC and 41 ST seats were reserved in the recent elections, amounting to 22% of total seats.

TABLE 8
DISTRIBUTION OF RESERVED SEATS FOR SCHEDULED
CASTES/TRIBES

STATE/UT	SC	ST	TOTAL
Andhra Pradesh	6	2	42
Arunachal Pradesh	--	--	2
Assam	1	2	14
Bihar	8	5	54
Goa	--	--	2
Gujarat	2	4	26
Haryana	2	--	10
Himachal Pradesh	1	--	4
Jammu&Kashmir	--	--	6
Karnataka	4	--	28
Kerala	2	--	20
Madhya Pradesh	6	9	40
Maharashtra	3	4	48
Manipur	--	1	2
Meghalaya	--	--	2
Mizoram	--	1	1
Nagaland	--	--	1
Orissa	3	5	21
Punjab	3	--	13
Rajasthan	4	3	25
Sikkim	--	--	1
Tamil Nadu	7	00	39
Tripura	--	1	2
Uttar Pradesh	18	--	85
West Bengal	8	2	42
Andaman&N.I.	--	--	1
Chandigarh	--	--	1
Dadra&Nagar Haveli	--	1	1
Daman & Diu	--	--	1
Delhi	1	--	7
Lakshadweep	--	1	1
Pondicherry	--	--	1
TOTAL	79	41	543

Source: election commission of India (1999)

A reserved seat means that the seat must be filled by a member of a SC or ST, but the electorate is inclusive of all voters in the constituency (every voter in the constituency

votes for the candidate). The Constitution provided for the expiration of these special privileges after twenty years, but the reservations have been renewed⁷⁵ and expanded to include another segment of the population, Other Backward Classes (OBCs)⁷⁶. In spite of the name, it is caste, not class, that receives the benefit, although low caste and low class are highly correlated.

Until the 1980s, political mobilization of the SCs had been sporadic and unfruitful. SC candidates most likely to be elected were members of the Congress party. However, by 1991, disillusionment with the INC and mounting frustration at the economic and social stagnation that befell most of the SCs begat a growing alternative in the form of a caste-based party, the Bahujan Samaj Party⁷⁷ (BSP). Attempts at fashioning a new party out of the SCs, STs, OBCs, and religious minorities have been productive in several states, especially Bihar, UP, and Orissa. Even though the party seeks to unite the majority of the population which is backward, low caste, poor and underrepresented, the divisiveness of the groups that make up the party undermines its viability, as well as the incompetence of the party leadership. This topic is explored in Chapter five. The significance of the rise of caste-based parties on the party system is the effect it has on the demise on the Congress party. Scheduled Class support for the INC has resulted in a loss of 33 seats for Congress since 1962. In 1962 Congress won 46 seats

⁷⁵ In 1969 the Twenty-third Amendment renewed the affirmative action until 1980, in 1980 the Forty-fifth Amendment continued them until 1990, and in 1989 they were again extended, until 2000. The latest extension, until 2010, was approved on 25 January with the signing of the 79th Amendment by the President of India. *The Hindu*, 25 January, 2000.

⁷⁶ The Mandal Commission (1980) was instrumental in expanding the program, but it was under V.P. Singh and the NF government (in 1990) that the Mandal commission recommendations were implemented. The Mandal report designated 3743 castes and subcastes as OBCs.

⁷⁷ The BSP was founded in 1984, on the birthday of the most notable 'untouchable', Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. It took another decade for it to become politically salient.

from Scheduled Class constituencies; by 1998 only 13 seats from SC constituencies were won by the INC⁷⁸. The shift of OBC support to other parties has been a greater source of INC vote loss. The OBC vote for INC has been cut almost in half in the last two decades (from 42% in 1980 to 22% in 1999), with most of that shift benefiting the BJP⁷⁹. Because the SCs and OBCs, constitute over sixty percent of the population (15% and 52% respectively) they are a significant factor in state and national politics. When Congress could reap the majority of the votes from these groups the INC eked out at least a plurality of the parliamentary seats. With these groups choosing to support other parties, the dominance of Congress declined precipitously.

Reservations may soon be extended to women. In the last three parliaments the subject of reserving one-third of the seats for women has been on the table. Each major national party has campaigned on this promise of creating a new constitutional amendment reserving seats for women at all levels of government. One of the first acts of the new NDA/BJP government was to reassert that this item will be one of the first issues on the new agenda. There is a certain irony in this, as the numbers of women candidates given tickets in the last two elections has declined from the high in 1996, although the numbers of women elected has risen.

As Tables 9 and 10 show, the numbers of women given 'tickets' to run have decreased from both the 1991 and 1996 elections, although their rates of successfully winning seats have increased.

⁷⁸ Data from India Decides: election coverage. (www.indiadecides.com/ec/htm).

TABLE 9
SEATS AND PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN LOK SABHA

YEAR	TOTAL SEATS	WOMEN MEMBERS	Percentage of women to total seats
1952	499	22	4.4
1957	500	27	5.4
1962	503	34	6.7
1967	523	31	5.9
1971	521	22	4.2
1977	543	19	3.4
1980	543	28	5.1
1984	543	44	8.1
1989	517	27	5.2
1991	543	39	7.4
1996	543	40	7.5
1998	543	43	8.0
1999	543	49	9.0

Source: compiled from data from Election Commission of India

TABLE 10
VICTORY PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN CANDIDATES
IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 1991-1999

Year	Total candidates	Women candidates	Percentage of women candidates actually elected
1991	9024	325	11.38%
1996	13952	599	6.68
1998	4740	274	15.69%
1999	4648	284	17.25%

Source: compiled from data from Election Commission of India

RE-DRAWING OF STATES BASED ON LANGUAGE

⁷⁹ Subrata K. Mitra and V.B. Singh, *Democracy and Social Change in India: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of the National Electorate* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), 135-139.

A challenge to Indian unity was the question of language-based states. Most of the states in British India had been devised as administrative units rather than cohesive cultural or linguistic entities. Interspersed throughout were the five hundred and sixty two princely states. After the integration of the princely states into India, borders between the states were even more arbitrary than had existed when Britain had ruled. None of the twenty-seven states were linguistically homogeneous. Rising demands led to the formation of the Dar Commission to study the problem, and after a year it was determined that redrawing borders based on language would be detrimental to national unity, as well as impractical, since any linguistically based state would not only contain several other minority languages but would also lead to further fragmentation of the states into smaller and smaller units based merely on language. The administrative complexities due to the multitudes of languages in India was (and still is) horrendous⁸⁰, and Nehru was very much opposed to the division of states based on language. In 1948 when he was appointed to the Linguistic Provinces Committee, he was appalled by his experience:

[This inquiry] has been in some ways an eye-opener for us. The work of 60 years of the Indian National Congress was standing before us, face to face with centuries-old India of narrow loyalties, petty jealousies, and ignorant prejudices engaged in mortal conflict and we were simply horrified to see how thin was the ice upon which we were skating. Some of the ablest men in the country came before us and confidently and emphatically stated that language in this country

⁸⁰There are eighteen official or 'Scheduled Languages' listed in the constitution (as amended in 1992), which means that any of these languages can be used in legal and governmental discourse or communication. Furthermore, education and standardized tests must be offered in these languages upon demand. The 1981 census of India lists 112 'mother tongues' of groups of more than 10,000 people, 32 languages with more than one million speakers, plus there are hundreds of distinct dialects. The 1991 census did not collect data on language. See Appendix for list of official languages.

stood for and represented culture, race, history, individuality, and finally a sub-nation.⁸¹

Although agreeing with the conclusions of the Dar Commission, Nehru finally had to concede to the formation of a separate state, Andhra (later Andhra Pradesh, AP), based on the Telugu language, after a Telugu leader fasted until death in support of his cause. After the floodgates were opened, the demand among all the states to be redrawn by majority language continued to grow, and by 1960 the country had been re-organized into new or differently formulated states. The future would see new states or demands for states grow, based this time, not (primarily) on language but on religion (for example, the Sikhs in Punjab) or culture or tribal autonomy⁸². However, since religion and culture were not legitimate or constitutional claims for re-organization, the politicization of language as a substitute for religion became especially contentious in regions that sought further autonomy or differentiation from the larger geographic or cultural unit.⁸³ Today there are twenty five states and seven 'Union Territories' (regions that have some local self but are controlled by the center) with eighteen official 'Scheduled Languages'⁸⁴.

⁸¹ Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States", in Old Societies in New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa, Clifford Geertz, ed., (Free Press of Glencoe: New York, 1963), 106.

⁸² The state of Punjab was redrawn because Sikhs living in Punjab, who were a minority, nevertheless wanted their own state, so set about identifying their mother tongue as Punjabi rather than Hindi. Hindi speaking Hindus living in the Punjab then demanded a separate state, and Haryana was carved from Punjab. Eighty-eight percent of the people in a section of Assam were Scheduled Tribes, with their own language and a demand for greater autonomy. After years of insurgency it was finally agreed that a new state, Nagaland, would be formed from Assam. After the initial reorganization of the 1950s and 1960s, much of the redrawing of state lines was 'subdivision' brought about as a means to subdue secessionist rebellions.

⁸³ See Myron Weiner, "India's Minorities: Who Are They? What Do They Want?" in State and Politics in India, Partha Chatterjee, ed., (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁸⁴ Scheduled languages are those that have been given official approval in the constitution. In 1950 fourteen languages were listed: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. Four other languages were added, Sindhi in 1967, and Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali in 1992. Fifteen years after the adoption of the constitution, Hindi

There are several ramifications of redrawing of state borders based on language in terms of party system development: 1) it abetted mobilization based on language; 2) it brought the subaltern into the political arena, increasing the opportunity for non-elites to participate; 3) it expanded accessibility; and 4) it contributed to more homogeneity within the state (but by no means creating a homogeneous state) which defused some of the separatist movements that were fomenting. The energies of these separatist groups was directed towards dominating the state apparatus rather than dismantling it.

was to be the 'official' language of the Union, (not the 'national' language, a semantic detail that was sensitive to the risks involved in declaring a single language as the one that should be spoken throughout the country, fearing that instead of a single language unifying the people it would instead inflame separatist demands). English was to be the *lingua franca* for the interim, to be phased out as Hindi became more widely spoken and more acceptable to the rest of the country. This in fact has not happened and English continues to be the most widely spoken 'common' language among the elite. See Granville Austin, the Indian Constitution (p 265-307). See Appendix, Table XXX, as well as Chapter 6, Table 13, page 210, for a listing of states, their major languages, and major parties.

CHAPTER FOUR
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS –
1885-1947

To have a clearer understanding of how the party system has developed it would be valuable to trace the emergence of the party system and its central core, the Indian National Congress party (INC). The INC has been a significant influence over political party development as well as the largest factor in the creation of the party system. Although the INC was geographically the broadest-based as well as the most organized of the various independence movements, at no time was the INC the only player in the political contest¹. This chapter will give an historical accounting of the INC from its beginnings in 1885, and the influences on its development, to the time of independence, on August 15, 1947. The fifty years of party system development since independence will be examined in chapter five.

Early beginnings

The Indian nationalist movement is formally dated from the creation of the Indian National Congress (abbreviated INC, or Congress) in December, 1885. Conceived of by a Scotsman, Allan Octavian Hume, who had held important posts in the Indian civil service but had advocated from his earliest years in India for reform and self government,

¹ For a classic text on party development in India see Myron Weiner, Party Politics in India: The Development of a Multi-Party System, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

the INC began as a forum for airing grievances, seeking greater input into governing India, and consolidating rival factions within Indian society to bring about eventual national identification. According to B.N. Pandey², the nationalist movement is divided into three distinct phases. The first, from 1885 to 1916, was the 'moderate phase; the second, 1917 to 1935 was the 'mass oriented stage; and the third, which consists of two parts. The years from 1936 to 1945 were distinguished by the polarization of political forces and 1946 to 1947 encapsulated the effect of this polarization on future events, leading to the partition of India into two states, India and Pakistan.

Phase I: 1885-1916 the moderate stage

The fundamental objectives of the founders of the Indian National Congress were summarized by Hume:

First: the fusion into one national whole of all the different and, till recently, discordant, elements that constitute the population of India; second: the gradual regeneration – along all lines, mental, moral, social and political, of the nation thus evolved; and third: the consolidation of the union between England and India, by securing the modification of such of its conditions as may be unjust or injurious to the latter country.³

The National Congress met for the first time on December 28, 1885, in Bombay.

Its first president, Womesh C. Bonnerjee was a Calcutta barrister, who presided

over a group of seventy-three men, most of whom were Hindu Brahmins, only

two of whom were Muslims, and a small sprinkling of Parsees and Jains. By the

third Congress session, Muslim attendance had increased to eighty three delegates

² See B.N. Pandey, ed., The Indian Nationalist Movement, 1885-1947: Select Documents, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979).

³ "A.O. Hume on the Aims and Objects of Congress, 30 April 1888", from B.N. Pandey, ed., The Indian Nationalist Movement, 1885-1947, Select Documents, (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1979), 6-7.

out of six hundred, but most Muslims shied away from the INC, opting instead to form their own, communally exclusive, political organizations that sponsored separate nationalist movements.

The limited and moderate goals of the INC were geared towards expanding the opportunities of Indians in the Indian Civil Service (ICS), being granted more input into government policy-making, and, as important, more government revenue spending on internal development rather than on military campaigns and wars. In the 1880s the government of India spent from forty to fifty percent of all revenue on military expenses. Reasonable as these demands may have been to the INC, especially when couched in language that promised fealty to the crown, mutual interdependence, and acknowledgment of British paramountcy, British reaction was mixed. Many viewed the INC as elitist and unrepresentative, oblivious to the masses who made up almost all of India. The irony of the government of India regarding itself as the benevolent and paternalistic protectors⁴ of the masses, while simultaneously fortifying the positions of the tulukdars⁵, zamindars, and princes, cannot be ignored. In fact, some British did recognize the irony; but the dichotomy of British strategic motives impelled contradictions. To secure their position in India, the British had to garner support from the conservative landlords, who could control the peasants and subdue dissent.

⁴ Lord Dufferin was especially contemptuous of the 'right' of the Congress to pretend to represent Indians, and convinced himself into believing in the superiority of the British in understanding and safeguarding the peasants. In his farewell speech he emphasized this: "The chief concern of the Government of India is to protect and foster the interests of the people of India, and the people of India are not the seven or eight thousand students who have graduated at the Universities, or the Pleaders recruited from their numbers who are practicing in our Courts of Justice, or the newspaper writers, or the Europeanized Zamindars, or the wealthy traders, but the voiceless millions whom neither education, nor civilization, nor the influence of European ideas or modern thought, have in the slightest degree transfigured or transformed from their forefathers were a thousand years ago." Quote from C.H. Philips (ed.) The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947. Select Documents (London: 1962), 144.

The liberal, 'modern' part of the British psyche detested the impoverishment of the peasant, the degradation of the caste system and the stultifying traditional customs, but options for reform were limited. The peasantry and orthodox segments of society repulsed efforts that interfered with religious practices, clinging assiduously to the social structures that so often enslaved them. At the same time, programs and reforms that could improve the economic well being and security of the peasantry would be gleaned from the profits and security of the landlords and rural elite. As the British perceived it, to stay in India required connivance and co-optation with zamindars⁵. Since improving the lot of the masses was only a part of the British pretexts for colonialization, and the more pressing purposes were strategic and financial, allying with the traditional overlords was the most rational option.

The INC, composed of the Indian intelligentsia, the westernized, modern elite, were a separate force for the British to deal with. They posed a *real* threat to British supremacy. The landowners, princes, and traditional elite could be regarded in part as an aristocracy that mirrored the British aristocracy. They posed *no real* threat to British interests, either as competitors for jobs or as competitors for power. As long as the traditional elite was granted a semblance of control over their own territory and peasants and their standard of living remained fairly stable, they could be relied upon to support British policies. It was the new 'middle class' that challenged the British. Lord Dufferin, whose tenure as viceroy has been recorded as mediocre, inept, and unpopular by many

⁵ Tulukdars and zamindars can be loosely translated as landlords, from different regions in India.

⁶ For an valuable assessment of the changing social structure, precipitated in great part by British administrative policies see Francine R. Frankel, especially "Introduction", (1-19) Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order, Volume I, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, eds.

historians, was astute and prescient enough about the potential of the INC to warn that “the Indian caucus was a trifle, but what is now in the germ could some years hence ... grow into a very formidable product.”⁷

Partition of Bengal: Introduction of the Census, Separate Electorates, and Language Issues

Several specific events had special significance in how the independence movement unfolded. The first was the partition of Bengal in 1905, ordered by the viceroy, Lord Curzon. Undertaken without the consent or consultation of Indians, Curzon determined that the sheer magnitude of Bengal’s population (85 million people at that time) was administratively too unwieldy to manage. His solution was to divide Bengal into two provinces, eastern Bengal and Assam as one province, and West Bengal as the second. Partition reconfigured the ethnic balance of Bengal. East Bengal/Assam would now be comprised of a Muslim majority; West Bengal would continue to have a Hindu majority, but because of the vast number of persons who spoke the Bihari and Oriya languages, Bengali would no longer be the majority language. Since the Bengali speaking Hindu intellectuals of Calcutta were also the most outspoken and vociferous Congress members, journalists, lawyers, and merchants, this segment believed that the partition reeked of duplicity on the part of the government, and viewed partition as an attempt to undermine their burgeoning nationalism through ‘divide and conquer’.

This view was reinforced when a delegation of Muslim leaders approached the viceroy, Lord Minto, who had succeeded Curzon in 1905, with the demand that any

⁷ Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 177-8.

future legislative reforms must reserve special status for the Muslim population, assuring that a Muslim electorate elect Muslim representatives for a specific proportion of the available seats. Minto wholeheartedly agreed to this proposal, achieving, what one official observed, “nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two million people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition.”⁸ Two months after this promise, the All-India Muslim League was founded, on 30 December, 1906.

The partition of Bengal galvanized popular opinion against the government, and mass rallies, petition campaigns, and scathing newspaper editorials pilloried the government. Curzon was forced to resign, ending the career of a man described as brilliant, efficient, capable, competent, but highly unpopular. Lord Minto replaced Curzon, but it was Minto’s successor, Lord Hardinge that proposed the reunification of Bengal, and in 1911 Bengal was reunified. Two new states, Bihar and Orissa, were formed on the southwest flank. In addition, it was determined that a new capital city would replace the former capital, Calcutta, and the construction of New Delhi was begun. For six years Bengal had remained partitioned and India had remained in tumult.

Constitutional reforms enacted by the viceroy, Lord Minto (1905-1910) and secretary of state for India, John Morley, between 1906 and 1910, had an impact that would reverberate through the next five decades, and shifted the political battleground. “These same reforms, moreover, stimulated a sense of political communalism among India’s Muslim minority, transforming what had hitherto been a socioreligious and cultural conflict between Hindus and Muslims into a separatist national movement under

⁸ Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 4th Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 278.

the Muslim League, which resulted in the birth of Pakistan.”⁹ The reforms, initiated and enacted by the sheer will of John Morley, are frequently attributed with equal credit to Lord Minto, but Stanley Wolpert vigorously denies Minto’s partnership in this pursuit, calling Minto “at best a mediocre representation of his peers in that office”¹⁰. The period was also studded with some of the greatest turbulence, political awareness, and mass discontent that India had known since the war of 1857-8 (the Sepoy Mutiny¹¹).

Rise of the Muslim League

One of the constitutional reforms Morley introduced was the direct election by an Indian electorate of the members of the Indian Legislative Council. Called the Indian Councils Act (1909), the Indian members were for the first time allowed to introduce their own bills and contribute to the debate on pending budget and legislative decisions.¹²

Although the enfranchised voters were a tiny subsection of the population (property

⁹ Stanley A. Wolpert, *Morley and India, 1906-1910* (University of California Press: Berkeley, Ca. 1967), 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ The war of 1857 was important for at least 2 reasons: it highlighted the cleavages within British hegemonic control over India, and it changed the nature and quality of British rule. The war has been referred to by various terms: a mutiny, a war, a rebellion, a revolution, a revolt, or even the first war of independence. The war of 1857-1858 was in fact a little bit of all of these. Eric Stokes, a noted historian, characterized the war as not one movement, but many. [Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1986)]. British histories invariably refer to the war as the Sepoy Mutiny, diminishing the gravity and the scope of the rancor prevailing throughout much of India. Numerous accounts now affirm that the Sepoy Mutiny was “far more than a Mutiny” [Wolpert, 238]. At the same time it was not the first battle in the war for independence. The war of 1857 was the most prolonged but it was not the only ‘mutiny’ that the British had faced. Prior to 1857 numerous insurrections and battles had plagued the British throughout India. Mutinies and uprisings on a smaller scale had occurred in Vellore (1806), Barrackpore (1824), Patna (1845), Sindh (1844 and 1849), were the most obvious examples. Although the immediate cause of the war is attributable to the introduction of a new cartridge that was greased with pig or beef fat and had to be bitten off by the tip before inserting it into the rifle, the underlying discontent of the sepoys and the bulk of the population gave the war its longevity, its vigor, and its viciousness. Ingesting pork and beef is taboo for Muslims and Hindus respectively so could obviously be a catalyst for disobedience. However, the significance of the cartridges is more symptomatic of the insensitivity of the British to its sepoys and subjects than a basis for war. Repugnant as the cartridges may have been to the sepoys, David Hutchinson points out that “both Mohammedans and Hindus made good use of the cartridges against the British, once the mutiny started”, demonstrating that other factors played a much more significant role. (David Hutchinson, in *Annals of the Indian Rebellion, 1857-1858*, Noah Alfred Chick, ed. [London: Charles Knight, Ltd., 1974), xxxi.

¹² See Wolpert, (1993), 284-5.

owners and taxpayers, or highly educated men were the qualifications), some of the seats were specifically reserved only for Muslims (and elected by Muslims), a policy that Minto had vowed to uphold.¹³

The Muslims had, for the most part, remained aloof from allying with the budding independence movement, especially in partnership with the Hindu cadre that formed its foundation. There were notable exceptions of course, but for the most part, Muslims feared the emergence of majoritarian, democratic institutions that mirrored the English system because such a system would preclude Muslim inclusion. Asma Barlas attributes the divisions between Muslim and Hindu intellectuals to their view of nationalism "not as

¹³ It has been suggested by numerous authors that the Minto-Morley Reforms dramatically and irrevocably laid the basis for communal conflict, and therefore, probably, partition, because the reforms were concerned more with suppressing Indian nationalism than with introducing Indians to the necessary tutelage for self-government. To thwart the nationalist drive, separate electorates were not only agreed to, but encouraged as a means of dividing Indian elites. Gokhale, who had worked with Morley to draft the reforms, later came to the bitter conclusion that any good that they offered was countermanded by the harms inflicted. See R.N. Aggarwala, *Indian National Movement (1885-1947)*, (Metropolitan Book Co.: Delhi, India, 1971). The primary criticism was that "representation was given to classes and interests, which resulted in splitting the country into many divisions and segments. ... the communal venom was introduced into the body politic of India for the first time through communal electorates, which rent asunder all hopes of evolving a unity in India." (72). Thus, for some critics, "the real father of Pakistan was not Jinnah or Rahimattolla but Lord Minto." (67). The period of 1905-1910 was critical in setting the tone and focus of the future nationalist struggle. That the period laid a foundation for the partition of India has been well accepted in various historical and political accounts. Even Lord Minto acknowledged that English justice had been overly biased towards the Muslim interests, due in large part to rewarding Muslim fidelity, with potentially disastrous results within the other communities (Sikhs, Rajputs, Hindus and Gurkhas), who had also displayed equal loyalty. M. N. Das, in *India Under Morley and Minto* (George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.: London, 1964), summarizes the era: "It was an inauspicious coincidence in India, arising out of socio-educational processes of a century and a half, that the politically disloyal and loyal groups fell into two major religious divisions. The educated of both communities were predisposed towards progress and unity. But the voice of the educated in the minority community got submerged in the louder profession of loyalty to rulers, in order to combat the uncertainty of agitation and anarchism. When communal conservatism united with an apprehensive imperialism, still at its height, insurmountable obstacles arose to national unity and revolutionary programmes. That was the beginning of the tragedy of Indian nationalism. The struggle between nationalism and communalism, once begun, ended only when the inevitable occurred. While both forces emerged victorious finally, ..., imperialism itself was lying dead. The significance of the time was the legacy it left." (251).

an alternative principle of social cohesion but as one that co-existed with and depended upon traditional social cohesive units like religious communities,” and can be ascribed to the fact “that colonialism not only failed to effect a ‘modernizing’ economic transformation of India but in many cases helped to energize its ‘traditional social units’.”¹⁴

Even though animosities peppered Hindu-Muslim relations throughout their interactive history, the British were instrumental in institutionalizing these hostilities. The British first took a census of India in 1871, repeating the procedure every ten years. The census¹⁵, an innocuous enough device if used merely to count people, was, in the hands of the British, a means to categorize people into immutable units that not only inaccurately reflected the reality of Indian social identity¹⁶, but highlighted disparities between them. Institutionalized structures that rewarded or penalized communities based on their religious category served to bolster British dominance but formalized distinctions that had only passing significance in actuality.

Representation based on religion, reservations for groups, and enforcement of separate laws for Hindus and Muslims were tactics that were adopted by the British as

¹⁴ Asma Barlas, Democracy, Nationalism, and Communalism: The Colonial Legacy in South Asia, (Westview Press: Boulder, CO,) 65.

¹⁵ For an analysis of the significance of the census in formulating identities, see Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, (Verso: London, 1993), especially chapter 10 (163-170).

¹⁶ For more on this subject see D.A. Washbrook, “Caste, Class and Dominance in Modern Tamil Nadu”, (204-264), in Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order, volume I, Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, eds., ((Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989). Washbrook argues that the colonial government misconstrued the caste system, the mobility within it, and the mutuality of responsibilities and obligations that were inherent in the system. In order for the ‘modern’ state to administrate it must “fix status and class categories”, but in India in general, and Tamil Nadu specifically, “the distortions created by freezing traditions would have been serious enough, (b)ut in Tamil Nadu the British compounded the problem by freezing the wrong Tradition”. (241.)

early as the eighteenth century, but it was only in the latter half of the 1800s that in selected regions the British specifically set about to depict former Muslim rule as nefarious and injurious to Hindus. After the war of 1857-8, official policy encouraged the Hindus in Hindu majority states to displace their resentment and hostility against the British towards the Muslims who had originally ‘oppressed’ them¹⁷. In other regions, specifically the Punjab, the British “bolstered the Muslim clergy ... in an effort to underwrite its own legitimacy”¹⁸. Although much has been written about the ‘divide and rule’ strategy of British colonialists, no universal consensus has been reached among scholars about whether these practices were intentionally adopted to divide people who were hostile to British rule, or were instead responses to capitalize on conditions that were latent or pre-existing¹⁹. In the aftermath of the war of 1857, the position of Muslims became problematic, as awareness of their loss of status, of their declining influence and power in government, and of their economic vulnerability became apparent. Initially, for the Muslims, “the object of their anger became the British who, by ousting them from

¹⁷ In the nineteenth century British historians concluded that Muslim rule in India “was a period of despotism, misrule, and anarchy”, thus, according to Chatterjee, “being the historical justification for colonial intervention.” See Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), page 102, and chapter five, ‘Histories and Nations’ (p 95-115); and Ronald Inden, Imagining India, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

¹⁸ Barlas, 69.

¹⁹ Jyotirindra Das Gupta contends that the ‘racialist policy’ of British rule “hastened the development of reactive communalism, whereby each religious community increasingly came to depend on exclusive mobilization to defend its members’ interests.” He continues, “it is easy to argue that the structural features of Indian society could account for the use of traditional symbols for exclusive mobilization in Indian politics of this time. This, however, would ignore the critical role of the political rewards, punishments, and prohibitions used by a newly centralizing effective power—Crown rule in India. For the strategists of Crown rule the need for Indian manpower offered an excellent opportunity to create a loyal base of support for the expanding colonial regime. Discriminatory preference seemed to offer a special dividend for the new rulers in a country where modern education and political consciousness was historically developing in an uneven spacial and ethnic distribution.” See Das Gupta, “India: Democratic Becoming and Combined Development”, in Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia (Volume Three) Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., (Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder, CO., 1988), 57.

rulership not only severed the connection between their exercise of power and their notions of religious solidarity contingent upon its exercise, but also opened up the issue of their status in India to dispute.”²⁰ This anger was soon to be mollified by switching tactics: allying with the British, as a means to reap rewards from cooperation and collaboration, as envisioned by Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan.

Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), founder of the Aligarh College (the Mohomedan Anglo-Oriental College, established in 1877) and activist for Muslim rights, recognized the precarious position of the Muslims following the war of 1857, wherein the British attributed most of the blame of the uprisings to the Muslims. Seeking to protect Muslim interests, Sir Sayyid lectured and wrote ardently about the loyalty of the Muslims to the British cause²¹ and almost single-handedly attempted to drag the traditionalists within the Muslim community, most of whom denounced his conclusions, into the understanding that the future for Muslims lay in English/Western education. Only through education could they possibly hope to compete with the Hindus. Sayyid Ahmed was vehemently opposed to the INC²². Mocking the idea that India was or could

²⁰ Ibid., 68.

²¹ Two Muslim associations, the Mahomedan Literary Society (founded in 1863) and the National Mahommedan Association (founded in 1878) were significant organizations that appealed to different segments within the Muslim elite community, the first more representative of the landed aristocracy and traditionalists, the latter consisting of the urban, Western educated elite. Although there were many political differences between the two organizations, they each were completely persuaded that representation should be the “exclusive claim of the well-born and the outcome of official recognition rather than of ostensible popular support. ... Both were persuaded that the effective representation of their interests and those of their followers could only be accomplished by acting as adjuncts of the colonial administration rather than as spokesmen of Muslim popular opinion.” Farzana Shaikh, Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947, (Cambridge University Press: NY, 1989) 88.

²² See John L. Hill, “Muslims and the Congress Organization”, 133-153, in The Congress and Indian Nationalism: Historical Perspectives, John L. Hill, ed., (Wellesley Hills, MA.: Riverdale, 1991). Hill accounts how Sayyid Ahmad had, from the 1870s, warned both the British and his fellow Muslims about “the dangers inherent in elective democracy and parliamentary government for India”, and opposed the aspirations of the nascent INC for representative government and scorned all, but especially other Muslims,

be a 'single nation'²³ he fought for special status, representation, and rights for Muslims, ingratiated himself with the British, and set a tone of separateness from the Hindus for future Muslim political movements. This separation became formalized with the creation of the political party, the All-India Muslim League in December of 1906.²⁴ At a conference of the League, the aims of the League were

- a) to promote and maintain among Indians feelings of loyalty towards the British crown;
- b) to protect and advance the political and other rights and interests of the Indian Musalmans;
- c) to promote friendship and union between the Musalmans and other communities of India; and
- d) without detriment to the foregoing objects, the attainment of a system of self-government suitable to India by bringing about, through constitutional means, a steady reform of the existing system of administration; by promoting national unity and fostering public spirit among the people of India, and by co-operating with other communities for the said purposes.²⁵

That the Muslims were under-represented in the civil service can not be disputed.

Figures for Muslim employment in the ICS, contrasted with Hindus, in 1904, were one

who participated. Sayyid Ahmad died in 1898, eight years before the formation of the All-India Muslim League.

²³ In a letter to Badruddin Tyabji, Muslim nationalist leader, Sayyid Ahmed stated that he regarded the activities of the INC as not only not beneficial to India, but as injurious to our own community. The concept that "the different castes and creeds living in India belong to one nation, or can become one nation, and their aims and aspirations be one and the same" is "quite impossible". See Sayyid Ahmed Khan's letters and writings in Pandey's The Indian Nationalist Movement, pages 14-17. Rebuking Barrudin Tyabji for cooperating with the INC, Sayyid wrote: "Is it possible that under these circumstances two nations – the Mahomedan and the Hindu – could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down. To hope that both could remain equal is to desire the impossible and the inconceivable." (quoted in Gopal, British Policy in India, p. 160.) Representative government would be a disaster because voting would be merely a census, and since Hindus outnumbered Muslims four to one, Muslims would never be able to secure a seat on the Viceroy's Council. This reasoning also extended to appointment to the civil service based on merit. Acknowledging that Muslims were far behind Hindus in education and credentials, he reasoned that 'breeding' (i.e. 'high birth, from good families) should be the major criterion to assure that Muslims could have an adequate number of positions. See Sanker Ghose, Political Ideas and Movements in India (Allied Publishers: Bombay, India, 1975), 153; B.R. Nanda, Gokhale: The Indian Moderates and the British Raj (1977). 320-329; and Farzana Shaikh, op.cit., 102.

²⁴ "The Aims of the Muslim League, 31 December 1912" are reproduced in the Foundations of Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents, 1906-1947, S.S. Pirzada, ed., (Dacca: 1979), vol. I. p 258., reprinted in Pandey, p.19.

Muslim for every seven Hindus, and in Bengal, with a larger proportion of Muslims, the ratio was closer to one in ten²⁶. A major cause of this unbalance can be traced to the educational levels of the Muslims, the vast majority of whom shunned western education and avoided the non-traditional roles that Hindus eagerly sought. This proportion was reversed in Hyderabad, a princely, or native, state, where only ten percent of the population was Muslim, but the Muslims had a literacy rate of 5.88 percent, contrasted with the 2.29 percent literacy rate for Hindus²⁷. Hyderabad was ruled by a *nizam*, or prince, and Urdu, the language of the Muslim masses, became the official language in 1884. Thus, in Hyderabad, Muslims held most of the positions in state government, but few of them competed for positions outside of their own principality. As in Hyderabad, Muslims in India were better represented at the local and state levels of government than at the central level, reflecting the more historical and traditional distribution of power and prestige in British India.

By no means was the Muslim community a single entity. The friction between the 'dominant Muslim upper-class elite', constituting the old court nobility, who had been marginalized by British rule, and the zamindars and taluqdars (the landowning classes), who had benefited from British policies, resulted in discord within the Muslim political community. Furthermore, sectoral differences divided the Sunni and Shi'a, and class antagonisms assured that the Muslim community would not speak with a single voice.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁶ See B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties: An Historical Analysis of Political Behaviour up to 1947, (Oxford University Press: Delhi, 1976), 155-7. A debate over the interpretation and significance of these data, as well as other significant factors is concisely offered by Francis Robinson, in "National Formation: the Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism", and Paul R. Brass, "A Reply to Francis Robinson", in Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, Volume XV, no.3, (November 1977), p 215-234.

²⁷ See Myron Weiner and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, India's Preferential Policies: Migrants, the Middle Classes, and Ethnic Equality (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1981), p 60-63.

Aftermath of the partition of Bengal: The rise of Hindu Nationalism

The public uprisings that attended the partition of Bengal served as an early indication of the potential power that a unified population could unleash. The success of the uprisings added fodder to the nationalist movement, and revived the prospects of the INC, which had begun to flounder in the preceding decade. The INC had also discovered the importance of incorporating mass support to augment the elite-driven movement. This lesson was reinforced and applied in earnest when Mohandas Karamchand (M.K.) Gandhi returned to India in 1915 and took control of the INC in 1920. Using religious (mostly, but not exclusively, Hindu) imagery and symbols in his resolve to gain Indian independence, Gandhi ignited popular support. The years of Bengal's partition (1905-1911) saw a massive influx of common people involved in the nationalist movement. This was a mixed blessing for the INC, as many of the aroused masses were more radical and supportive of more militant contingents, some of which formed new parties from the splintered wings of the INC or arose independently as challengers to the INC.

The Congress party fell victim to internal dissent and fissures, a scenario that has continued to this date. The first split in the INC occurred in 1907 at the annual session of the INC when the extremists, headed by B.G. Tilak (a Marathi, from Poona, near Bombay), I.I. Rai (from Punjab), and B.C. Pal (a Bengali) were expelled. The split arose because of the direct challenge Tilak posed as candidate for the presidency of the INC, an unacceptable choice for the moderate Congress leadership, but the split was more significant than this. It was, in Robert Crane's words, a manifestation of the "deep

cleavage within nationalism that had its origins early in the decade of the 1890s and reflected basic features of Indian society under colonial exploitation and domination.”²⁸

Tilak was one of the most influential, militant, jingoistic, and vocal cultural nationalists of the period. The British called him ‘the father of Indian unrest’, but whether he manufactured that unrest or simply exposed it remains debatable to this date. What is less in doubt is that Tilak, appealing to the masses both in speeches and print, in the local language, Marathi, effectively mobilized massive support through the use of Hindu symbols, joining the concept of *swaraj* (self rule) to Hindu culture, beliefs (especially *dharma*, fate), and practices. His message was cultural nationalism, a reaffirmation of the orthodoxy of Hinduism, a single-minded quest for *swaraj* that thereby condoned any and all measures that would advance that goal, including terrorism and violence. Tilak, along with the Bengali militants, mounted a campaign of disobedience against British rule, using tactics such as boycott and swadeshi (purchasing of goods produced in India), to undermine British control.²⁹

In contrast to Tilak, G.K. Gokhale was the essence of moderation. Seeking to reform and modernize Indian culture, religion, and society, and to ‘resolve internal

²⁸ Robert I. Crane, “The Rift within the Congress”, p59, in The Congress and Indian Nationalism: Historical Perspectives, John L. Hill, ed., (Riverdale Co.: Wellesley Hills, MA., 1991), pages 56-73.

²⁹ The swadeshi movement was eventually a failure in that it did not achieve the self-rule that was demanded, but it had significant impact on the future development of political events and future strategies. Crane attributes the failure of swadeshi in particular, and extremist militancy in general, to multiple causes, including lack of support in the media, structural problems that impeded organization, social cleavages, and, perhaps most importantly, the means by which the extremists attempted to enforce swadeshi not only alienated many of the early supporters, but actually harmed them (see Crane). For a concise and insightful description of the impact of the swadeshi movement on ordinary people see Ranajit Guha, A Disciplinary Aspect of Indian Nationalism, (Merril Publications, University of California Press: Santa Cruz, CA., 1991). Swadeshi is one of the tenets of Gandhi’s philosophy, but he viewed it as more than a boycott of British goods. As quoted by Judith Brown, Gandhi wrote: “Swadeshi carries a great and profound meaning. It does not mean merely the use of what is produced in one’s own country.... Swadeshi means reliance on our own strength.” Quoted in Brown, Gandhi, Prisoner of Hope (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT., 1989), 90.

conflicts', as the first and most important steps to political independence, Gokhale worked for eventual independence through constitutional and institutional means provided by the British. Advocating legal reforms that would include increasing representation for Indian nationals in governmental councils and extending Indian influence in decision-making, he also supported legislation that would improve the lot of women and the lowest castes and untouchables. Without social reform, he believed that "political freedom would mean little more than a return to India's eighteenth-century regional wars and the continuing subjugation of women to men and of untouchables to the higher castes."³⁰ But social reform would not be his primary emphasis as he recognized that social interference had too frequently been an impetus for orthodox or religious nationalist groups to unleash their fury against reformers, thereby damaging the reformers' political influence.³¹

In 1910, the all-India Hindu Sabha (later the Hindu Mahasabha) party was formally formed from a wing of the Congress party, as a reaction to the formation of the Muslim League. Initially, most of the members of the party held joint membership in the INC, but in 1916, led by V.D. Savarkar, the Mahasabha split from the INC and organized with a platform that in one way mirrored the Muslim League: it contended that India was not and could not be a 'single nation' because of its religious diversity. Savarkar's book Hindutva was published in 1923 and argued that the idea of Indian nationhood was based,

³⁰ Wolpert, 253. For a comprehensive biography and analysis of Gokhale see B.R. Nanda, Gokhale: The Indian Moderates and the British Raj (Princeton University Press: Princeton, N.J., 1977).

³¹ See Nanda, 153.

by definition, on *Hindu* identity, distinct from and *necessarily* separate from the parallel *Muslim nation*.³²

The two-nation theory later realized by the formation of Pakistan had some support from this extremist, nationalist party. The party never commanded a massive popular base but its ideology resounded throughout the decades before independence and continued to challenge the secular orientation of Indian politics. The roots of its growth, in the Hindu revivalist movements of the 1800s, the Arya Samaj, the orthodoxy of extremists such as Tilak, and growing distrust of the Muslim separatists, has led in the last decades to offshoots of the movement, culminating in the present-day party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (the BJP). And, because its membership always included some Congress notables, the party, even without a mass following or official sanction, has affected the direction that politics has developed in modern India.

The first split in Congress was mended in 1916, when Tilak and his cohorts were re-admitted, almost two years after Gokhale's death (early 1915). The extremists had grown more moderate as their experiences in challenging British rule had been frustrating and devoid of real success. Part of their failure was their inability to translate "a resounding rhetoric" into "political techniques and organization."³³ Although violence continued to be a strategy used upon occasion, the extremists recognized that the British government of India was not about to collapse without a broader coalition, a unified front, and political pragmatism. At the same convention that the extremists were readmitted to INC, Congress and the Muslim League also achieved a (temporary) agreement concerning

³² See V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu Rashtra Darshan* (L.G. Khare: Bombay, 1949), especially chapter 15, "The Challenge of Hindu Communalism".

³³ Nanda, 491.

the goals for self-government and the arrangements for power sharing (an early prototype of a constitution for India). Known as the Lucknow pact, formally called the “Congress-

League Scheme of Reforms”, the agreement upheld the concept of separate electorates for the Muslims and delineated the proportion of representatives to be granted to Muslims in each province, a proportion that was greater than the Muslim population within the specific province.³⁴

Phase II: 1917-1935 The period of mass mobilization and participation

The government of India act of 1919 broadened the franchise to five million voters. This action contributed to the formation of new parties that were quick to challenge the dominance of the INC. In the 1920 election, the Justice Party³⁵ (first created as the South Indian Liberal Federation Party, a non-Brahman party) in Madras emerged as the winner in the local legislative council election, driven by the fear that

³⁴ See “The Congress-League Scheme of Reform 1916: Report of the 31st Indian National Congress, 1916”, p 77-81. It is reproduced in B.N. Pandey, The Indian Nationalist Movement, 1885-1947: Select Documents (St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1979), 20. Section One, number 4, reads: “Adequate provision should be made for the representation of important minorities by election, and the Mahomedans should be represented through special electorates on the Provincial Legislative Councils in the following proportions: Punjab— one half of the elected Indian Members; United Provinces—30 %; Bengal—40%; Bihar—25%; Central Provinces—15%; Madras—15%; Bombay—one third.” For the Imperial Legislative Councils, Muslims were promised one third of the seats, again through a separate electorate.

³⁵ For a short overview of the social-economic origins of the Justice Party see chapter two, pages 15-31, in Marguerite Ross Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India (Princeton University Press: Princeton, N.J., 1976). Barnett explains that the Brahmin population in Madras state was approximately three percent but they held almost seventy percent of the Bachelor of Arts degrees and were predominate in the administration, as well as politically active, especially in the INC, in the period 1870-1918 (page 20); non-Brahmin Hindus who had received an education felt shut out of the political process and short-changed in appointment to administrative positions. As important, however, according to Barnett, was the loss of prestige and status that a non-Brahmin underwent when he left his village for an urban community. As south India was primarily rural, the village is central to its social organization. At the village level, Brahmins constitute even less than three percent of the population, and they are frequently not the richest residents. Lower caste Hindus usually are the landowners and the particular *jati*, or sub-caste unit, can enjoy superior status and demand respect from the poorer Brahmins. When the non-Brahmin migrates to a city, however, “city life challenged their caste identity and rank. Their position, unlike Brahmins, was dependent upon very specific localized transactional relationships and deference patterns. The lack of generalized ranking and even of general knowledge of the position of various non-Brahmin castes, meant that some castes previously ranked above and apart from other non-Brahmins were now lumped with non-Brahmin masses in cities and towns.” (p 25). The belief in their relative deprivation united these non-Brahmin elites and paved the way for an anti-Brahmin movement and political activism. The anti-Brahmin strain remains salient to this day in southern Indian political parties, under the DMK and ADMK banners.

Brahmins would seize the political machinery of southern India. The Justice Party was an early political movement that sought to mobilize the Dravidian peoples in the south India state of (now) Tamil Nadu and was the predecessor of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).³⁶

By the early 1920s a proliferation of parties covering the political spectrum had formed across most of India, including both moderate and militant parties, and communal parties such as the Mahasabha party (a Hindu nationalist party) and the Muslim League. Rifts between various factions, regions, philosophies, and approaches to achieving ends riddled the political environment. By 1928, eighty-seven distinct political parties had representation at an “all-parties” convention that was organized by Motilal Nehru to approve the draft for an Indian constitution.

The Government of India Act, 1919, was adopted as a means to achieve “the 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 empire³⁷. To achieve this, a ‘dyarchy’, or parallel administration, was established where power was shared by Indian legislators, elected by the population, and an appointed British cadre. At the local level, services relating to health, education, agriculture, and public projects became the responsibility of the Indians, with the British retaining control over taxes, police, and revenue allocation. Inherent in this act was the commitment by Britain to eventually

³⁶ For a comprehensive analysis of the DMK, ADMK, and the Dravidian movement see the dissertation by Narendra Subramanian, Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy: Mobilization and Representation in South India, (MIT, 1994).

³⁷ Edwin Montagu, 20 August 1917, as quoted in R.J. Moore, The Crisis of Indian Unity: 1917-1940 (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1974), 1.

allow India a form of self-government, but British interests were ambivalent. The notion of ‘responsible’ government for the British meant installing a legislature that would be responsible to the electorate, eventually including the entire Indian population. However, since a major portion of India’s population was illiterate and politically naïve, the British were reluctant to cede control of the government to an elite, high caste, group of mostly Bengali men that were predominantly lawyers by profession. Using this rationale, the British could forestall independence for decades, arguing that the backward peasants must first be prepared for the noble responsibilities of democracy and self-rule. Pressure was exerted on the political activists to demonstrate that they were representative of and sensitive to the needs and demands of the average citizen, as well as acknowledged as ‘heirs-apparent’ by the masses. Thus, from early on, the elite adopted inclusionary tactics.

The passage of the potentially positive Government of India Act was coupled with the enactment of the Rowlatt acts (also 1919) that seriously eroded civil liberties by granting to the viceroy almost unlimited power to quell any and all (perceived) ‘seditious’ activities by arresting and detaining anyone suspected of engaging in seditious activities (defined by the arresting officer), holding suspects without trial, and banning or censoring press coverage³⁸. The right to assemble was curtailed. The infamous Amritsar massacre

³⁸ A new book has just been published that chronicles the role of the vernacular press in the independence movement and in raising nationalist consciousness, as well as exposing the internal conflicts between various groups, disseminating ideas, and representing indigenous views. The British were able to control the media that was printed in English much more successfully than the vernacular press, thereby provoking the harsh measures to curtail vernacular newspapers. According to Narain, the vernacular press was used to decry social injustices, debate communal issues, and urge social change, frequently more vociferously than the English medium newspapers and journals. See Kirti Narain, Press, Politics and Society, (New Delhi: Monohar, 1999).

on 13 April 1919, where British soldiers were ordered to shoot into a crowd of ten thousand unarmed civilians celebrating a Hindu festival, resulted in almost four hundred deaths and over a thousand injuries, and, as important for history, seriously eroded the trust that was essential to the peaceful transition of power. The massacre also marked the debut of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (widely hailed as *Mahatma*, or 'great soul') into the political melee.

Mohandas. K. Gandhi

The 1920s through the mid 1930s was a period dominated by Gandhi, who adopted satyagraha (non-violent civil disobedience or non-cooperation) as the means to shame the British authorities into granting independence. Recognizing the need to decentralize the party into a more representative and inclusive organization, Gandhi set about to recreate the INC. Using his abundant popular acclaim to mobilize portions of the population that had largely ignored the nationalist movement, Gandhi also dominated the Indian National Congress. He has been hailed as not only bringing nationalism to the masses, but also 'Indianizing' the middle classes³⁹ that were the core of the party. The leadership positions as well as the composition of the working committees shifted from being overly representative of the largest cities and comprised primarily of professionals (and lawyers in particular) to a much broader spectrum of workers, agriculturists, the rural gentry, students, lower level professionals, and peasants, as well as women and lower-level castes. These new recruits were from the interior of India, from small towns

³⁹ See Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India: the Dynamics of One-Party Democracy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 334.

and districts that had, up to this time, remained mostly unaffected by the nationalist movement and had been less affected by Western influences. Kochanek observes that “it was from this group the key leaders of the Indian states would be drawn some thirty years later”.⁴⁰ Gandhi’s adherence to consensus building and inclusion were invaluable for the Congress organization. Ideological conformity was a scarce commodity but the acknowledgment that dissident opinions would not result in ouster provided a forum for pragmatic compromise.

Gandhi’s role in the independence movement was significant in a number of important aspects, and numerous books have been written chronicling and interpreting his various activities, philosophy, and impact.⁴¹ Although the bulk of writings has lauded the moral and political influence of Gandhi in the independence movement, there has been a spate of recent scholarship that has been more critical, even censorious, of the tactics Gandhi wielded to achieve harmony. His frequent usage of Hindu symbols as well as his emphasis on traditional, parochial, and conservative means to mobilize the masses are cited as evidence that Gandhi unwittingly contributed to the communal divisions that he so earnestly sought to defuse. The controversy about Gandhi’s impact on social modernization should not be regarded as mere scholarly musings, as the consequences are

⁴⁰ Ibid., 332.

⁴¹ Not only have numerous books been written on Gandhi, on his actions as well as his philosophy, but he was also a prolific author. See M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth, (Public Affairs Press: Washington DC, 1948); The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (New Delhi: Government of India, volumes 1-50); Judith M. Brown, Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928-34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) and Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Gene Sharp, Gandhi as a Political Strategist, with Essays on Ethics and Politics (Porter Sargent Publishers, Inc.: Boston, Ma., 1979. Critical and controversial aspects of Gandhi’s contributions are dealt with by B.R. Nanda, Gandhi and His Critics, (Oxford University Press: London, 1985).

indicative of the paradoxes and inconsistencies inherent in any social or political transformation: how to engage the masses in a struggle which has only limited relevance in their every-day existence, but at the same time has massive significance in the overall environment in which they exist. The answer resorted to is often the creation of an elitist political organization that succumbs to populist strategies to attain mass support but relies on a core constituency that thwarts immanent change.

In 1929, Gandhi supported the son of one of Congress' most notable leaders, Motilal Nehru,⁴² to be Congress president, and Jawaharlal Nehru at the age of forty, became the youngest and most popular president. Nehru and Gandhi were equally committed to an independent India, but their conceptions of what independent India would look like differed drastically. The rifts between their visions characterized the discord that plagued not only the INC but Indian society as a whole. The questions of processes, of policies, of goals, were never totally resolved within the INC, preventing the INC from becoming the monolithic, efficient, and predominant party that it is sometimes portrayed as. Fissures between the Muslim League and Congress were only part of the complex segmentation that identified Indian politics. Nehru and Gandhi epitomized that debate.

Nehru was totally committed to a secular, modern, and socialist state. For Nehru, economic development based on industrialization and on state control of resources (and therefore a deep commitment to economic planning), was necessary to improve the

⁴² Motilal Nehru was an early and important member of the INC, and the primary author of a constitution for India in 1929 that was adopted by the INC, demanding full independence by 1930. His autobiography, Towards Freedom: An Autobiography, (Day: New York, 1941), as well as several volumes of his speeches and personal correspondence offer insight into his political and personal philosophy.

standard of living for all Indians. Independence was a first step in the process, as, in the mind of Nehru, colonialism had exploited and fettered the Indian economy. In contrast, Gandhi was a deeply spiritual man, ecumenical in his religious views, who conceived of an Indian nationalism based on social equality, religious freedom for all religions, removal of caste barriers and stigmas, an economy based on cottage industries, and as little government as possible. For Gandhi, it was “industrialism itself, rather than the inability to industrialize, that was the root cause of Indian poverty”⁴³, which reinforced his belief in village life and local control. In many ways, Nehru and Gandhi were polar opposites, but each was a competent and charismatic leader who appealed to the imaginations and aspirations of different segments of the Indian population. That Gandhi’s visions were too traditional and spiritual for an elite bent on rapid modernization did not impair his influence on the decisions and directions that Indian politics and the nationalist movement undertook.

Phase III: 1936-1947—Towards independence and partition

Stage I: Polarization of political forces, 1935-1945; Opposition parties become salient.

The 1920s to 1930s was the period that set the stage for the future partition of India, setting in motion a series of dominoes that almost inevitably, at least in hindsight, led to the creation of Pakistan as a separate state. The expectation that Edwin Montagu held when he drafted the Government of India Act (1935) was that gradual devolution of power would result in the merging of parties, of regions, of differences, especially between those of the Hindus and Muslims. Instead, as R. J. Moore observes, the “devolution of power by stages, which was hardly avoidable in view of the complex

⁴³ Partha Chatterjee, *Op.cit.*, 201.

relationship between Britain and India, steadily pushed the Indian parties apart. The very process of devolution demanded the co-operation of Indian collaborators, whose entrenchment at one stage restricted the choices open to British policy-makers at the next.”⁴⁴

The Government of India Act of 1935 abandoned the dyarchy of the previous (1919) Act and the repression that had characterized the earlier era. An expanded electorate now included one sixth of the adult Indian population (an increase from six to thirty million voters). According to the Act, the princely states were to have been incorporated into British India, an event which was never implemented under British rule, and which, therefore, was to become one of the first, and much disputed, tasks for an independent India. The Act of 1935, though not conceived as such, and denigrated by Nehru and many INC members as a ‘slave’ constitution⁴⁵, nevertheless served as a foundation for the constitution of the Republic of India. Viewed by some critics as meaningless, the devolution of power did in fact accord major areas of responsibility to the Indian ministries and provided a substantial opportunity to govern within the provincial levels. A federal form of government was instituted which was later adopted in the independent Indian constitution. The act also safeguarded the previous privileges of the Muslims to be represented by separate electorates.

The elections of 1937, the first held under the 1935 Act, were a disaster for the Muslim league, which could only win 109 out of 485 seats allocated to Muslims. Congress and regional Muslim parties handily won the election, reinforcing Congress’

⁴⁴ R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity: 1917-1940*, (London: Clarendon Press, 1974), vii.

⁴⁵ Hardgrave and Kochanek, p.48 and Wolpert (1993), 323.

claim that the Muslim League did not represent the majority of the Indian Muslims, and that regional interests as well as the nationalist movement itself were better represented within the Congress Party. In fact, after this election, Nehru boasted that there “were only two ‘parties’ in India, the government and the Congress.”⁴⁶ Congress dominance may have been overwhelming in terms of seats, but an analysis of the election shows that poor organization, lack of money and coordination among the Muslim parties, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s absence from the political scene (as well as from India) for several years prior to the election were the major reasons the Muslim League fared so poorly, rather than Congress’ attractiveness. Additionally, the bulk of the Muslim seats that were not won by the Muslim League were not won, and, in fact, were for the most part not even contested, by the INC. These seats were won by local Muslim parties⁴⁷. However, the sheer power of Congress in winning such a majority of seats, and the difficulties any party would have in overcoming Congress’ nation-wide domination accentuated the difficulties for opposition groups: “the 1937 elections clearly indicated one important political fact: that Congress was certain to dominate the Centre in the subcontinent.”⁴⁸

The consequences of the loss for the Muslim League propelled the Muslim elite, with Jinnah as leader, into switching tactics, basing its new mobilization on fomenting fears of Hindu domination in any independent state, and clamoring in earnest for a

⁴⁶ As quoted in Wolpert, (1993), 323. The response to this remark was made by Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League: “No, there is a third party, the Mussulmans.” Quoted in Michael Brecher, Nehru: A Political Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 231.

⁴⁷ See Bimal Prasad, “Congress versus the Muslim League, 1935-1937”, (305-329) in Congress and Indian Nationalism, the Pre-Independence Phase, Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert, eds., (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1988).

⁴⁸ Ishtiaq Ahmed, State, Nation, and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia (Pinter: London, 1996), 86-87.

separate Muslim state. In 1940 the Muslim League formally adopted the Lahore Resolution that articulated the “two nations” theory, the division of the Indian subcontinent into two sovereign states, Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India. Strategic errors among Congress leadership contributed to alienating many Muslims, but it is probably moot to believe that any specific action by this late date could have prevented the eventual partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The elections in early 1946 saw the Muslim League’s loss overturned, as the League won an overwhelming majority of the Muslim seats.

Stage II: 1946-1947— to partition and independence

Congress swept the general seats in the 1946 elections, further polarizing the distance between the two large winners, the Congress and the Muslim League. In September Nehru was invited by the viceroy, Archibald Wavell, to head an interim government, an action that fomented even more discord among the rivals. The last eighteen months of British rule saw India wracked by inter-communal rioting, looting, and killing, but it was a mere prelude to the massive slaughter that would accompany the formal division of the sub-continent⁴⁹.

On June 3, 1947, Lord Mountbatten formally announced that India would be divided into two states, India and Pakistan, with Pakistan itself geographically divided into two sectors, West Pakistan and East Pakistan. On July 15, the British House of

⁴⁹ When India and Pakistan were divided, more than ten million people transferred across the new borders, fleeing from what they perceived to be hostile territory and fear of communal reprisals against them. More than one million of these migrants were slain enroute.

Commons announced that August 15, 1947 would be independence day for both India and Pakistan.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS SINCE INDEPENDENCE

The First Three Decades (1947-1977)

In 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru became the first prime minister of India, serving until his death in office on May 27, 1964. His long tenure in office enabled him to enact social, economic, and political policies that dramatically set the stage for an activist government intent on propelling India into the twentieth century. His charismatic appeal, his nationalist credentials, his vision of a just, egalitarian and modern society, and his intellectual prowess contributed to gaining the support of a wide strata of Indian citizens. His adroit political maneuverings enabled him to hold together a Congress Party beset by internal divisions and a multiple of philosophical contradictions. Faced with the mammoth task of solidifying a country wracked by partition, as well as the tragic carnage that followed it, Nehru also had to contend with two wars with Pakistan and a disastrous war with China (1962).

At the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, when the Indian subcontinent was partitioned and freed from British rule, Nehru had reluctantly, but pragmatically, accepted that Indian nationalism had been as much a religious as a cultural and political identification. As an avowed secularist, Nehru sought to unite what remained of India under a banner of secular, democratic, socialist rule, and to disprove the commonly held

skepticism of Indian unity so often voiced by western observers. Typical of this skepticism was the declaration by Sir John Strachey in 1884, in an introduction to a series of lectures at Cambridge University that “(t)his is the first and most essential thing to learn about India – that there is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious....”¹ This sentiment that was repeatedly reiterated by British colonial rulers, in part because according to the criteria they used, it appeared valid, and partially because it justified continuing its colonial rule and rejection of nationalist demands by the Indian population, had been borne out by the partition. It was a matter of survival as well as vindication that India become truly a single country.

In the 1940s, Nehru’s future deputy prime minister, Vallabhbhai (Sardar) Patel, had played an important role in convincing the Congress leadership and even Gandhi, that partition was not only inevitable, but probably necessary, because his “knowledge of regional politics convinced him that throughout the country there were forces at work that would lead to disruption, so that India would be faced with the prospect of not one partition, but many, unless a strong central government took over.”²

Therefore, the initial task facing the new leadership was to incorporate into the union the five hundred and sixty two princely states³ that had been granted limited

¹ Ainslie T. Embree, *India’s Search for National Identity*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 129.

³ Integration of the princely states was of paramount importance in establishing the integrity, the stability, and the sovereignty of India. At independence, princely states constituted one third of the Indian land mass, one fourth of its population, and, although relative strength and wealth varied among the various princely states, forty-four of them had their own military forces which could pose a threat to a new country. Negotiations for the accession of the states to India had been conducted since the 1935 Government of India Act, although as early as the 1920s the INC had declared the inevitability of the union of the princely states with the rest of India. V. Patel, India’s first deputy prime minister, actually was the major player in the

sovereignty by Great Britain during colonial rule. The choice of which country they would cede to (India or Pakistan) was given to them, and, except for Hyderabad (largest in both land mass and population – 17 million residents), Junagadh, and Jammu and Kashmir, the remaining 559 principalities merged with India. For Nehru, this was one of the most immediate crises of his rulership. Junagadh, a small state with a Hindu population but a Muslim leader who choose to merge with Pakistan, was invaded by Indian troops and forced to conduct a plebiscite (which then acceded to India). But the larger problems were Jammu and Kashmir (with a Muslim population and a Hindu ruler) and Hyderabad (with a Muslim ruler and Hindu majority population). The claim by both India and Pakistan on Jammu-Kashmir (J-K), as well as a determination by many of the J-K citizens to remain independent, was temporarily resolved when Pakistan invaded Kashmir, inducing the Hindu maharajah to seek Indian protection, for which he was obliged to sign the 'Instrument of Accession to India' (October 1947). This action precipitated the first Indian-Pakistani war. The question of Jammu-Kashmir sovereignty has to this date remained in dispute, and two more wars between Pakistan and India, constant civil uprisings, terrorism, and insurgencies have been part and parcel of the failure of India (and Pakistan) to resolve this problem.

The case of Hyderabad was accentuated because, not only was it a rich and vast territory, but it was totally surrounded by India, in the central part of the peninsula. Rather than acceding to either Pakistan (which would have been unacceptable to India) or to India, Hyderabad opted for total independence. After a year of negotiational stalemate

accession process. For a short discussion of this see Granville Austin, The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation, (Oxford University Press: Bombay, 1966), 243-254.

but increasing internal disorder and violence, India took over militarily (via a 'police action'). The accession by the princely states was sweetened by India's promise to grant 'privy purses' and special privileges to the former maharajas, who could also retain titular status.⁴

The next challenge to Indian unity was the question of language-based states⁵. Language itself was a point of major consternation for the Constituent Assembly, with advocates for an Indian language clashing with those who believed that English would be a preferable alternative, providing India with a 'neutral' language that was widely understood among the intellectuals from all states, and one that did not bestow preference to a single region. The detriment to English, however, was that it was a 'foreign' tongue, one that was identified with colonialism and subservience. At the same time, it was a language of modern commerce, of international politics, and widely understood among the elite throughout India's diverse regions.

Early in the 1940s, Hindustani, a compilation of Hindi and Urdu, was initially slated to become the official national language. When the independence movement had become mass oriented in the 1920s, the Provincial Congress Committees had been organized by linguistic regions. These units used regional languages to communicate

⁴ In September, 1970, Indira Gandhi attempted to abolish the privy purses and 'de-recognize' the maharajahs with the 24th amendment, which was passed by 2/3 of Lok Sabha, but the Rajya Sabha failed to agree, thereby not becoming law. She then accomplished it through presidential order, but the Supreme Court, on 12/15/70 struck down this order as unconstitutional, and therefore void. The privy purses were regarded as constitutionally protected private property. Her failure led to the dissolution of the government on 27 December (although this is considered to be a political ploy by Indira at the time to rid herself of a hostile and only marginally Congress majority Lok Sabha and to hold elections before the opposition had a chance to consolidate its growing popularity). Indira finally was able to achieve her goal in December, 1971, when her new majority government passed the twenty-sixth Amendment.

⁵ For a terse discussion on the reorganization of states see W.H. Morris-Jones, The Government and Politics of India (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964) and Selig Harrison, India: The Most Dangerous Decades (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

within their regions, but English remained the medium with which the regional committees communicated with each other. However, a single, and common, language was deemed vital to link the entire country together, as well as to link the Hindu and Muslim communities⁶. Hindustani was the most commonly understood language of the North Indian masses, as well as the Congress leadership. Therefore, it was a logical decision on the part of the leadership to adopt Hindustani. English would continue to be the *lingua franca* of the new nation, with the expectation that Hindustani would become a more refined and developed language, would gradually spread throughout the country, become accepted by the non-Hindustani-speaking population, and eventually would replace English. However, in 1948, after Partition, Hindi replaced Hindustani as the language of choice for a powerful cabal of the framers of the Constitution. Blaming the Muslims for the partition of India, Hindustani was rejected because of its association with Urdu and Muslims. “If there had been no Partition, Hindustani would without doubt have been the national language, but the anger against the Muslims turned against Urdu” opined the Constituent Assembly member, K. Santhanam.⁷ The INC was deeply divided over this issue, and rather than risk further polarization, and after vociferous debate, Hindi was anointed the ‘Official Language of the Union’, with English as the acceptable, short-term alternative.⁸

⁶ Hindustani “drew its vocabulary from both Sanskrit and Arabic-Persian roots. It could be written in either the Devanagari or Urdu scripts. Muslims, on one side, might be expected to use a more Persianized vocabulary and the Urdu script – which had religious overtones for them because of its relationship to Arabic, the holy language of the Koran. Hindus, would, in general, use the (Deva)Nagari script and a more Sanskritized vocabulary both of which had links with Hindu scripture. ...Hindustani provided a happy example of cultural synthesis sorely needed in an atmosphere of increasing communal tension.” Granville Austin, 273.

⁷ As quoted in Austin, 277.

⁸ Article 345 of the Constitution decreed that English was to be the language of the Supreme Court and High Courts until Parliament passed a law specifying another language be used. However, any citizen can

The timetable for the conversion from English to Hindi was initially set for 1965 but this deadline was not met, and the deadline was pushed back several more times. The present deadline is 2001, but that date is also presumed to be untenable. Thus, the question of a national language was arbitrated and resolved in a fashion that satisfied Hindi advocates while at the same time enabled losers to continue to rebuff implementation. But this did not resolve the problem of language within the states themselves⁹. At the state level, most of the people communicated in one of several regional languages. The fact that many states had more than one regional language made intra-state communication a matter of highly politicized and emotional conflict. Debate on a national language had been undertaken within a limited sphere and among an elite that were either Congress members or under the Congress umbrella, thereby having only a marginal effect on political party development. The issue of language at the state level, however, was more widespread and affected development of parties at the state and regional levels.

As mentioned in Chapter three, language was a conundrum that was partially resolved by reorganizing states linguistically. The INC's initial reaction to demands to create 'unitary linguistic' states was to postpone any decisions in the expectation that passions would be defused and the clamor would eventually dissipate. The Congress leadership at the national level stressed the unifying effect that a single language (Hindi) would have on the country at large, and feared that the realignment of states based on a

petition the courts in any of the legal languages cited in Schedule XVII, chapter 1, of the constitution. A complete text of the Constitution can be accessed via the internet. See <http://alfa.nic.in/const/html>.

⁹ Nehru had written in 1937, in his book, *The Unity of India*, that provincial languages "were to be the instruments for achieving national democracy. Culture depends on language ...(thus) it becomes essential

single language would enflame regional sentiments and abridge the rights of minorities that lived within the new states. They disdained the “primordialism” of the language-based movement, concerned that it would lead, in the words of Myron Weiner, to “the deprecation of other ethnic groups which so often accompanied the deep-seated passionate emotional attachments to language, regional history, and ethnic community.”¹⁰

However, the seeds of polyglotism had spread throughout the regions of India that were not part of the ‘Hindi belt’¹¹, especially the western and southern states. In Madras (that was later to become Tamil Nadu), the former Justice Party had evolved into a new political force, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The DMK was founded in 1949 as a Tamil nationalist, non-Brahmin, Dravidian cultural movement that subsumed the Justice Party and the Self-Respect movement and culled the newly emerging ‘backward castes’ from the Congress Party. The increasing support for the DMK rested in part on the use of the Tamil language, and DMK opposition to Hindi was instrumental in forcing the newly independent India to retreat from legally declaring Hindi as the national language until 1965. When the date neared for Hindi to become the official language, massive rioting erupted throughout all of Tamil Nadu, resulting in the arrests of thousands of protesters, at least one hundred deaths, including several self-immolations, and thousands of injuries. The government in New Delhi finally backed down and reiterated the assurances that Nehru had made in 1956.

to conduct the business and politics of the country in a language which is understood by the masses. So far as the provinces are concerned, this must be in the provincial language.” As quoted in Austin, 271.

¹⁰ Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 49.

¹¹ The Hindi belt includes most of the northern states, comprised of Uttar Pradesh, India’s largest state, and is also called the ‘heartland states’, or the ‘real’ India, especially in the early years of independence. This insulted the southern states, which argued that Hindi was as foreign a tongue to almost half the population as English and was thereby no more democratic nor unifying.

The national Congress Party leaders continued in the early to mid 1950s to try to persuade regional Congressmen to support the government's stance on adopting Hindi, but, when they were successful, the Congress party members often lost local elections, or regions saw mass defections from the party, with similar electoral results. The political reality forced the Congress government to concede, and the reorganization of states on linguistic lines was implemented in 1956. According to Weiner, "this decision may have created many new national problems, but it did result in a settling of passions within each of the states and within the state party organizations. The linguistic movement largely disappeared and linguistic sentiments were reduced in importance once the new states were formed."¹²

THE INC AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Nehru's domestic agenda included economic development that was to be directed through government intervention in the economy, creating five year plans that allocated resources and focused investments to achieve determined goals. As a Fabian socialist, Nehru had long believed in the capability of government to effect change and manage economic reform. Partha Chatterjee¹³ suggests that the leadership viewed planning and Government involvement in the industrialization process as legitimizing the new state and providing further proof of the unifying, beneficent capacities of government. The initial steps towards planning began as early as 1938 with the formation of the national planning committee (NPC), a committee set up through the INC, with Nehru as its chair. Rapid industrialization required state involvement, and thus, planning, in Nehru's

¹² Weiner, (1967), 50.

¹³ See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories*, (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press), chapter ten, 200-219.

perspective, and was to be separate from “the squabbles and conflicts of politics,”¹⁴ a domain that should not be arbitrated nor debated as part of the political process.

Chatterjee explains that planning was an integral part of the nationalist movement, part of the *raison d’etre* of an independent India. Colonialism was not only a political, but an *economic* exploitation of India, and only self rule would allow the economic resources of India to be used to improve the lot of the Indian people. Chatterjee explains the connection between economic planning and representative government:

Colonial rule had become a historical fetter that had to be removed before the nation could proceed to develop. Within this framework, therefore, the economic critique of colonialism as an exploitative force creating and perpetuating a backward economy came to occupy a central place. ... The new state represented the only legitimate form of exercise of power because it was a necessary condition for the development of the nation. ... A developmental ideology then was a constituent part of the self-definition of the post-colonial state. The state was connected to the people-nation not simply through the procedural forms of representative government; it also acquired its representativeness by directing a program of economic development on behalf of the nation. The former connected, as in any liberal form of government, the legal-political sovereignty of the state with the sovereignty of the people. The latter connected the sovereign powers of the state directly with the economic well-being of the people.¹⁵

Nehru’s socialist platform did not go unchallenged by members of the INC nor the core of elites that had supported independence. Whereas the left wing of the INC sought greater government restrictions on private enterprise and radical land reform, the more conservative elements criticized the party’s economic policies as impeding capitalist development, obstructing entrepreneurship and undermining private property rights. The Communist parties and various socialist parties maintained a small following of loyalists, but for the most part they were engaged in the politics of pressure, as the ‘parties of

¹⁴ Ibid., 202.

¹⁵ Ibid., 203.

pressure'¹⁶ that Kothari termed the opposition parties within the 'Congress system'. Throughout the first decade of independence the (non-communal) conservative forces exerted pressure within the INC also, but in 1959, an assortment of socially liberal businessmen, entrepreneurs, landowners, princes, and so forth created the Swatantra Party as a bulwark against the increasingly socialist agenda of the INC. Unlike the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS)¹⁷, the Swatantra Party stressed liberalizing the economy, but fell short of achieving much electoral support in a country where most of the citizens were too poor and ignorant to find such a platform appealing. Thus, even though the 1962 and 1967 elections saw the Swatantra Party¹⁸ become the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha, it only amassed 7.9 percent and 8.7 percent (eighteen and forty-four seats respectively) of the vote in these two elections¹⁹. By 1971 its strength had dwindled to 3.1 percent of the vote (eight seats), and by 1977 had merged with the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), becoming part of the Janata Party's coalition government when Congress lost the national election for the first time. The Swatantra Party's effectiveness in its short existence was primarily in lobbying within the INC (as part of the 'Congress System') to rein in the socialist tendencies, in effect, to be a 'balancer'.

¹⁶ Rajni Kothari, "The Congress 'System' in India", *Asian Survey*, (4:12, 1964, December); 1162.

¹⁷ The BJS was formed in 1951, from the pre-independence Hindu Mahasabha/RSS (communal) organizations and was the ancestor of the modern BJP. Although it also advocated a more classical economic liberalism it stressed *swadeshi* (self-reliance) as part of its Hindu nationalist orientation.

¹⁸ For more information on the Swatantra Party see Horst Hartmann, *Political Parties in India*, (Meenakshi Prakashan, 1971), 149-166.

¹⁹ Election results are from J. C. Aggarwal and M.K. Chowdhry, *Elections in India, 1952-1996* (New Delhi: Shipra Publications, 1996).

1967 to 1990

The year 1967 is considered a watermark, where India and the Congress Party strayed from the path set forth by Nehru and envisioned by the founding fathers. The Congress Party, committed to democracy and inclusion, became a party that instead was committed to the primary goal of re-electing its own leadership and retaining power. Indira Gandhi is at least partially responsible for distorting the status quo.

In 1966 Mrs. Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, was selected to be prime minister by Congress president Kamaraj after the death of Prime Minister Shastri. Expecting a malleable and obedient puppet that would follow her father's (Nehru) economic and social agenda, Indira quickly seized control of Congress, creating a network of patronage that became increasingly dependent on her benevolence to retain power or hold political office. Instead of consensus building, Indira practiced confrontation. Her lip service to social reform, her identification with Nehru, and her adroit campaigning style made her popular among the people. Instead of relying on the Congress organization to solidify her basis of power, she concentrated power in her own hands and established a regime of personalized rule.

Shastri's short tenure as PM had seen a broader nexus of power sharing emerge within the Congress Party. Party leaders demanded that they be included in decision-making. State governments and the chief ministers of the states became embroiled in policy decisions and had to agree to major policy decisions before they were enacted. The party organization had become 'polycentric', dispersing power throughout the

organization in competing but overlapping groups: the Working Committee, the chief ministers of the states, the Cabinet, and the Congress Party in the Parliament. National leadership was divided among several different kingpins each vying for control. At the same time, the state Congress parties had become more autonomous but also were convulsed with intra-party squabbles and power plays. The Chief Ministers and the state Congress parties (commonly referred to as 'the Syndicate') dominated the national party organization, sapping strength from the prime ministership and the cabinet itself. The more limited role for the prime minister and cabinet did not suit Indira Gandhi's managerial style, provoking a massive restructuring of the political process, one that would prove to be unsustainable and destructive for the future of party politics in India.

Trying to re-establish the centralized rule enjoyed by her father and to reinforce her control over the Congress Party and the state governments, Indira took three major steps. First, she created a much more centralized and closed party, where appointments to the important party organs were selected based on two criteria: a) a lack of an independent support base and b) personal loyalty to Indira herself. To assure that these two criteria remained in effect, members of party committees and cabinet ministers were shuffled, fired, or re-appointed willy-nilly to ensure that these individuals could not threaten her position of supremacy. Second, Indira undermined the federal nature of the country by appointing to the states Chief Ministers that were beholden to her, dissolved state legislatures (through president's rule) that challenged her authority, and dominated the nominating committees that approved candidates who were allowed to compete in local, state, and federal elections. Third, her confrontations with the rest of the party

leadership provoked a split in the party, giving Indira control over the most powerful organs at the national level.

In November, 1969, Congress split into two parties, the direct cause being the intra-party battle over who would succeed Zakir Husain, the president of India who died in office. Indira's candidate, V.V. Giri, eventually was elected over the official Congress candidate, Sanjiva Reddy, but the event highlighted the power struggle that had been brewing for several years. The Congress party bosses (the 'Syndicate') who commanded the state party organizations and represented the 'old guard' ousted Indira from the party. She promptly formed a splinter Congress party, called Congress[R]²⁰ (for reform), and her opponents became the Congress[O], (for 'organization'). When she called for new parliamentary elections in March, 1971, her decision was vindicated as her new party won a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, enough to pass constitutional amendments. In 1967, the INC had won 283 seats, but in 1971 it received a massive 342 (out of 520) seats, (66% of all seats)²¹ Congress(R) won its majority at the expense of Congress(O) and its allied parties, Jana Sangh, Swatantra, and SSP, which lost most of its representation, winning only sixteen seats from its previous sixty-five.

Indira's remarkable electoral achievement is credited in part to her delinking center and state elections. This ploy served to delink national issues from local ones, and could be exploited by a personalistic, charismatic campaigner such as Indira to her

²⁰ Congress (R) became Congress (I), [for Indira] in 1980; other parenthetical parties with the Congress label include (O), for organization, (U) for Urs, (J) for Jagjivan Ram, and (S) for socialist. They are basically inconsequential parties.

²¹ The seat gain was achieved even though the popular vote only increased by three percent (40.8% to 43.7%). Data from David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, India Decides: Elections 1952-1995, (New Delhi: Books and Things, 1995), 82, 86.

advantage. The delinking of elections helped Congress(R) because local parties were better placed to bestow patronage at the local level, and thus fared better at election time, even on the national level.²² Indira used this opportunity to contend for election on a populist theme, *garibi hatao!*²³ (eliminate poverty) that had national appeal. Exalting in her victory, Indira exclaimed “how strong the democratic roots in the country are and how discerning our people are”²³ and vowed to push through programs to nationalize industries, redistribute land, and expand her socialist agenda. Promising food sufficiency and heavy investment in the industrial sector, Indira embarked on the fifth five-year plan with optimism. Her tactics and agenda were to have major and long-term effects that permanently altered the political and social environment in India.

First, her determination that government could engineer social change, eliminate inequality, promote economic growth, and control social behavior impelled her to use governmental institutions in non-democratic ways. A primary example of this is the population control program implemented during the period from 1975-1977.

Second, in order to assure popular support for her programs, she circumvented the political party and made direct appeals to the population through charismatic, populist, and divisive campaigning practices. The decision, in June, 1969, to nationalize the country’s largest banks was sudden and marginally illegitimate, but the accolades spewing from the common citizen eventually lent credence to the action.

²² Judith Brown notes that local problems are the most salient, and promises to solve them most appealing to voters. Delinking state and center elections can alter the appeals so the emphasis on nation-wide issues can be beneficial in breaking down old group identities, can help to construct vertical linkages, and can abet the development of stronger parties that are more institutionalized and pluralistic.

²³ Wolpert, 387.

Third, to command the utmost allegiance to Indira Gandhi herself, within the government, she stripped the governmental agencies, the civil service, and the state governments of the autonomy and internal controls that had contributed to their being accountable and effective. Opposition to her or her policies was viewed as traitorous, punishable by transfer or replacement, or in the case of states, their governments were dissolved through the 'constitutional' means of President's Rule. These tactics became rampant during the emergency, and during the 1980s. State governments were dissolved ninety-five times between 1951 and 1995 (March), forty-one times by Indira alone.

The Emergency and the Deinstitutionalization of the Congress Party

The economic crises facing India in the early 1970s was brought about in part by the 1971 war, the flood of refugees from Bangladesh into Bengal, mounting inflation due to natural disasters, compounded by the 1973 Arab-Israeli war (and ensuing energy shortages) that resulted in widespread shortages of food supplies and fertilizer, further civil unrest, and growing political opposition. J.P. Narayan in Bihar and Moraji Desai, in Gujarat, mobilized mass support against the government and won the Gujarat state election in 1975²⁴. The day before the results were tallied Indira had been found guilty by the High Court of election fraud in her 1971 race for a parliamentary seat, which would have led to her ouster as prime minister, at least until the issue had been appealed to (and perhaps overturned by) the Supreme Court. Faced with clamorous outcries for her

²⁴ The percentage of popular vote for Indira Gandhi's branch of the INC dropped from 50.9% to 40.7%, whereas the INC(O) percentage barely changed (23.5 to 23.6%). However, the effect was disastrous for the party in terms of seats lost: in 1972 the INC(I) had 140 seats, in 1975, only 75 seats; the INC[R] seat gain was from 16 in 1972 to 56 in 1975. Furthermore, another new party (the KMLP), which had won zero seats in 1972, won 12 seats in 1975, and the BJP (BJS in 1972) increased its seat count six fold (3 to 18). Data from Butler, et.al., India Decides: Elections 1952-1995 (New Delhi: Books and Things, 1995), 175.

to step down, a hostile public, and disastrous election outcome in Gujarat, Indira declared a State of Emergency on June 16, 1975. An immediate arrest of her opponents, suspension of civil rights, censorship of the press, banning of 'extremist' organizations, and enactment of measures to "secure the peace" followed the declaration. Within two months at least ten thousand (or by many accounts, as many as fifty thousand) political prisoners were being held in jails across the country and opposition political parties were banned. Indira reconvened Parliament and pushed through the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth amendments which "barred India's courts of law from hearing any challenges to the emergency, and ... retroactively exonerated the prime minister from any legal charges pending against her, as well as from all possible future charges of criminal actions while she was in high office. ... Finally, the amendment itself was declared immune to Supreme Court review."²⁵ The emergency was viewed by Indira as a means to consolidate power and to enact an agenda that would bring about massive social and economic change. Alarming and repugnant as the Emergency was to advocates of political democracy, nevertheless the Constitution of India provided the legal means by which an emergency could be called. Article 352, clause (1) allows for a state of emergency, to protect the 'security of India' to be called for if internal conditions warrant it. That these conditions were not in place mattered little to Indira.

What is rather remarkable is that the Emergency was called off in less than two years, and Indira, on January 18, 1977, called for new elections to be held that March. She released political prisoners and lifted the ban on opposition parties and the press, and

²⁵ Wolpert, 399.

re-instated civil rights. Historians and political scientists have debated as to what impelled her to call for new elections but the consensus appears to point to the arrogance and confidence that Indira had that she could actually win the next election²⁶. She was proven wrong.

The 1977 election was won by a multi-party coalition that campaigned as the Janata Party which set up a government with Morarji Desai as prime minister. His short tenure in office was studded with internal divisions, bickering, competition, rivalry, and fragmentation. He resigned after only twenty-eight months rather than risk losing a no-confidence vote, and was replaced by Chaudhury Charan Singh. Within months Singh realized his government was unable to survive, and he called for new elections to be held in January of 1980. Indira Gandhi and her newly named Congress Party, now with the parenthetical 'I', for Indira, regained office. Governmental ineptness had characterized

²⁶ The expectation that she would win the election would have to be at the crux of any decision to call for new elections, but there were several other factors that were significant in determining that holding elections was in the short and long run necessary. After all, Indira already was in control, so why should she risk holding elections, even if she believed victory was practically guaranteed? The reasons suggested are: 1) the need to 'legitimize' the emergency; 2) the opportunity to provide her son, Sanjay, with an electoral basis of support in Parliament, achieved through his winning of a contested election, thereby assuring that he would be situated to take over the prime ministership when she retired; 3) even within her own Congress faction, opposition to more and more of her proposals had begun to emerge, with refusals to sanction or support some of her measures occurring more frequently, especially her proposal to further 'postpone' elections. Mrs. Gandhi understood that without the backing of her cadre of party members it would be more and more difficult to operate the government without resorting to more and more coercive or authoritarian practices; 4) finally, it has been suggested also that she was not exempt from international opinion: the embarrassment of India being branded a dictatorship in the international media, the suggestions that India was not a democracy any longer, and her nemesis, Pakistan, which was about to hold elections, would be characterized as the 'only democratic state' in the region, probably played some part; and, on a pragmatic level, that if she would have to hold elections at any time in the next few years, this would be as good a time as any since economic indicators showed that the economy was headed downwards, which would make a future election even more risky for her re-election. See Myron Weiner, India at the Polls: The Parliamentary Elections of 1977, (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research: Washington, DC, 1978), 7-12.

the short interim reign of the first non-Congress party, and Indira capitalized on this, voicing the electoral slogan of “elect a government that works”.²⁷

During the Emergency Indira had bestowed extra-constitutional authority to her son, Sanjay, her heir apparent, to implement a widespread and intrusive population control program. Forced sterilization of men and women, quotas that had to be reached by officials in order to qualify for bonuses or promotions, rules that prevented housing allotments or educational opportunities to be given to employees who did not prove s/he had been sterilized, and raids into poor communities to forcibly sterilize men and women became the mainstay of Sanjay’s program²⁸. The policy was rationalized as necessary in order to fulfill Indira’s commitment to improve economic growth – population growth was eroding any gains that were being made – and therefore, was legitimate, according to Indira. Prior to 1975, attempts to achieve reductions in population growth had been rather nominal, allocating the task to the individual states rather than pursuing a central government agenda. State governments were reimbursed for each IUD insertion and

²⁷ Rajni Kothari would take issue with this slogan, however, since he contends that Indira Gandhi’s greatest failure was her and her government’s incapacity to perform. According to him (and he is by no means alone in this), “Indira Gandhi and the radicals who backed her had little understanding of the processes through which a complex political-bureaucratic apparatus spanning a large and diverse polity could be made to deliver the goods.” He further contends that “to the extent there was evidence of dynamism and skill in the period between 1969-1977, the credit should go almost entirely to the team of dynamic advisers in those years and the detailed thinking and leg-work done in the Prime Minister’s Secretariat.” Kothari credits the old guard of Congress regulars with any success that she was able to accomplish, and that her displacement of them over the period of her reign eroded all capability to either garner support within the institutions of party or government, or to establish a base of support within the population that would enable programs to be enacted or change to take place. Instead of being an astute politician, she, according to Kothari, was inept, unable to rally allies, choose strategies, or time events to either her, or the country’s, benefit. Her failures were prolific, matched only by the ineptness of the opposition to seize the initiative and the opportunity to re-establish democratic processes and participation at the grassroots level. See Rajni Kothari, Politics and the People: In Search of a Humane India, Volume II, (New Horizons Press: New York, 1982), 335-7.

²⁸ For a fictionalized report of the sterilization program, as well as the terror that accompanied the period of the Emergency on the poor see Mistry, A Fine Balance (Vintage Publications, 1997).

sterilization that was performed. These financial incentives, coupled with a more intensive public awareness campaign were somewhat successful in reducing the *rate* of growth, but the total increase in population figures continued to soar. Just as inroads were being made, the dangers of IUDs became known, resulting in declining insertions. Subsidized sales of condoms and a renewed emphasis on sterilization became the birth control methods offered by government policy. The irony of Sanjay's authoritarian approach is that, although the avowed goal of population control became paramount during the Emergency, "Mrs. Gandhi failed to give adequate attention to family planning as supported by the fact that family planning was not even listed as a political objective of the Congress Party until its Chandigarh session in 1975."²⁹ The coercive methods utilized in order to force people to undergo sterilization had some impressive results, but a backlash resulted. After Indira Gandhi's defeat in the 1977 elections, the new government de-emphasized sterilization and only urged voluntary family planning. The next years resulted in an actual increase of population growth. The numbers of sterilizations fell from 8,663,000 in 1976/7 to 1,242,000 in 1977/8.³⁰

The intrusion of the government into the most private of individual decisions, and the pervasiveness of the intrusion into even the village level of society certainly altered the government-society nexus. Because most of the population planning was imposed from above and barely sought to deal with the underlying causes of overpopulation, failure to

²⁹James G. Chadney, "Family Planning: India's Achilles Heel" Journal of Asian and African Studies, (XXII, 1987). 223.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 228, Table 2. Family planning and population control has remained a 'non-issue' for either legislators or policy-makers. In mid August, 1999, India officially passed the one billion mark in population.

effect long-term social change was perhaps inevitable. The same could be stated for the failure of Indira's 'poverty elimination' programs. Her 'twenty-point program' of economic reform, of which points two through seven dealt with land reforms, has been criticized as "no more than a political gambit to deflect criticism of the emergency – a reiteration of earlier tactics when the ruling elite employed radical language for symbolic effects."³¹ More rhetoric than policy, Indira's promises to redistribute land to India's landless peasants were neither implemented nor were steps taken to enact new laws (or to enforce old ones, which date from the early 1950s). That Mrs. Gandhi's (original) *intentions* were probably noble, and she sincerely believed that government could enact programs that would dissipate the inequities and injustice of the social/economic status quo, accentuates the tragedy of her failures, due in great part to her insecure power base and her incapacity to cooperate, conciliate, and depend on the process, her colleagues, and the opposition.

The aftermath of the Pakistan war and the independence of Bangladesh exacerbated the separatist movements in the northeast in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Bengalis fleeing from Bangladesh had overrun some of the tribal areas, threatening to outnumber the indigenous population. Assam and Nagaland were especially affected, adding fuel to the nascent 'liberation' armies that had become rooted in the hinterlands and were increasingly populist, extremist, ideologically driven, and violent. Mrs. Gandhi's compulsion to have tight and centralized control over the entire country was becoming more and more ephemeral as the entire country seemed to be unraveling into regions demanding more and more autonomy and rights, clamoring for 'sons of the soil' legislation, and the Congress Party became less and less capable of capturing state electoral victories or holding on to its

³¹ F. Tomasson Jannuzi, "India's Rural Poor: What Will Mobilize them Politically?", in Indira Gandhi's

minority constituencies. Indira Gandhi's response was to further personalize politics, increase centralization and become more authoritarian. The short-term results may have benefited Indira Gandhi, but the longer-term effects were disastrous, both for her, for party politics, for democracy and for India.

When the crisis in Punjab over increased autonomy came to a head, Indira committed the most horrendous mistake of her political life. To fragment Akali Dal leadership among the Sikh community in Punjab, and split the state's ruling Sikh-Hindu ruling coalition, which had flourished during the Emergency and had emerged victorious over Congress in the subsequent elections, Indira Gandhi sponsored and propped up a radical fundamentalist, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale³². Although not part of the Sikh political hierarchy, Bhindranwale was more potent than the forces he had displaced because his tactics were extremist and confrontational rather than the constitutional and negotiable methods followed by the Akalis. Indira chose to support communalist zeal and terrorism rather than grant legitimacy to the political process as exemplified by the Akalis, thereby subverting their party and their base of support. When it became apparent that Bhindranwale could not, and would not, be controlled by Indira's manipulations, it was too late and events had already sped towards the fatal finish. In December, 1983, Bhindranwale moved into the Golden Temple, the most holy of Sikh shrines, vowing to remain there until Delhi granted complete autonomy to Punjab. There is no doubt that the shrine was being used as an arsenal and a central headquarters to plan and execute terrorist acts across the

India: A Political System Reappraised, Henry C. Hart, ed., (Westview Press: Boulder, CO., 1976), 194.

³² For a narrative account of this period, written from the perspective of a noted journalist, a political 'insider', who was a confidante as well as advisor to Indira Gandhi, see Patwant Singh, Of Dreams and Demons: A Memoir of Modern India, (New York: Kodansha International, 1995), especially chapter six

Punjab, but few efforts were made to defuse the impending conflagration as Indira sought instead to impose central government power against any and all dissidents and minorities. Afraid of appearing weak or conciliatory, Indira catered to the growing anti-Sikh, chauvinistic Hindu nationalists. On June 5, 1984, 'Operation Bluestar' was unleashed. The Indian army attacked the temple and killed thousands of rebels, bystanders and pilgrims, as well as destroying the library that contained sacred manuscripts and relics of the Sikh religion. Less than four months after the Golden Temple debacle, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her (Sikh) bodyguards, on 31 October, 1984. Her assassination ignited national sentiments against Sikhs that resulted in the butchering of at least three thousand Sikhs, while the army and police stood by passively and government officials tacitly (if not directly) condoned the massacres.

Following this event, several commissions³³ were appointed to investigate the complicity of the government in the rioting; charges have been levied against several ministers that they not only were neglectful in controlling the mobs, but had actually conspired to aggravate tensions. Patwant Singh notes that the government reaction

(119-140). The book is an indictment of the criminalization of politics in India and how the democratic process has been undermined in the last three decades, beginning with Indira Gandhi.

³³A number of reports have been written about the Operation Bluestar and of the rioting that followed Indira Gandhi's assassination. See for example, Government of India, White Paper on the Punjab Agitation (New Delhi: 10 July, 1984); Sachchidanand Sinha, et.al., Army Action in Punjab: Prelude and Aftermath (New Delhi, 1984); Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle (Jonathan Cape: London, 1985); Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh, Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Bluestar and After (Vision Books: New Delhi, 1984); People's Union for Democratic Rights and Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties, 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, 1984), and Justice Denied: A Critique of the Misra Commission Report on the Riots in November 1984, (New Delhi, April 1987). Although the Punjab crisis is complicated and even at the time of the crisis there were contradictory views, for the most part the media and the population were more supportive of Indira's policies and the government actions than I have indicated. As time has passed and more information has emerged, there has been a growing realization of the duplicity that the government engaged in, as well as the distortions in the information that was released to the media, and the effects that misguided (or worse) policy has had on the subsequent events.

following Indira's death as contrasted to the official reaction following Mahatma Gandhi's death is indicative of the deterioration and criminalization of politics since 1948:

In 1948, all India radio had delayed the announcement of the Mahatma's death by almost three-quarters of an hour to give the government time to deploy the security forces to contain a backlash, in case his killer was a Muslim. From the governor-general downwards everyone had moved swiftly to contain any possible violence. In 1984 the state-owned television network helped raise the level of hostility against Sikhs by mesmerizing viewers with pictures of crowds demanding blood for blood after the news of Indira Gandhi's death – the blood of *all* Sikhs as it turned out. And this was done under the auspices of H.K.L. Bhagat, the Congress minister for information and broadcasting, against whom accusing fingers for his complicity in the killings have been pointed to by several enquiry commissions. He has been protected by successive prime ministers and still continues as a senior functionary of the Congress Party.³⁴

Whether or not the government was culpable in abetting communal violence, or was merely negligent in containing it is not the central issue for this study. What is more important is the perception, among the Sikhs in particular, of complicity by Congress officials, and that justice and accountability would not be forthcoming. Legitimacy was severely compromised. This was a pattern that would be characteristic of all future clashes that would bloody the Indian landscape: riots, killings, destruction of property and holy shrines, followed by government inaction, then a tepid attempt at investigation, and the ensuing report either shelved or ignored, with no charges filed against the guilty parties.

From the 1970s onwards, corruption increased exponentially. There are various reasons for this, but one explanation is offered by Ved Mehta. He explains how the increase in corruption became an unintended consequence of the ideological philosophy of the Indira camp. Championing the socialist, left-wing philosophy of the new Congress, Indira and her cohorts interpreted political contributions from businesses as a corruption of socialist

values. Whereas under Nehru's reign contributions to political parties were solicited openly, accounted for, and appreciated, Indira's methods were surreptitious. Disdaining the idea of being obliged to business for contributions, the new policy was to ban fundraising from individuals and businesses. However, no alternative financing was available, and as the electoral process became more competitive and expensive, Congress was strapped for cash. The answer to how to procure funds lay in illicit donations, procured by middlemen and in the form of kickbacks for awarding of contracts, *baksheesh* or bribes. Sanjay Gandhi perfected this system by eliminating the middlemen and demanding that payments be made directly to party functionaries. Justifying the practice "as a necessity for fighting and winning elections – for keeping India democratic" became semi-official doctrine.³⁵

The underlying structure of the party system, to this point, had rested on the tacit agreement that opposition parties were parties of pressure and influence, and had a legitimate role in the party system. This premise unraveled under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. Direct appeals for personalized (i.e. Indira popularity) support became more important than party popularity, and became the new strategy, touting Indira, rather than Congress, as a means of retaining electoral viability.

Kothari decried this trend, noting "the marked decline in the importance and authenticity of institutions. It reflects the loss of politics as an ethical space, its inability

³⁴ Patwant Singh, *Of Dreams and Demons: A Memoir of Modern India*, (Kodansha America, Inc.: New York, 1994), 139-49.

³⁵ See Ved Mehta, *Rajiv Gandhi and Rama's Kingdom* (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT., 1994), 130-134. Additionally, according to Bhagwan Dua, the continuation of one-party rule both at the Center and in the states was a "virtue", and necessary for "greater unity and the integrity of the nation." See "Federalism or Patrimonialism: the Making and Unmaking of Chief Ministers in India", *Asian Survey* VXXV, no. 8 (August 1985), 793.

to function as an idiom for translating the diversity of interests so crucial for the unity of India.”³⁶ Instead of using the party apparatus to aggregate interests and to inform, educate, and influence the electorate through party platforms and activities, populist appeals that pitted group against group, class against class, and caste against caste became the mainstay of political speeches. Advances for one group were perceived to be made at the expense of others, and little effort was made to unify the disparate interests. Congress was willing to sacrifice the pluralist foundations of its origins in its scramble for an electoral majority. Long term results of this strategy led to the diminution of the party and to polarization of the diverse Indian population.

Rajiv Gandhi and the 1980s

Rajiv Gandhi, Indira’s younger son, was thrust into politics not because of an interest in governing but because his brother, Sanjay, had died unexpectedly in an airplane accident in 1980 and he was ‘obliged’ to take over his seat in the Lok Sabha as a representative from UP. When his mother was killed, the heir to the Nehru-Gandhi legacy was immediately propelled into the prime ministership, winning the largest Congress victory³⁷ (in the 1984 election), capturing the ‘sympathy vote’ and ushering in a

³⁶Rajni Kothari, *Politics and the People: In Search of a Humane India*, volume II, (New Horizons Press: New York, 1989), 440. His condemnation of the rising ‘terrorist state’ (chapter 26) asserts that “the story of the third decade is an obituary of the earlier era. What we confront today is not the crisis of politics but its virtual elimination. The last decade (i.e. 1970s-1980s) has marked the beginning of the Indian State that has not only deprived society of a basic consensus but which has eschewed any scope of dialogue from it. The violence, the fear, the repression, the rhetoric of deceit and doublespeak, are symptoms not of crises but of the end of politics.” (439).

³⁷ Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress (I) party won 415 of the 542 Lok Sabha seats, the greatest proportion of the popular vote than at any time in its history. The elections which had been scheduled for January 1985 were moved up a month (to December 1984) in order to “give political legitimacy to what was essentially a dynastic succession.” (Ved Mehta, 61). Political analysts have been cynical about why the election had been advanced, for the most part agreeing with Mehta’s observation that Indira’s Congress party leaders “felt that if they created an atmosphere of Hindu solidarity they could capture the right-wing Hindu vote, which generally went to the opposition parties.” Thus, they “arranged the four-day anti-Sikh riots to help Rajiv win, and, at the same time, to teach the Sikhs a lesson.” (61). Holding on to power appears to be the

hopeful era for the future of India. With the enthusiasm of youth and a naiveté borne from a coddled life, Rajiv rapidly became a pawn for forces that not only had emanated from Indira's reign but had profited from it. Rajiv's inexperience coupled with the obstinacy of entrenched bureaucrats and party officials undermined his ability to effect essential changes. Although aware of the rot³⁸ within the Congress and the government, Rajiv could not excise the malignancies. Within a short period of time he began to succumb to the very influences and corruption that he had so vigorously attacked. In an attempt at making ministries accountable and responsive he shuffled ministers in his cabinet eight times in his first two years of leadership, resulting in chaos and undermining party loyalty. Attempts to reform the civil service failed, bifurcating power between the central government and the local power brokers, with the furtherance of the paradox of more centralization but less control.

underlying motivation for most, if not all, of the strategies employed by the Congress party during the 1980s, affecting all their decisions.

³⁸ At the centennial celebration of the Congress party's formation, in 1985, Rajiv presented a scathing speech that, instead of celebrating the event, critiqued the major failings as he perceived them: ... "We have government servants who do not serve but oppress the poor and helpless, police who do not uphold the law but shield the guilty, tax collectors who do not collect taxes but connive with those who cheat the state, and whole legions whose only concern is their private welfare at the cost of society. They have no work ethic, no feeling for the public cause, no involvement in the future of the nation, no comprehension of national goals, no commitment to the values of modern India. They have only a grasping mercenary outlook, devoid of competence, integrity, and commitment Instead of a party that fired the imagination of the masses throughout the length and breadth of India, we have shrunk, losing touch with the toiling millions. It is not a question of victories and defeats in elections. For a democratic party, victories and defeats are part of its continuing political existence. But what does it matter whether or not we work among the masses, whether or not we are in tune with their struggles, their hopes, and aspirations. We are a party of social transformation, but in our preoccupation with governance we are drifting away from the people. Thereby, we have wakened ourselves and fallen prey to the ills that the loss of invigorating mass contact brings. Millions of ordinary Congress workers throughout the country are full of enthusiasm for the Congress policies and programmes. But they are handicapped, for on their backs ride the brokers of power and influence, who dispense patronage to convert a mass movement into a feudal oligarchy. They are self-perpetuating cliques who thrive by invoking the slogans of caste and religion and by enmeshing the living body of the Congress in their net of avarice. We talk of the high principles and lofty ideals needed to build a strong and prosperous India. But we obey no discipline, no rule, follow no principle of public morality, display no sense of social awareness, show no concern for the public weal. Corruption is not only tolerated but even regarded as the hallmark of leadership." (quoted in Ved Mehta, 75-77.)

His hopes of accelerating economic development relied in part on the abandonment of India's economic socialism, a course that was politically impossible at that time. Not only were there influential forces that had vested interests in retaining the status quo, the bulk of the voters believed in the slogans and rhetoric that had been voiced so adamantly during the previous four decades, that private enterprise was anathema to the poor and socialism was the only alternative. However, India's economic situation was in dire straits, and impoverishment continued to attend the vast majority of the population. Rajiv was unable to enact structural changes within the economy and instead only allowed more private enterprise to coexist within a structure that was heavily burdened with vast numbers of complex and inconsistent rules, regulations, duties, taxes, and so forth. The result was a burgeoning of a class of entrepreneurs who could extract massive profits, but only after maneuvering its way through the intricacies of a corrupt and powerful network of bureaucrats and officials, leading to greater corruption of the party and the political process. Extensive poverty continued to define the lot of India's villages, and cities were magnets for the impoverished peasants who flocked there hoping for relief.

The 1980s was a decade filled with restiveness, fragmentation, and violence across the subcontinent. Populist appeals without substantial change in the physical quality of life for many Indians had resulted in rising expectations accompanied by frustration, a combination that was seized upon by politicians to cull votes and followings away from other competitors. Mobilization became more group oriented, emphasizing a limited pie that could only be distributed to the most clamorous, the most demanding, the most organized of the disparate sectors. Anxieties pitted majorities against minorities,

minorities against other minorities. National goals were blared over the constantly expanding media networks, but the reality was that regional and local claims were the predominate interests being addressed. Identification based on caste, religion, class, language, or a myriad of other ways of discriminating ones group from another became the norm.

Part of this was due to a maturity in the participation process that differentiation along interest lines was the most promising way of articulating specific needs and wants; but much of it was fabricated by politicians who saw the demise of the traditional vote banks³⁹ and the easy, almost guaranteed, support networks that had characterized earlier mobilization efforts. Instead of garnering support among those with mutual interests and creating vertical constituencies, the atmosphere of the time was conducive to an

³⁹ The term vote banks is frequently used when discussing the Indian electorate. A vote bank is based on the traditional cohesion of electorates based on caste or social hierarchy, but especially on caste. It is a system whereby all electorates would, or could, be assumed to vote for a single candidate or party, based on the advice or coercion of the presumed leader of the community/caste association. A commonality of interests (as determined by the 'leader') assured a commonality of support. Partha Chatterjee defines vote banks as the means "by which forms of authority were translated into representative forms of electoral support." Intent upon industrializing "without taking the risk of agrarian political mobilization", vote banks were communal in intent, in order to avoid "the unnecessary rigors of social conflict." See Chatterjee, The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ., 1993), 213-4. Frequently vote banks were flagrant instances of corruption. The party leader in a district was expected to produce a specified result, most commonly for the Congress Party, and the means by which this was done was ignored. Voters were required to show up at the polling place, 'sign in' (often just a thumb print if the voter was illiterate), and then leave without actually voting. The party official then marked the ballots in the voters's names. The overseers of the election were often bribed or distracted. This practice was more common in rural areas where higher castes controlled the district and could physically punish dissenters, and before the Election Commission became a more institutionalized and voracious watchdog, a change that began in earnest in the 1980s. Not all vote banks were coercive or corrupt, however. Vote banks are breaking down due to more differentiation among castes and sub-castes and differences in interests (and how to achieve them) among the castes, as well as much closer supervision by the Election Commission of elections. Vote banks relied on an appeal to the most fundamental of their commonalities in order to attract a large and solid support base for a politician or party. It can be a factor for more sectarian or communal appeals. Clientalism is easier without having to accommodate other parties that would fragment links between the single party and the vote bank. But when accommodating is necessary with coalition parties or a coalition government then there is bound to be a breakdown of the vote bank. See A.H. Somjee, Parallels and Actuals of Political Development (St. Martin's Press: New York,

atomization of the electorate. While India was becoming more fragmented, the government became more centralized. Whether partially as a response to or a cause of increasing centralization, regions articulated greater demands for autonomy. Government responses to this were both inept and overly repressive.

International events contributed to this. Pakistan had been besieged by refugees escaping the war in Afghanistan, as well as armed, rival factions. India accused Pakistan of supporting separatist efforts among the Punjabis, as well as stepping up its military forays into Kashmir and abetting the militants there. On the eastern borders Rajiv had quelled most of the insurgencies by agreements with the leadership of the Assam and Mizoram rebel groups, granting them political control in their respective territories, making Mizoram a state (from its previous union territory status) in 1987, and promising to stem the flood of illegal Bangladeshi (primarily Muslim) immigration to these tribal regions. But by the end of the decade violence again wracked the region and efforts to oust the interlopers resulted in the unraveling of the pacts.

In Sri Lanka the government in Colombo had intensified its battle against the separatist group, the Tamil Tigers (LTTE). Viewed by the fifty million Tamil Indians in south India as an affront to their own 'brothers', pressure mounted on the Indian government to intervene. In 1987, Rajiv and the Indian military contrived with the Colombo government to end the Sri Lankan civil war by sending in a 'peacekeeping' force to subdue the Tamil Tigers. The resulting fiasco finally ended in defeat for the Indian army, who withdrew in disgrace in April, 1990, leaving the situation unresolved and festering, but with the addition of even greater terrorist activity in Tamil Nadu (an

1986), 74. Accommodations "take their own toll of party linkages. Every incidence of accommodation

Indian state). Almost exactly one year later, during the election campaign, on May 21, 1991, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by Sri Lankan Tamil terrorists. Circumstances surrounding the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi have been under investigation since that fatal date, culminating in the “Interim Report Of The Commission Of Inquiry”, released in November, 1997 (although the matter is **still** the subject of governmental inquiry). This report, written under the auspices of M.C. Jain, a Supreme Court justice, is controversial and incomplete, but highly critical of the security arrangements accorded to Rajiv Gandhi by the Chandra Shekar government (the interim prime minister, member of the SJP, part of the National Front party coalition) and the complicity of the DMK party (the leading party of the state of Tamil Nadu in 1991) with the Tamil terrorists. The release of this report in November 1997 led directly to the dissolution of the Gujral government, and the call for new elections in late February and early March of 1998.⁴⁰

It is likely that had Rajiv not been killed he and his Congress party would have been re-elected. In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections Rajiv and Congress had been ousted, due to public disillusionment with his tenure in office and amidst the flak of scandals that had eddied around Rajiv since 1987, the most notable one being the Bofors scandal⁴¹.

potentially weakens ties between party personnel, party organization, and party supporters.” Ibid., 220.

⁴⁰ See *India Today*, November 24, 1997, December 1, 8, and subsequent issues.

⁴¹ The Bofors scandal consisted of charges that the Swedish armaments company, Bofors, had paid ‘kickbacks’, amounting to at least \$5million (on October 22, 1999 this figure was cited as \$60 million) to high Congress officials as well as Rajiv personally, for awarding it a contract to supply howitzers to the army. The amount of the bribe and the high level of the accused involved made this scandal unprecedented in its audacity, up to that point. The scandal was denied vigorously, but the attempts to thwart investigation, the stonewalling of officials, the attempts to classify all discoveries undermined all possible confidence in the process. To this date the Bofors case remains unresolved. The ensuing Congress governments have been loathe to investigate further, although promises are regularly made, and broken, to release documents and to pursue the matter actively. It has been stated that the Bofors scandal became the turning point in corruption practices, making corruption commonplace and protected at the highest level. It has been suggested that the most recent upheaval of government (the fall of the BJP led coalition that fell in April, 1999) was brought to its early demise through the maneuverings of Sonia Gandhi, president of the Congress party and widow of Rajiv, who reacted to stop the BJP government’s initiatives to proceed with the

The election of V.P. Singh (1989), as head of Janata Dal party, had been another, and even more disastrous a period for Indian democracy. The Janata Dal⁴² party was composed of factions from the old Janata Party, and the BLD (Bharatiya Lok Dal). These two parties led the ragged coalition of regional parties, socialist parties, as well as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a right wing Hindu nationalist party, the Left Front, which included both of the communist parties, (CPM and CPI), and the two Marxist parties (the Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party), that would form the National Front, an ideologically diverse and inherently unstable mishmash. Campaigning for the 1989 (November) elections Singh condemned the corruption of prior administrations and vowed to restore the integrity of government institutions, to resolve the conflicts in Punjab, and to relieve the abject poverty defining most Indians' daily existence. His objectives were not to be realized, however. In less than a year his government fell, due to two crises.

The first crisis arose in August, 1990, when Singh implemented the Mandal Commission Report⁴³, a treatise that had been compiled in 1980, reserving an additional twenty-seven percent of new positions in the civil service and institutes of higher

prosecution of several of the principals in the Bofor case, former external affairs minister, M.S. Solanki and former defence minister, S.K. Bhatnagar (see India Today 3 May, 1999, and The Economist, May, 1999.) Other persons with close personal ties to the Gandhis have also been under investigation and charge sheets (indictments) are expected soon. Only one week after the seating of the new Lok Sabha, formal charges were levied against the suspected officials, including Rajiv Gandhi.

⁴² V.P. Singh was a former Congress (I) member as well as a former Finance Minister for the Indira government. In 1988 he had won a massive victory in the Allahabad by-election, reinforcing the notion that the Congress could be defeated in the forthcoming Lok Sabha election. The Janata Dal was itself a coalition of centrist parties, comprised of the former Janata Party, both factions of the Lok Dal, and the Jan Morcha. The DMK and AGP (Assam), both regional parties, and the Congress (S, for socialist) added to the coalition, forming the National Front; the BJP and the Communist parties entered into a pre-election alliance.

⁴³ The Mandal Commission Report will be addressed in chapter six.

education to 'other backward classes', bringing the total of reserved positions to almost sixty percent. The immediate reaction among upper caste youths was violent protest, including rioting and self-immolation, resulting in several hundred deaths and a decline of support for Singh's leadership.⁴⁴ Whether Singh could have weathered this first crisis became moot when, two months later, the leader of the BJP (one of the Janata Dal's coalition partners), L.K. Advani, rallied a rabid crowd of Hindu nationalists to mount a *rath yatra* (a pilgrimage) to Ayodhya (in UP), to raze a four hundred year old mosque (called the *Babri Masjid*) and replace it with a Hindu temple⁴⁵. The march to Ayodhya fanned the fires of wrath that seethed below the surface of a frustrated and anxious population, and threatened to explode in massive violence. Appeals by Singh to Advani to desist from such provocative behavior were unsuccessful so orders were given to arrest Advani. In less than two weeks the BJP withdrew support from the fragile coalition government and Singh was forced to resign on November 8, 1990.

Rajiv Gandhi was invited to form a new government but he declined, and instead backed the Janata(S) party⁴⁶, under Chandra Shekhar, as a replacement government. Inexperienced and dependent on the much larger Congress party for support, Chandra Shekhar's government lasted for only a few months, finally resigning in March 1991

⁴⁴ The matter of increasing 'reservations' was presented to the Supreme Court for review and its conclusions, handed down in 1996, was that the total percentage of reserved seats could not exceed forty-nine percent, including all class, language, or caste preferences, at both the national and the state levels. Reservations for both the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs), although provided for in the Constitution and a continuation of the practices set forth by British colonial policy, have been generally well accepted by the Indian population as a whole, but the extension of the reservations to the OBCs (other backward castes) has created a hornet's nest of controversy and resentment.

⁴⁵ Ayodhya became a focal point again in 1992 when Hindu militants, led by the BJP and Advani, demolished the Babri Masjid and rallied for the reconstruction of a Hindu temple honoring the (alleged) birthplace of Ram on the very spot that the mosque had occupied. An estimated two thousand riots and several thousand deaths were the legacy of the mosque's destruction. It also affected the political debate for the next years, forcing a debate and an analysis of the reality of India's secularist claims.

when Congress (I) withdrew support, and new elections were scheduled, to be held in May. The debacle of the previous two years had taken its toll on non-Congress parties, and the Congress party was predicted to win a narrow victory. The BJP had become a major contender but still lacked nation-wide support, and the discredited Janata Dal⁴⁷ attracted even less. With Rajiv's assassination (May 21) and a splintered opposition, Congress elected Narasimha Rao as its party leader and when Congress swept the elections⁴⁸, Rao became the new prime minister, ushering in a period of economic restructuring and, as it turned out, short-lived, optimism.

The 1990's: Narasimha Rao's Leadership and Economic Liberalization

Faced with massive economic woes, Rao quickly stepped forward with a restructuring program formulated by his finance minister, Dr. Monmohan Singh.

⁴⁶ The Janata (S, for socialist) Party was a motley assortment of approximately sixty Lok Sabha members who had splintered from Singh's Janata Dal party the previous year.

⁴⁷ This election signaled the end of the Janata Dal Party. Its share of seats fell from 142 in the 1989 election to a scant 56 seats, with only 10.8% of the popular vote. Poor grassroots organization has been blamed for the demise of the JD: Bhaskar Roy summed it up: "Singh's major impediment is an almost non-existent party infrastructure. In the absence of organization, the Dal cannot hope to translate its support into votes." *India Today*, 15 April, 1991 (41). This organizational support had been fractured for several reasons: the support base for the JD had been disenchanted by the failures of the JD to effectuate reforms; the lower castes, who were to be the beneficiaries of the Mandal Commission implementation, were siphoned off by the rising caste-based parties. At the same time, the middle class, professional, and student support deeply resented the party's decision to implement the Mandal Report. (See *India Today*, 31 May, 1991 (8). The core supporters had switched their votes to the BJP.

⁴⁸ 'Swept' may be an exaggeration. The seat-wise performance of Congress (I) was certainly improved upon from the 1989 elections when it had won only 197 seats (but 39.5 percent of the vote). The 1991 elections saw Congress (I) win a smaller percentage (37.6) of the vote, but it translated into 227 seats, short of a majority. Source: J.C. Aggarwal and N.K. Chowdhry, *Elections in India, 1952-1996*, (New Delhi: Shipra, 1996), 100-104. The BJP almost doubled its share of the vote (from 11.5 versus 20.1% in 1991). The 'sympathy vote' attributed to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi did seem to be a factor, perhaps adding about thirty or forty seats to the Congress(I) victory. Walter Andersen cites these figures: In the first round of voting, the day before his (Rajiv's) death, 196 seats were contested. Congress(I) won 50 of those seats and 32.5% of the vote. Its performance was substantially better in the second two rounds in June after the assassination. It won 40% of the popular vote and 176 of the 301 seats contested during that second phase." This was due, in part, to an increase in voter turnout, also attributed to the sympathy factor. Walter K. Andersen, "India's 1991 Elections, The Uncertain Verdict", *Asian Survey* (Vol. XXXI, no. 10, October 1991, pp 976-989), 983.

Cautiously they attempted to make the Indian economy more market friendly, thereby dismantling some of the more burdensome restrictions on growth and innovation. The World Bank, the IMF, international donor countries, as well as the Indian business community had been pressuring the V.P. Singh (National Front) government to restructure the economy and make it more competitive and open to foreign investment, removing the massive bureaucratic impediments and subsidies that burdened economic growth. The irrisolute liberalization of the economy undertaken by the Rajiv government had been regarded as too shallow and selective. Singh's short-lived government had implemented a few minor improvements but the lukewarm measures satisfied neither the business and international communities, which viewed them as ineffectual, nor the coalition partners. The communist, socialist, and agrarian parties criticized the measures as anti-Gandhian and harmful to the poor, while the BJP attacked the measures as pandering to foreigners, the multinationals, and undermining *swadeshi*.

Jawahar Nehru's economic vision for India, entailing planning, import substitution, government ownership of heavy industry, power, and transportation, had taken its toll on performance, increasing bureaucratization, abetting massive corruption, and strangling growth. By the late 1980s India's economic prospects were pitiful, with GDP unable to keep up with population growth, rising deficits, soaring inflation, and decreasing foreign investment. By 1991, international debt, continuing high inflation, economic stagflation, and a foreign exchange crisis brought India to the verge of bankruptcy. The collapse of the Soviet Union, India's primary trading partner and benefactor, exposed India to further risk if it could not revamp its economy. Therefore, the first priority for Rao was to re-tool India's economic system, an undertaking that was

to be difficult to effect. Even though the political environment was more amenable to economic reform because of the impending economic collapse that faced the country, the opposition parties, as well as factions within the Congress(I) continued to try to thwart change, or, at the very least, to reap political capital from disparaging the changes as anti-poor, anti-farmer, anti-India. Realistically, most of the savants from all parties had recognized the necessity to abandon the Nehruvian economic model, but the political situation was in such disarray that change would be filtered through the contentious battlefield of inter-party competition. Nevertheless, the revamping of the economic system did bring about an improving economic situation, better growth rates, and gradually providing a growing middle class a whiff of prosperity and luxury.

Economics was not the only crisis area that needed resolution during the early to mid 1990s. Terrorism in Punjab, erupting in the 1980s and climaxing with Indira Gandhi's assassination, had continued to plague the state. The Sikh extremists had gone on a murderous spree of killing, kidnapping, and intimidation for much of the decade, killing at least 25,000 people (mostly Hindus) within the state. Early in 1992 a tenuous peace was brokered by Rao and new state elections were held, for the first time in six years. Although only twenty-two percent of the electorate voted, a semblance of normality began to prevail. This peace was literally blown apart three years later when the Chief Minister, Beant Singh, a moderate, was the victim of a bomb attack at the end of August, 1995⁴⁹. India appeared to be in thrall to militants and thugs. The Rao government's ineffectual response provoked the magazine, India Today to editorialize

⁴⁹ For news reports and analyses of this incident see Far Eastern Economic Review (14 September 1995), The Economist (2 September, 1995), India Today (30 September 1995).

that the spotlight had been turned on to “the ominous dimensions militancy had assumed in the country and the Government’s effete role in combating it.”⁵⁰

Compounding the situation, the government was embroiled in scandals, in intra-party fratricide, and *immobilise*. In addition, opposition parties were in no mood to help resolve these myriad problems. The political environment had changed dramatically since Rao had assumed office. Congress’s dominance had been seriously eroded over the last decade and intra-party feuding had reached an apex. Even in 1991, Rao’s selection as prime minister had been contentious. The Congress leaders had, in vain, pleaded with Rajiv Gandhi’s widow, Sonia, to head the party and assume the role of prime minister. Congress’s dependence on the Nehru/Gandhi dynasty for its claim to power was epitomized by this gesture but when the offer was rebuffed, the party turned to Rao, passing over other stalwart and regionally powerful Congress loyalists. Rao was the first south Indian to be prime minister, a factor that pitted regional party members against each other. With new parliamentary elections to be held in 1996, the political horizon appeared to be very bleak indeed.

The opposition parties were becoming more salient, although for the most part, just as disorganized and chaotic as Congress (an exception was the BJP), posing real threats to the electorability of the Congress(I). Numerous states were led by multi-party coalitions that had dissolved in disputes, President’s Rule had been invoked in xxx states, and new issues sprang to the forefront of party manifestoes. All parties were cognizant of the changing political environment – potential electorability. No longer would they have to be on the outside looking in, the bridesmaid but never the bride. The inability of the

⁵⁰ India Today, (30 September 1995), 28.

parties to work together combined with the restiveness of the electorate made solving the most pressing problems untenable. These major problems had to do with communal violence, separatist movements, and growing dissatisfaction of the lowest tiers in the caste system – the Dalits (Untouchables). The country seemed to be on the verge of rebellion with frequent clashes between communities, between castes, and between regions. The Ayodhya debacle ushered in a wave of Hindu – Muslim altercations that spawned a plethora of academic treatises on secularism, ethnic violence, and Indian democracy being sacrificed on the altar of venal religious warfare. Separatist movements in the northeast, festering for decades, became virulent. The situation in Kashmir continued to erupt. Dalits confronted their caste ‘superiors’ and began organizing in earnest, albeit on a regional basis, forming their own political parties, to electorally challenge the political elites. This was the situation as India approached the 1996 elections.

1996 to the 1999 elections

The most significant factor that has colored the last decade of twentieth century Indian politics is the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the BJP⁵¹. The almost meteoric rise of this party has been paralleled by the plummeting of the Congress Party beginning with the 1996 elections. Never before had Congress received so few votes, so few seats, and lost so much of its core constituency⁵². Although Congress remains a contender and

⁵¹ In 1984, the first year the BJP contested as the newly formulated party, it won only two seats (7.9% of the vote) in the Lok Sabha.

⁵² The results of the 1996 election are given in the appendix (p--). In brief, Congress received its lowest share of votes in its history (28.1%), in many districts falling below the critical 30% mark (where votes translate into seats), receiving only 140 out of 537 possible seats (a loss of 92 seats from the 1991 election). In 144 constituencies it failed to be even a second place winner. Furthermore, Congress lost the support of its former core minority groups. Only 28% of Muslims (46% in 1991) voted for Congress, and only then in areas where there were no realistic alternatives; their votes went mostly to the Janata Dal or

an influence in Indian politics, its demise has lent more uncertainty to the electoral process and ushered in the prospect of a future of coalition government, fragile majorities that have been patched together and the risk of any government being toppled by even small rebellious factions. From 1996 to 1999 there have been five governments and three separate national elections⁵³.

In May 1996 the BJP won a scant plurality of the seats in the Lok Sabha elections. Although there were ample omens that predicted the potential victory, most scholars and political reporters were surprised that the BJP emerged with such strong electoral support⁵⁴. Because of its plurality, the BJP was invited to form a government, but was unable to achieve a simple majority; the BJP government lasted only thirteen days before resigning and accepting its position as the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha. Cobbling together a minority coalition government in short order, the United Front (UF), comprised of the Janata Dal (JD) and Samajwadi party (SP), and a melange of regional

Left Front. OBC and SC also deserted Congress; 47% of the ST remained in the Congress camp, although even among the Scheduled Tribes the BJP and the NF-LF have made inroads. The election also shows an aging support base for Congress: young voters, as well as the more educated voters are also less likely to vote for Congress. These results are a continuation of a trend from the last ten years and bode poorly for the future of Congress. See *India Today*, 31 May, 1996 (22-27), and *Elections in India 1952-1996*, J.C. Aggarwal and N.K. Chowdhry, (Delhi: Shipra, 1996), chapters 9-11.

⁵³ The May, 1996 election resulted in Atal Bihari Vajpayee (the BJP party) being named PM; his government fell in thirteen days. The United Front (a patched together post-election coalition of thirteen minor parties) was able to muster enough votes, with Congress support, to form a new government under Devi Gowda. Gowda was ousted as PM in April 1997 when Congress withdrew support and, after much political musterings, I.K. Gujral (also of the UF) became PM, until November of that same year when lack of support forced his resignation and new elections were called for in March of 1998. Again the BJP eked out a slight plurality and with its twenty post- and pre-election coalition partners were able to form a government. In April, by a single vote this government lost a vote of confidence, forcing new elections in September-October 1999. This election was again won by the BJP and its pre-election coalition partners under the banner of NDA (National Democratic Alliance), with a larger margin of the vote, giving the NDA a majority of the seats (298 out of 537), out of which the BJP won two more seats, bringing its total to 182 seats.

⁵⁴ The BJP won a total of 160 seats, and its allies another 34, for a total of 194 seats in the Lok Sabha.

parties, with both communist parties, [CPI(M) and CPI], and with outside Congress support, began its term in June, 1996. Deve Gowda was selected as prime minister.

The characteristics of this coalition government were very different from previous administrations: the leadership as well as many of the ministers had rural rather than urban roots, and, for the most part, experience was primarily only at the state or local level of politics. The Lok Sabha was also more reflective of the population as a whole⁵⁵. The Congress party, although not participating in the government, supported it from the outside in order to assure that the UF would have the necessary number of seats for a majority⁵⁶. The UF, a post-election coalition of thirteen parties, pieced together a policy agenda called the 'Common Minimum Program' (CMP), but the coalition was so fractious and ideologically diverse that the CMP was little more than a blueprint for discord. In spite of this, the short-lived government managed to score a few successes, namely, continuing economic growth, defusing of the powder keg in Kashmir, and an improvement of relations with India's neighbors. However, domestic politics were fraught with acrimony. The poles of the coalition frayed the fabric of the government and within seven months the fragility of the coalition was exposed. Gowda's vacillation on policy perplexed supporters, depleted public confidence, and weakened the government's ability to legislate. By February, 1997, a poll commissioned by India Today revealed that more than sixty percent of those questioned believed that Gowda should be replaced as

⁵⁵ Make up of the 11th (1996) Lok Sabha membership: Farmers, 51.8%; Backward castes, including SCs and STs, 45.6%; first time winners, 55.8%; and 39 women (three more than in 1991 but less than the 44 women elected in 1984). See India Today, 15 July, 1996.

⁵⁶ The UF could only collect 179 seats, 43 of which were won by the Janata Dal (JD). Deve Gowda, leader of the JD assumed the prime ministership as a compromise selection.

PM and only seventeen percent were confident that the government would last the full five year term.⁵⁷

Compounding the UF's (and Gowda's) troubles, the president of the INC, Sitaram Kesri, spearheaded a drive to topple Gowda. In September, 1996, Kesri had been chosen to become INC party president after the former PM, Narasimha Rao, resigned as party president in disgrace, charged by the courts with numerous counts of corruption. Kesri orchestrated a showdown in Parliament on April 11 forcing Gowda's resignation. Fearful of facing new elections, the UF and Congress bartered and finally selected I.K. Gujural, a former cabinet minister for the Gandhi regime, as the new PM. From the beginning of Gujural's appointment the prognosis for the government lasting more than a few years was dismal. True to expectations, the government failed to survive even a single year. Congress withdrew its support on the first of December, resulting in the call for new elections in February/March of 1998. The withdrawal of support for the UF government was not predicated on serious policy differences. Atul Kohli, along with a bevy of other political analysts, instead blamed the INC. According to Kohli, "the main reason for the split was the Congress leadership's hope – a false one as it turned out – of gaining political advantage."⁵⁸ Congress had been biding its time before seizing the initiative to challenge the BJP at the polls again, and to be swept into power. Congress's calculations and strategy were in error.

The May 1998 election results were similar to the 1996 election, but the BJP had rallied enough pre-election allies to support its claim for power. The BJP was invited to

⁵⁷ See *India Today*, 15 February 1997, (p.14-23).

⁵⁸ Atul Kohli, "Enduring Another Election", *Journal of Democracy* (September 1998, p.7-20), 8.

form a government in April of 1998. Several other small parties joined after the election, making the government an unwieldy composite of eighteen parties and boosting the number of supporting Lok Sabha seats to 268 (of a possible 543 seats), a narrow victory and a precarious one. For the next eleven months the BJP government struggled to enact any meaningful legislation, although there were two significant events that distinguished its term in office. The first occurred on May 11 when India officially became a 'nuclear power' after a series of underground nuclear tests were conducted in Pokhran.

Weathering the clamorous international censure and ensuing sanctions, but also basking in the eighty-seven percent approval rating of the citizenry⁵⁹, the government muddled through the next months without any significant domestic achievements. In fact, governmental inertia and coalition squabbling marked the next few months. Rising prices resulted in the BJP's loss in three state assembly elections in late November and added fuel to Congress's drive for returning to power at the national level. The second historic event was staged on February 20, 1999, when the Prime Minister, Vajpayee, embarked on a peace-making bus journey to Lahore (Pakistan), ushering in an optimistic atmosphere that *rapprochement* between the two countries was at hand. In late February the government finally seemed to be on the road to governance, presenting a budget and displaying a fortitude that had been sorely missing in the domestic arena. The March 6th issue of the Economist reported that "instead of a fragile government on the brink of collapse, India now has a government that looks like lasting"⁶⁰. Unfortunately, this was an erroneous assessment.

⁵⁹ Poll conducted by India Today (25 May, 1998), 15.

⁶⁰ The Economist (6 March, 1999), 40.

By April, 1999, the AIADMK, in consort with the INC, withdrew its support, resulting in a loss of a confidence vote by a single vote. The conflicting demands of coalition partners undermined the government. Most of these demands had very little to do with policy. The wild card in the coalition was the leader of the AIADMK, Jayalalitha Jayaram. Although only contributing eighteen seats to the BJP government's coalition (but the largest of the coalition parties), Jayalalitha demanded the lion's share of cabinet seats as well as twenty-five bureaucratic posts to be allocated to her personal nominees. Other coalition partners vehemently opposed this demand⁶¹. More importantly for Jayalalitha, a corruption case against her, initiated by her home state, Tamil Nadu, and the DMK party's chief minister, had been pending since 1996⁶². Demands that the BJP government intervene on her behalf to squelch the probe by dismissing the DMK government had been rejected by the government. The Congress Party and Sonia Gandhi made covert promises to secure Jayalalitha's support in ousting the BJP government.

The fall of the BJP government was orchestrated by the Congress party, which expected that it [Congress] would be able to muster enough support in the Lok Sabha to replace the BJP. However, after more than a week of scrambling, the INC was unable to

⁶¹ The AIADMK only had 18 seats, but controlled 27, making her the "most powerful politician after the prime minister, perhaps more powerful", according to India Today (30 March, 1998), 16. Without the AIADMK the Vajpayee Government is a non-starter" (ibid.,) 15.

⁶² Forty-eight cases are pending against Jayalalitha and other former AIADMK ministers, as well as against her nephews and a foster son, obliging the state of Tamil Nadu to create three special courts to handle the excess load. For a full accounting of the related issues see India Today, "The Odd One Out", (23 March, 1998), 12-18. In February 2000, Jayalalitha was arrested and indicted on corruption charges.

garner the necessary votes to provide it with a majority, and new elections were scheduled for September-October 1999.

Although the Congress party, under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, the Italian born wife of Rajiv Gandhi and the daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi, is undergoing re-organization and attempting to rebuild its support base, the party is still fragmented and weak. When new elections were declared, the party was still in turmoil, with even the leadership of the party being contested. Several high ranking party notables refused to support the candidacy of a 'foreigner'⁶³ (Sonia Gandhi) for prime minister. This division within the party was in part personal. The leader of the rebel faction, Sharad Pawar, head of the Congress Party in the state of Maharashtra, had aspired to the Congress presidency for more than a decade, being passed over numerous times, first with the selection of Narasimha Rao, then Kesri, and finally Sonia Gandhi as party presidents. By acknowledging his misgivings about a foreign born prime minister he was also expressing his resentment that his role in the party has been unrewarded. But more serious calculations were at the root of the intra-party split. The idea that Congress was so bereft

⁶³ Sonia Gandhi, the Italian born wife of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, became a naturalized citizen of India (with dual citizenship) in April, 1983, 15 years after her marriage and only a year before Rajiv became prime minister. Whether Sonia's citizenship was significant to most voters had been a topic for speculation; polls show that less than half the electorate believe this is a reason to disqualify her as a prime minister (see opinion poll, April 30-May 3, 1999, in *India Today*, 17 May, 1999, p. 14). At the same time, this topic engendered problems within the Congress party itself. Three senior party leaders, Sharad Pawar (who is also a powerhouse in the large state of Maharashtra), Tariq Anwar, and P.A. Sangma, publicly agreed with the BJP's disconcertion with the idea of a foreign born person being eligible for India's highest office. In an emotional yet calculated move, Sonia Gandhi tendered her resignation as leader of the INC on May 17, 1999. The resignation was withdrawn eight days later amid a flurry of sympathetic musterings by party loyalists. As punishment for questioning Mrs. Gandhi's credentials the three rebellious Congressmen, along with twenty others who supported them, were expelled from the party. Pawar abruptly formed a new party, the Nationalist Congress Party, in his state of Maharashtra. This state, which had delivered 37 seats to the INC in the 1998 election, only produced ten INC winners in 1999. The BJP alliance was the largest recipient of the Congress split, providing 28 seats for the NDA. Pawar's NCP (National Congress Party) won only six seats. The state's Assembly Elections mirrored this pattern, re-electing the Shiva-Sena/BJP

of leadership that no native born Indian could be found to lead the country in the advent of a Congress victory was not considered by the rank and file to be a spurious objection, but that aspect could arguably have been spun to Congress's advantage (or at least not into too much disadvantage) by Sonia Gandhi's association with the Congress legacy, the Gandhi dynasty, the traditional appeal of charismatic personality. However, Congress also saw that Sonia Gandhi was a possible liability, an inept leader who would not be able to unite the party or master the intricacies of Indian politics. As an astute journalist observed:

...with customary imperiousness, Sonia imagined that she was being targeted for her origins. That is certainly true. But if the Italian factor overwhelmed Congress stalwarts, it was not because of a sudden onrush of xenophobia coinciding with the World Cup. Sonia's nationality was the cover for the party's exasperation at her political ineptitude during the fortnight between the defeat of the BJP-led Government and the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. At a time when she needed to demonstrate her skills, Sonia revealed herself as a complete amateur unaware of both political and constitutional realities. Worse, the crisis clearly indicated her exclusionary style of working. It was dissatisfaction born out of concrete failure that led to the May 15 revolt. The Congress didn't betray Sonia. She spoilt the party's comeback chances. Italian or Indian, she wasn't up to the top job.⁶⁴

The results of the September-October election confirmed this assessment. The INC suffered a loss of forty-six seats from its 1998 showing, bringing its total number of seats won to a mere 112, its lowest number in the history of independent India. Combined with the seats won by its few pre-poll alliance partners the total number of seats totaled only 134 seats. Sonia Gandhi had contested for two seats in safe constituencies (districts that have voted for the INC in every election) and comfortably won in both, but her coattails could not drag along very many of her party members.

alliance government with 125 MLAs. Data from Government of India, National Information Center, website: nic.in/India/PIB/99elecrrhb.

⁶⁴ Swapan Dasgupta, *India Today*, (31 May 1999) 23.

Nevertheless, the INC voted on October 12, 1999, to retain her as the party president and to name her the president of the INC parliamentary party.

For the 1999 election, the BJP made numerous pre-election alliances and created a new 'Front', the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), that has a bevy of parties that have strong regional support. The NDA campaigned on a common manifesto⁶⁵. The array of parties and a joint manifesto made it more difficult for Congress to paint the NDA as communalist. The BJP, in conjunction with its allies in some constituencies, contested every seat except in the state of Kerala, a change from its past where some constituencies were uncontested by the BJP. This is relevant because it shows the expanding base within which the BJP now believes itself to be competitive. This has been borne out in the results of this election. From a party reaping its greatest number of votes in the 'Hindi heartland', each election since 1991 has shown a wider support for the party throughout the country as a whole.

The verdict of the voters this time produced a majority winner. The BJP led NDA alliance won in October, with almost fifty-five percent of the seats. When governments have collapsed before the five year term, voters have told pollsters that a stable government is an important issue. In 1996, political stability ranked a low five percent as the most important concern of polled voters. Since India was experiencing a regularly scheduled election, having just had completed a five year term of Congress rule, this figure reflects the expectation that another five year term would be in the offing. In this 1996 pre-election poll the primary concerns of those questioned were poverty and unemployment (36%), corruption (27%), and rising prices (25%). The issue that absorbs

the foreign press and political scientists, communal harmony, ranked first as a problem for a mere four percent of those polled⁶⁶. Communalism as a primary concern has remained fairly constant in the last three years, at 5 % in 1999⁶⁷.

The 1998 election, conducted after the befuddled twenty month span where three prime ministers failed to hold on to power, saw the issue of instability rise to the category of “most important” for thirteen percent of those polled. By the 1999 election, almost twenty percent listed political stability as the most important issue facing India, out-scoring every other category, including economic issues (unemployment, economic issues, price increases only garnered a total of 17.3 percent).

In this most recent election the voters were more decisive in their verdict, returning a clear majority winning coalition government to power. The increase in poll fees⁶⁸ (in 1998) decreased the numbers of contestants, from almost 14,000 in 1996, to 4750 in 1998, and to 3923 in 1999. The greatest change was in the number on independent candidates who ran for election – from 10,635 in 1996, to 1948 in 1999. Electorally successful independent candidates have been in the decline. In 1998 they received only 2.37 percent of the popular vote, translating into only six seats, and in 1999 seven seats⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ A comparison of manifestoes will appear in the appendix. A copy of the manifestoes of the major parties appears in the Appendix.

⁶⁶ *India Today*, (30 April, 1996), 53.

⁶⁷ *India Today*, (x-x- 1999), xx.

⁶⁸ Security deposits were increased prior to the 1998 from Rs 500 to Rs 10,000, a substantial increase, and the first since 1952.

⁶⁹ Since 1962 (and until 1998) independent candidates have multiplied, from 480 to the record 10635; at the same time the success rate for independents has also decreased, from a high of 35 (in 1967) independents elected to a low of 5, in 1991. Before that time independent candidates were included in ‘other’, along with all political parties that were not recognized as national parties. In the last two decades 99% of the independents forfeited their deposits (i.e., received less than one sixth of the vote in the particular constituency). From 1952 to 1977, the average number of contestants per seat hovered at about four,

Forty parties⁷⁰ won at least one seat, but twenty-one of these parties were aligned in a pre-poll alliance with either the BJP or the INC. The Left Alliance of five parties garnered forty-two seats. Of the remaining parties (and sixty-four seats won), two thirds of the seats were won by two parties, the BSP [14 seats], and the SP [26 seats]. The contrast of this Lok Sabha with the constitution of the 1998 Lok Sabha is that the earlier Lok Sabha was characterized by loose alignments, a government formed from primarily post-poll alliances, and a vaguely designed election manifesto, an invitation to fragmentation.

At the time of this writing the prognosis for the BJP government to be able to rule for a full five-year term seems promising. Even though there are, again, multiple parties in the governing coalition, the electoral equations are enough different from 1998 to provide optimism. For one thing, no single party will be able to bring down the government, as was the case in 1998. Secondly, the opposition parties, both the INC [with its allies] and the Left Front alliance, are too weak and fractured to be able to pose as an alternative government if NDA allies were to break away. The loss of a majority for the NDA would thus require new elections to be held, a dreary prospect for politicians and voters alike.

doubling to 8.5 in 1980, then rising precipitously through 1996, to 25.69. In 1998 that figure dropped to 8.75. Data from National Information Center of India, Government of India: website: www.nic.in/India-Image/PIB/

⁷⁰ The numbers of parties vying for office in 1999 were much greater than the numbers given. According to the Election Commission, a total of ninety parties nominated at least one candidate: six national parties, 39 state or regional parties, and 45 recognized or registered, parties. Although this is still a hefty number of parties, this figure is down from the 209 parties in 1996, and 177 parties in 1998.

The 'blackmail' effect that has tainted earlier coalitions has less salience in this new government, even if this is not immediately apparent in the naming of the cabinet. Vajpayee has expanded his numbers of ministers to seventy⁷¹, an unprecedented number of ministers at the national level (up from 43 in 1998). Performance may now take center stage, and the pragmatism shown by the NDA during the pre-election run-up may result in the cooperation and moderation that Granville Austin suggested can be the benefits of a coalition government⁷².

⁷¹ The Cabinet includes members from ten of the coalition partners, although the bulk (60%) of the ministerial berths have been allocated to the BJP party.

⁷² See interview by Hasan Suroor with Granville Austin, The Hindu, (16 March, 1998), 14.

CHAPTER SIX

PARTY SYSTEM CHANGE AND THE DEMOCRATIC IMPACT

As the party system in India has evolved from a one party dominant to a multiparty system it can frequently be frustrating to try to discern a pattern that is emerging, or to see if there is, in fact, any pattern emerging. During the last fifteen years many observers have bemoaned the complexity and fragmentation of the party system as becoming increasingly unruly, evidenced by unstable coalition governments. The plethora of parties is sometimes cited as the cause of unstable rule at the national level. Because the numbers of parties represented by at least one seat in the Lok Sabha has almost doubled in the years since 1952 (21 to 38 parties in 1999) it is commonly assumed that this forestalls a majority government from being elected. In the last three elections even the party with the largest numbers of votes, and the greatest number of seats, has been barely able to attract twenty-five percent of the popular vote¹. Because of the first-past the post electoral system this translates into one-third of the seats, but nonetheless, this is far from a majority in the party's own right, requiring the cooperation and support of alliance partners.

Since independence, any non-Congress government has been a coalition government, and not a single coalition government has been able to last the full five-year

¹ The BJP won 23.75% of the total number of votes cast at the national level; the losing INC won 28.31%.

term. Whether this condition will continue to plague the recently elected (NDA alliance/BJP party) government remains to be seen, but based on past performances, the prognosis is not optimistic. However, the formulation of this most recent coalition varies considerably from past coalitions, offsetting some of the pitfalls which awaited most coalition governments in the past. For one thing, the NDA alliance was formed before the election, with a pre-poll allocation of seats. Second, a common election manifesto was agreed upon, giving a single focus to the government's policy direction. Third, having suffered through so many elections in such a brief period, it is less likely that any party will purposefully fell another government. Finally, the electorate has become more accepting of coalition governments. In the 1999 election, survey results show that more persons believe that there is 'nothing wrong' with coalition governments, perhaps providing parties with more flexibility to form, and remain in, coalitions².

A party system, as defined in chapter one as "the pattern of interactions among the parties"³, undergoes change in two major ways, according to Giovanni Sartori. First, "continuously, i.e., by inner development, endogenous transformation, and spontaneous transition" and second, "discontinuously, i.e., via system breakdown."⁴ Sartori's criteria for system breakdown is quite specific, entailing an 'infringement' or 'repudiation' of rules of engagement as well as an alteration of the 'preexisting structures of authority'. When systems undergo change through transformations of relationships between parties,

² Post-election survey results on attitudes towards coalition governments: 'nothing wrong': 1996, 18%; 1998, 17%; 1999, 22%; 'in special circumstances': 1996, 12%; 1998, 15%; 1999, 18%; 'no coalitions': 1996, 32%; 1998, 32%; 1999, 25%; 'don't know': 37%, 36%, 35%, respectively. Frontline,

³ Peter Mair, Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 75.

⁴ Giovanni Sartori, Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 274.

through the inner workings of the political structure and the component pieces, that change can be regarded as ‘continuous’⁵. Following this format, the Indian party system can be seen as an example of continuous change. Only for a brief eighteen month period, during the Emergency (1975-1977), could the party system be characterized as a breakdown of the system (i.e., an ‘infringement of the rules of engagement’). Once new elections were called the party system returned to ‘normal’, albeit with different patterns of party engagement. The disjuncture within the system served to accentuate and accelerate the continuous changes that had already been occurring⁶, even if not acknowledged as such at the time.

Since 1977 the Indian party system has been undergoing a tumultuous and pervasive change. This chapter will analyze some of the reasons for the changes in the interactions between the parties, the ensuing changes in the party system, and what impact these changes have had on the electorate in terms of broadening and deepening their commitment to the democratic process.

I. A sketch of the party system – a system in flux

The Indian party system has been evolving from a predominant-party system⁷ to a two-tiered, multiparty system based on several national parties and numerous state or regional parties. National parties must ally with regional parties in order to win elections.

⁵ Ibid., 275. Hedley Bull: a *system of states* is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another’s decisions, to cause them to behave – at least in some measure as part of a whole.”*The Anarchical Society*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977) 9.

⁶ For at least a decade, the dominant, ‘umbrella’ INC party had been unable to cope with the diverse pressures, an increasingly mobilized citizenry, and a dissatisfied opposition that sought to rule, not just influence policy.

⁷ In his 1976 book, Sartori characterizes the Indian party system as ‘predominant’, rather than dominant, stressing that a “predominant-party system is a type of party *pluralism* in which – even though no alternation in office actually occurs – alternation is not ruled out and the political system provides ample

State parties are regionally specific, reflecting caste, class, religious, economic, or ideological interests. Sporadically, parties will erupt onto the political scene then sputter and die. A party must register with the Election Commission to be eligible to compete in elections but is not assigned a symbol and deemed 'recognized' unless it fulfills at least one of the following two criteria: 1) the party must have been engaged in continual political activity for at least five years and have elected at least one Member of Parliament for every twenty-five representatives sent to the Lok Sabha from a state (or one member of the Legislative Assembly – the state parliament—for every thirty MLAs); 2) or the party must have attracted at least six percent of the valid votes cast in the state. When a recognized political party fulfills these requirements in more than four states it is considered a national party; fulfillment in four or fewer states designates it a state party. Recognition is an advantage because it provides recognized parties with a) access to the electoral rolls in the constituencies; b) it provides free radio and television time on the Indian broadcasting system; and c) it provides the party with a symbol reserved exclusively for its use.⁸

Prior to each election parties are designated as national, state, or registered parties. During the 1999 election eight national parties, forty-seven state parties, 139 registered parties, and 1945 independent candidates vied for office. In total, 4648 candidates

opportunities for open and effective dissent, that is, for opposing the predominance of the governing party.” Party and Party Systems, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 200.

⁸ A nationally recognized party has exclusive use of its symbol throughout the country whereas a state party has exclusive use of its symbol only in the states in which it is recognized. Registered but not recognized parties can choose any symbol from an approved list of free symbols that the EC has published. Party symbols are very important in a country with so many illiterate voters. Symbols can also evoke images among certain groups so the choice of symbol can be important. The EC screens the symbols to eliminate any overt manifestations of religion or caste.

competed for office, an average of slightly more than 8.5 persons per constituency. Although this is a large number of candidates this is the lowest average number of candidates since 1980. The state of Uttar Pradesh, with 85 seats to be filled, had the highest average number of candidates per seat, with an average of fourteen candidates per constituency.⁹ The 1999 election resulted in MPs from seven national parties, twenty three state parties, eight registered (not recognized) parties, and six independents being elected to the Lok Sabha¹⁰. National parties win the greatest numbers of seats in each election, but state parties, with more than twenty-five percent of the seats, have been increasingly important in determining which party will form the government. Table 11 shows the percentages of votes each sector has received for the last four elections.

TABLE 11

PARTY PERFORMANCE: NATIONAL VERSUS STATE PARTIES¹¹
 Percentage of votes polled for national, state, and registered parties and independents.

Year of election:	1991	1996	1998	1999
National Parties	80.74%	69.08%	67.98%	67.12%
State Parties	13.08%	21.34%	18.79%	25.73%
Registered Parties				
(unrecognized)	2.17%	3.29%	10.87%	3.22%
Independents	4.01%	6.28%	2.37%	2.74%

⁹ UP had 1208 candidates contesting for the 85 seats, with a minimum six candidates per constituency and a maximum thirty-two candidates per constituency. In actuality, the state of Chandigarh had the dubious distinction of having the highest numbers of candidates (16) for its single seat but it scarcely is reflective of the country as a whole. Data from Election Commission of India – General Elections, 1999 (13th Lok Sabha). The numbers of candidates dropped in large part due to the increase of deposits required, enacted in April 1996, a rise from 500 Rs. to 10,000 Rs. for the 1998, and subsequent, Lok Sabha elections.

¹⁰ Eight national parties, fifty state parties, and 653 registered (not recognized) parties (as well as 1945 independent candidates) contested the election.

¹¹ Data is from the Election Commission of India.

As Table 11 clearly shows, the percentage of votes at the national party level has been decreasing, from 80.74% in 1991 to 67.12% in the latest, 1999, election. The percentage of votes for state parties has been increasing, from 13.08% in 1991 to 25.73% in 1999. When combined with the percentages of seats won by registered parties, the percentages show a clear trend towards greater viability of non-national parties: 15.25% in 1991 to 29% in 1999, almost doubling the percentage of votes in the Lok Sabha.

The party system is undergoing changes, and a pattern does seem to be emerging, but how it is configured is still indeterminate. One emergent pattern that has been bandied about is that the party system is evolving into two (or three) separate 'fronts', perhaps forming a hybrid 'two-party' system. The Economist, India Today, as well as several informed political observers¹² have suggested that this is a possible direction the 'new' political party system is headed towards.

One of the fronts consists of the BJP and its allies, and the second front includes the Congress with its allies. The third front is the Left Front, headed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPM], that rejects both the Congress and the BJP. Branding the BJP as religious nationalists and fascist, the third front also scorns Congress for forsaking the socialist economic agenda of the Nehruvian era as well as blaming Congress for its role in bringing down the UF governments (in 1996). In 1999 the Left Front has essentially disappeared as a coalition.¹³ Even though the third front is electorally fairly

¹² See for example Sudha Pai, "The Indian Party System under Transformation: Lok Sabha Elections 1998", Asian Survey, (38:1); Ashutosh Varshney, "India's 12th National Elections", Asia Society Publications, (February 1998); Shaila Seshiam "Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: the Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party", Asian Survey (November 1998, 38:11).

¹³ The only stable parties in the Left Front have been the Communist Party, Marxist, [CPM] and the Communist Party of India [CPI]. In the 1999 election there were five parties loosely aligned as the Left Alliance: CPI, CPM, FBL, KEC, and RSP. Together they won a total of forty-two seats (of which the CPM won thirty-two), having contested in 147 constituencies. The Left Front had played significant roles

insignificant at this point, it does represent an ideological base that is not duplicated by any of the other fronts. The leader of the Left Front, Jyoti Basu, who is also the Chief Minister of West Bengal, has indicated that he wishes to retire, but the party is unwilling to accept his resignation because it has no leader that can take his place¹⁴. Membership in the CPM has gradually fallen and fewer young voters are joining. At this writing, the future of the Left Front is tenuous. However, it continues to dominate the political scene in two states, West Bengal and Kerala. Thus, even with its meager showing in this election, it cannot be discounted as a possible third pillar in the party system.

The interpretation of the emerging party system as a duality of 'fronts' has some merit in that the array of parties has clustered around two major national parties. However, the clusters are composed of parties that are not necessarily aligned ideologically, and are instead, in many instances, alliances of convenience. Allegiance to the 'front' is shallow and tenuous. At this point it is premature to characterize the party system as two (or three) fronts. It will take at least one period of governance and another election to see if this pattern is retained. If the coalitions break apart and realign then the

in the governments since 1996, first as an 'outside' backer of the United Front governments, then as a 'spoiler' in the BJP governments. Its weak showing in 1999 makes it unlikely that it will have a significant role in this parliament. Although Kerala and West Bengal have been bastions of Left Front strength, it did have some significant presence in both Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, but poor performance and organization have dissipated its viability in these two states. Its former supporters have transferred allegiance to regional parties or to caste-based parties such as the Samajwadi Party, the BSP, the Telugu Desam, or, in some cases, to the BJP.

¹⁴ In failing health, Jyoti Basu, the 79 year old leader, has been seeking to retire since 1994, but the CPI(M) Politburo turned down his latest request at its national meeting in mid November, 1999. Calling Basu 'indispensable', the party appointed a deputy to assist him with his duties as Chief Minister in West Bengal, a position he has held for twenty-two years. The Politburo views Basu as the only person who can keep the fractious Left Front together in the state of West Bengal, and, with state Assembly elections pending in the year 2001, there is fear that the party will not survive an electoral threat from the Trinamool Congress (TC), a state party that, in alliance with the BJP, won ten Lok Sabha seats in October, and is poised to replace the CPI(M) in the next electoral contest. See India Today, 6 December, 1999, 28-9.

'fronts' could instead be merely peaks on the multiparty terrain, providing little structure to the system and providing little order to the confusion.

PARTY SYSTEM CHANGES IDEOLOGIES, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND INTER-PARTY COMPETITION

Emergence of real competition at both the national and state levels has forced parties to make alliances in order to be electorally viable. This has modified ideological stances, increased pragmatism, and motivated parties to cooperate (within alliances) on policy goals. Traditional elites have been undermined as the electoral process has brought new, previously marginalized, groups, into the political process. As citizens become aware of the power of the vote they have increasingly voted against incumbents that fail to deliver on campaign promises. For example, in the 1999 Lok Sabha election, of the 537 seats contested, only 281 seats were retained by the same parties that won in 1998. Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, in a post-election analysis of the results have noted that throughout the 1990s seat retention has been very low, showing that volatility in India "shows greater upheavals than elections in most other democracies."¹⁵ The performance of government has been the reason cited most often as to why voters vote against the incumbent. The changes in votes often cancel themselves out on the national level as shifts against one party in one state are balanced against gains in another state.

Holding the elected officials accountable has contributed to voters casting votes for whichever party, or candidate, that they believe may deliver on the promises made,

¹⁵ Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar, "Interpreting the Mandate", *Frontline*, Volume 16, issue 22 (23 October – 5 November, 1999). They show that from 1991 to 1996, only 264 out of 537 parties retained their seats, and 263 from 1996 to 1998. They also note that these figures "will go do further for constituencies that returned the same member. Clearly, one is looking at the rejection of the incumbent at the ground level."

sometimes voting against a party (or candidate) that would supposedly be more reflective of the voters' socio-economic/caste interests. This, combined with the knowledge that the balloting is truly 'secret', has made vote banks much less predictable. As a result, vote banks have been breaking down¹⁶. 'Vote banks' are not exclusive to India, but in India they have specific characteristics that have had negative characteristics that eroded democracy. (Vote banks are discussed in Chapter 5.) Attracting votes without relying on vote banks and control of patronage has shifted the nature of competition between parties. Control over vote banks and patronage had been the almost exclusive domain of the INC in the first decades of Indian independence.

When increasing competition became the norm, after the early 1970s, the capability of the ruling INC party to arbitrate, negotiate, and ultimately dominate, policy making, both within its own ranks and in conjuncture with other parties, was severely curtailed. Increased participation by more demanding and organized groups strained interparty cooperation. After 1996 the INC was no longer able to continue its role at the apex of a ruling party coalition. The need to share power with state parties that were more than 'silent partners' precluded the INC from winning the last three elections. Congress has continued to operate under the delusion that it can rule alone, and has for the most part ignored the reality that state parties are the means through which national alliances must be forged. The showing of the INC in the 1999 election has demonstrated

¹⁶ Ashis Nandy, in discussing the outcomes of the March, 2000, Assembly elections believes that vote banks have largely disappeared from Indian politics. Analyzing the post election results in Bihar (March 2000), he remarks that "the very fact that there is a hung assembly in Bihar this time is a major reflection of the fact that the assumption that the caste vote bank is homogenous and stable is not correct. These elections have proved that any political strategy based entirely on caste vote bank tactics is bound to be short lived." Interview with India Decides, 15 March, 2000. www.indiadeclides.com/misc/feature.html.

the erroneousness of that belief. In that election, Congress allied with only five parties, which contributed only an additional twenty-two seats to the 112 seats won by the INC.

This next section will sketch the changes in the party system and will explain some of the reasons for these changes, using the structural influences (electoral laws, the federal system of government, the central government's influence over state politics, the constitutional protections and reservations for scheduled castes/tribes, and the re-organization of states based on language) as the bases of these changes. Table 12 outlines the changes that the party system has undergone in the past fifty years.

TABLE 12

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTY SYSTEM AT EACH STAGE

	Congress Party	Opposition Parties	Structural Influences as Contributing Factors
Phase I [1947-1967]	Dominant	parties of pressure	Formation of linguistic states; electoral laws. Moderate centralism
Phase II [1967-1977]	'enforced' domination confrontational	At state level: electoral law available to INC; at national level: confrontational	Centralization; populism; Defections; Delinking national and state elections.
Phase III [1977-1984]	'populist party; ideological.	Parties in government not recognized as ally against INC. Attempts short-lived. Dissatisfaction with INC is manifested in new party development.	Centralization
Phase IV [1985-1996]	Weakened but only viable alternative	Multipartyism leading to extreme multipartyism. parties adopting ideological stances. Based on caste, regional issues; reaction to 'in-governability', salience of opposition. Religion versus secularism.	Reservations. Federalism
Phase V [1996-1999]	organizational and institutional failures. Party of opposition.	Fragmentation and fracturing but ideological basis of parties has not changed. Parties allying on vote fronts. Formation of coalition governments.	Federalism; Secularism

Phase One (1947-1967)

Characteristics

The Indian National Congress dominated during this period, tempered by a semblance of 'consociationalism', conforming to the 'umbrella' notion suggested by Rajni Kothari. In this period the INC dominated national and state politics, both in terms of holding office and in mobilizing participation. James Manor described the prominence of the Congress party as the main instrument that knit together the state and society, which is to say that it was India's central integrating institution. As a consequence, one did not find in India, as in the west, a relationship between the government and the party organization in which the latter plays an instrumental and subsidiary role. Congress was more important than that and arguably, more important than all of the formal institutions of state put together.¹⁷ High levels of organizational strength allowed Congress to dominate the bureaucracy and bureaucrats, and to channel patronage as incentives and rewards for party membership. Recruitment was open, with an emphasis towards inclusion of minorities as well as the local elites.

Congress out-pollled every other party electorally; opposition parties were influences on Congress factions (thereby affecting political outcomes) but they were not in and of themselves significant electoral or opposition forces. Because the INC occupied such a wide swath in the in the political spectrum, opposition parties were relegated "not only to the margins of Congress, but to the margins of the political and party systems as well"¹⁸. It was within Congress, not between parties, where conflict occurred. Certainly

¹⁷ James Manor, "Parties and the Party System", in State and Politics in India, Partha Chatterjee, ed., (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 95.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

other parties remained distinct from the INC but the likelihood that they were going to be able to topple the Congress Party remained but a distant dream. In Myron Weiner's book, Party Building in a New Nation (1967), Weiner lauds the INC as a superb example of party building and competency. "The Congress party of India is surely one of the most successful political parties to be found anywhere in the developing areas. Its success in recruiting political workers, in resolving internal conflict, and, above all, in winning four successive national elections has made it possible for India to sustain stable and relatively effective government at the local, state, and national levels since independence was achieved in 1947."¹⁹ Weiner attributes the success of the INC to four factors: a) organizational maintenance [recruitment and training]; b) congruence between the needs of the party and the interests and ambitions of party members; c) adaptability of the party to new demands and participants in the political process; and d) performance and relevance of the party at the local, or constituency level. The party had transformed itself into a legitimate and powerful ruling party by being adaptive, building alliances with the social elite, and creating legitimate authoritative structures through the use of patronage networks using local notables. In short, it had metamorphosed from an exclusive to an inclusive party that claimed the loyalty and respect of the Indian populace. By heralding these attributes Weiner disputes the commonly touted explanations that the party's success hinged on the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and/or the role of the party in the independence movement. Although both of these explanations contain seeds of validity, they offer an idiosyncratic explanation that can neither be refuted nor proven. Weiner's

¹⁹ Myron Weiner, Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2.

explanation instead has a basis upon which the future successes and failures of the INC can be evaluated. It also offers a framework upon which competing parties could be compared: how well do other parties perform the organizational and functional duties that contribute to electoral success.

It is in this phase that the India political system could conceivably be interpreted as consociational. Arend Lijphart unconditionally asserts that India “was a perfectly and thoroughly consociational system during its first two decades”²⁰. He even contends that “in more recent decades India has remained basically consociational”²¹. In Lijphart’s early writings he declares that the “primary characteristic of consociational democracy is that the political leaders of all significant segments of the plural society cooperate in a grand coalition to govern the country”²². Implicit in this statement is that a) there are clearly differentiated ‘segments’ in the society; b) there is a single ‘leadership’ for each of the specific segments; and c) the leadership of ‘significant segments’ are included in the governing of the country as part of the cabinet. These conditions were not satisfactorily met in India, even during the first two decades. In many ways Congress rule in the first two decades resembled a coalition government rather than a ‘consociational’ one. The purported consociational nature of Indian governance from independence until 1967 took the form of cooperative pragmatism and deal-making, not power-sharing. This argument will be analyzed at greater length in the final chapter of this dissertation.

²⁰ Arend Lijphart, “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation”, American Political Science Review, (90:2, June 1996, 258-268), 258.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 262.

²² Arend Lijphart, Democracy in Plural Societies: a Comparative Exploration, (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1977), 25.

The INC was inclusive, trying to be ‘all things to all people’, and engaged in accommodative practices both within its organization and with opposition parties. However, the stratification of Indian society during this era precluded effectual participation of the bulk of the population. Congress, as well as most of the other parties represented and were represented by the same elite cadre. Rekha Saxena summarizes this aptly:

the opposition to Congress mainly came from the divisions of the same elite group. Therefore their programme and perception of problems and future were the same. Hence, they could not pose themselves as an alternative to Congress, but act as ‘parties of pressure’. Thus, these elections were held and fought in the framework of an established and stable one party system...²³

The parties may have spoken **for** the masses, (without having consulted them) but were not part **of** the masses. The elite of all the parties gave lip service to improving the economic and social lives of the population, but the vast proportion of the population lived in villages which were controlled by traditional elites and dominant castes that sought to perpetuate the status quo. Politicians, dependent on these rural elites to deliver votes (through the vote banks), were hesitant to enact or enforce policies that undermined the traditional basis of power in the rural districts. Promises of massive land reform, widespread education, and enforcement of laws pertaining to discrimination and casteism remained just that — promises. The very need to assure political stability precluded disrupting the social order, a state of affairs that was tacitly agreed to by most parties, but ultimately would be self-destructive for the INC²⁴. Massive recruitment brought into the

²³ Rekha Saxena, Indian Politics in Transition: From Dominance to Chaos, (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1994), 9.

²⁴ The INC would feel the impact of this policy in the 1967 elections. The juggling of interests and satisfying of diverse demands, according to Rajni Kothari, depended not only on voluntary acceptance of the status quo “by the dependent strata within the caste hierarchy but also on a permanent state of

Congress fold a more and more diverse population with conflicting demands and needs. The very success of Congress at co-opting various elites made development of a common platform virtually impossible. Factions within the party proliferated and the INC expended most of its efforts juggling the various components.

All parties, including the INC, suffered from widespread defection, splintering, realignment, and re-formation, but Congress, as the largest and most cohesive, could afford to be magnanimous and allow the drifting in and out of party members. After all, in order to participate in decision-making at any level of government required that the politician be either a 'Congressman' or at least cooperate with the Congress leadership. The fluidity of the party system made it flexible but it certainly did not make it consociational.

The basic heterogeneity of the Indian population precluded any real hegemonic party from arising. Congress' role as mediator was ordained by the necessity of retaining and forging a bridge between the

heterogeneous cluster of dominant groups characterized by widely divergent interests and outlooks. The lack of either a single dominant class or a homogeneous dominant social block resulted in an uneasy balance of power. The prevailing state of affairs was such that any political decision could be reached only by a cautious and continuous mediation through a maze of divergent and often conflicting interests.²⁵

deprivation for them. the consolidation of the power base of the middle-caste peasantry thwarted any further land reforms, led either to eviction of smaller tenants coming from lower peasant castes or left them with small land-holdings that could not any longer be supplemented by sharecropping. ... the lower castes became resentful and lost patience with the Congress leadership which had in any case not implemented either the long promised land reforms or the various plan programmes that were meant to generate employment in the rural areas. By 1967 these caste groups saw a close relationship between the local structure of dominance and Congress rule at higher levels and translated their despair with the former into a challenge to the latter." *Politics and the People: In Search of a Humane India* (New York: New Horizons Press, 1989), 333.

²⁵ Michelguglielmo Torri, "Westernized Middle Class", in John L. Hill, ed., *The Congress and Indian Nationalism: Historical Perspectives*, (Wellesley Hills, MA.: Riverdale Co., 1991), 46. Although this essay examines the controversy between two schools of Indian historiography, (the traditional school that taught

Federalism Versus Centralism During This Period

According to the framers of the constitution, federalism was to be the basis upon which minority fears were to be assuaged. By providing the maximum autonomy for the states, vesting them with residual powers (such as control over agriculture, public health, education), and limiting central powers to the necessities such as defense and foreign affairs, the interests and rights of minorities could be safeguarded. Communal differences, whether based on religion or caste, would be contained regionally, insulating the country from widespread conflagration. However, the establishment of a federal system conflicted with another goal of the early government, that of pursuing economic development through centralized planning and government ownership of major industry. In order to be able to instill a greater sense of nationhood in the nascent country, carry out massive restructuring of the economy and implement socialist development plans (such as land reform, income redistribution, and breakdown of the caste system), federalism was discounted as a viable system of operation. The dependence of the states on New Delhi for revenue, the powers of the national government to veto state's legislation deemed not to be in conformance with national law, and the inclusion of President's Rule in the constitution assured that the national government would have the greatest role in governance. Conflict between the states and the center for superiority was avoided for the most part because in the first two decades the ruling party in New Delhi was also the ruling party in most of the states.

that M. Gandhi and the 'westernized middle classes/intellectuals', as an autonomous and internally consistent social group, were the significant impetuses for Indian nationalism and the Cambridge School that saw the westernized elites as intermediaries between the indigenous, traditional elites and the British), the thrust of the article is an evaluation of the balances and counterbalances between the factions that

Nehru enjoyed, for the most part, INC majority governments in most of the states²⁶. The chief ministers were selected through the legislatures of the states, by secret ballot, and had their own power bases within their respective states to wield independent power. Federalism was still to some extent a sham as the state governments were dependent on the central government for most of their revenues, and the pyramidal power equations within the Congress assured a high degree of conformity with the central government. However, the central government was intent upon a national agenda and for the most part allowed states to operate with a fair degree of autonomy.

Under Nehru, state governments were dismissed for just cause, as provided in the constitution²⁷. Nehru (and his successor, Shastri), invoked Presidential Rule on ten separate occasions, all within the context of protecting national unity, security, and maintaining order within the states.

The Electoral system

The electoral system favored the organizational prowess of the INC. The single member district, first past the post electoral system gave the Congress Party its majority of seats in the Lok Sabha. There were numerous opposition parties that competed separately, fracturing the opposition vote. Furthermore, the opposition parties were much smaller units and were not entities throughout all the constituencies in the country. An

continuously arose between different elements of Indian society, and which continued unabated after independence.

²⁶ In the 1957 election the Communist Party of India (CPI) won the State Assembly election in Kerala. However, in a number of states, regional parties had begun to cut sharply into the INC majority, leaving a truncated Congress party in control but portending future losses.

²⁷ Articles 278 and 278A empowers the central government to dismiss a state government and to transfer the authority from the state Assembly to the Lok Sabha, and the primary leadership to the President of India. This authority remains in effect for six months, unless extended another six months by Parliament, or until a new government is elected.

examination of the numbers of candidates presented to the voters shows that there was no possibility of a single opposition party winning an election: the greatest numbers of candidates from a single opposition party were 196 Jana Sangh candidates (in 1962), foreclosing any hope of becoming any more than a potential opposition force in the Lok Sabha. By default, if nothing else, the INC was bound to win. The result was that in the 1952 elections (the first election) the multifarious opposition parties attained more than fifty-five percent of the total votes, but earned only twenty-five percent of the seats. The INC reaped the rewards; with forty five percent of the popular vote it won an absolute majority (74.5%) of the Lok Sabha seats, 364 seats out of 489. In the 1957 and 1962 elections the pattern was repeated.²⁸

Although the electoral system continued to produce similarly skewed results over the next decades, it was during these first two decades that it exerted its greatest influence over the development of the party system. Because of the preponderance of seats that were granted to the INC despite its lack of majority vote, and coupled with its control over state governments, the INC was able to assert its dominance in setting the national agenda, to mold policy, act as mediator between opposition parties, and in general act as a munificent benefactor for its wide network of supporters. If seats had been distributed proportionally there is a greater likelihood that competition between parties may have intensified and the party system may have evolved in quite different ways. Instead, the one-party dominant (but with legitimate opposition parties monitoring and competing)

²⁸ In 1957 the INC won 371 out of the possible 493 seats (74.5%), with 48% of the valid vote, and in 1962, 361 of the 494 seats (72.9%), with 44.7% of the vote. Data from Election Commission of India .

model that did arise provided a stability to electoral politics that was a strong foundation for future democratic competition.

Linguistic States

The reconfiguration of the states based on language had a significant impact on electoral politics. A clamor for redrawing of state borders to reflect more closely linguistic realities had been mounting from the time of annexation of the princely state of Hyderabad. Congress as a party and as the government was categorically opposed to realignment, fearing that re-visiting the question of language-based states would be tantamount to opening Pandora's Box²⁹. Linguistic-based states would subvert national unity and consolidation of the states into the Indian State and open the flood gates to all linguistic groups for statehood. Because India has so many languages³⁰, and most states have sizable minority language regions within their borders, the fragmentation of the country into ever smaller units was a possibility that loomed before the government in the early 1950s. However, the Telanganda Movement in the (former) state of Madras had rapidly devolved from agitation to violence, demanding the division of Madras into two states, one comprised of the Telugu speaking population to be called Andhra Pradesh³¹,

²⁹ The INC had originally supported the established of linguistically homogeneous states, and had organized its provincial parties on the basis of regional languages, to facilitate administration, communication within the party unit, and wider participation of the non-elite. This was the position of the INC until 1945. The change of heart came about after the partition of the subcontinent into two countries, India and Pakistan, exemplifying the fragility of union.

³⁰ How many languages India has depends on how they are categorized: do we distinguish language from dialect from 'mother tongue? According to several sources, there are "seventy five 'major languages', 112 'mother tongues' (languages with other 10,000 speakers), 325 languages used in Indian households, and thirty-two languages that have at least one million speakers. Source: *India, A Country Study*, (Washington, DC: U.S Government Printing Office, 1996) (182). The constitution recognizes eighteen 'official' languages (as amended in 1992).

³¹ This state would also include Hyderabad, a predominately Muslim, and Urdu speaking, population.

and the second, the Tamil speakers, into the state of Tamil Nadu³². The intensity of the violence convinced the government to react. In spite of his personal misgivings, Nehru, as Prime Minister, in 1953 appointed a States Reorganization Commission to address the problem. In 1956 the Parliament enacted the States Reorganization Act that redrew the boundaries of existing states into fourteen states and six territories that would conform (as much as possible) with the principal language of the region.

The capitulation of the government defused some of the regional tensions, but the reorganization can also be noted for what was not done. A number of states were not reorganized as part of the 1956 law, most notably Bombay and Punjab. In these two states communal, rather than linguistic, issues were regarded by law makers as impelling division, and under no circumstances were they to be legitimated. Nehru warned his partymen that “so far as I am concerned, I am prepared to lose every election in India but to give no quarter to communalism or casteism.”³³ The 1956 reorganization was not to be the final word on state boundaries, however, and communalism did play its part in reformulating future states (there are now twenty-five states and seven Union Territories). However, the reorganization mitigated the immediate crisis.

Shown below, in Table 13, are the dates the states were formed. Dates other than 1947, independence, depict a realignment of the states according to linguistic lines. Some

³² A rise of political dissent in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, formerly the province of the Madras Presidency, is well analyzed and documented by Christopher John Baker in his book, The Politics of South India: 1920-1937, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Language was only one of the issues that mobilized political activism in this region. As important was the ‘self-respect movement’, an anti-Brahmin movement that galvanized leaders from the lower castes and led to the creation of the Justice Party in 1916.

³³ Jawaharlal Nehru, in a speech in 19XX, as quoted in Bipan Chandra, Ideology and Politics in Modern India, (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1994), 82.

of the original states also underwent some realignment at later dates, carving out regions within them to form new states. The major regional political party (or parties) electorally important in the states in January, 2000, are also listed.

TABLE 13
STATES OF INDIA AND THEIR PRINCIPAL LANGUAGES AND REGIONAL
PARTIES

Date	States	Principal Language(s)	Principal State Parties
1956	Andhra Pradesh	Telugu, Urdu	Telugu Desam
1987	Arunachal Pradesh	Monpa, et al	Arunachal Congress(M)
1947	Assam	Assamese, Bengali	Asom Gana Parishad, ULFA
1947	Bihar	Hindi	Samata, Samajwadi
1987	Goa	Konkani, Marathi	
1960	Gujarat	Gujarati	
1966	Haryana	Hindi	Haryana Vikas, Haryana LokDal
1971	Himachal Pradesh	Hindi, Pahari	Himachal Vikas Party
1947	Jammu and Kashmir	Kashmiri, Dogri, Urdu	National Conference
1956	Karnataka	Kannada	Karantaka Congress Party
1956	Kerala	Malayalam	Kerala Congress, CPI, CPI(M)
1956	Madhya Pradesh	Hindi	MPVC
1960	Maharashtra	Marathi	Shiv Sena
1972	Manipur	Manipuri	Congress (K)
1972	Meghalaya	Khaasi, Garo, English	
1987	Mizoram	Mizo, English	
1963	Nagaland	Naga dialects, English	
1947	Orissa	Oriya	BIJU, Samata Party
1966	Punjab	Punjabi	Akali Dal
1947	Rajasthan	Rajasthani, Hindi	
1975	Sikkim	Bhutia, Nepali, Lepcha	Sikkim Democratic Front
1956	Tamil Nadu	Tamil	DMK, AIADMK
1972	Tripura	Bengali, Kakbarak, Manipuri	
1947	Uttar Pradesh	Hindi, Urdu	Samajwadi Party, BSP
1947	West Bengal	Bengali	CPI (M), RSP

The formation of states is still not complete. The newest state to be created is the tribal area, Jharkhand, which had been demanding statehood for decades. The last four governments had promised to consider the issue, but were dissolved before action had been completed. The new BJP government placed statehood for Jharkhand on the top of its 2000 agenda, and it was granted in December, 2000. Two other states were formed in the fall of 2000. Chhattisgarh became a new state on 1 November, 2000 and Uttaranchal on 8 November 2000. The BJP proposed five new states in its 1996 election manifesto. There may still be more states on the horizon as tribal groups become more politicized.³⁴ Coorg, a part of Karnataka, has petitioned to reinstate its statehood. Coorg had originally been a separate state (1952-1956) until it was absorbed into Karnataka in 1956. There is also movement afoot to divide UP, a state with a population of more than 150 million, into two new states. Language is not as great an issue in this bifurcation, as Hindi is the dominant language. However, the sheer size of the state makes rulership unwieldy, and division is attractive to some as a means to make it more governable. Cynics and critics see this as a political maneuver to gain votes for the BJP.

³⁴ For a curt article on the idea of new states see The Economist, (14 September, 1996), 40.

Language based states affected political party development in a number of ways. First, regionalism was reinforced by making the states more (though certainly not completely) homogeneous. The movements that had been created to advocate for statehood spawned nativist or regional parties that were more provincial, more reflective of the region's population, and more sensitive to local concerns. It made politics more relevant to a wider spectrum of the Indian population and invited direct participation. Political advancement in regional parties did not depend on fluency in English, a skill that was only mastered by a small elite. When panchayats (local governing councils) became more prolific and gained greater clout in local development, advancement between local and district or district and state governments could more easily be scaled by an average citizen. Duncan Forrester observed that the realignment of states

...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.³⁵

Over time the effect of expanding the political opportunities of the citizenry filtered down to lower class and lower caste persons.

Second, employment opportunities, especially with the state government, were improved with knowledge of the regional language. The residents of the state who spoke the dominant language of the state had greater advantage in attaining a state job than others from outside of the state. Skilled 'migrants' from other states would have more

³⁵ Duncan B. Forrester, "Electoral Politics and Social Change," Economic and Political Weekly, (July 1968), 1083.

difficulty competing for these jobs. To cement these advantages, states began enacting 'sons of the soil' legislation which gave preferences in university admissions and state employment to residents who had resided in the state for a set number of years. These preferential policies proliferated after states were realigned.³⁶

A third consequence of creating states based on language was the gradual increase of demands for more state autonomy, challenging the centrist goals of the federal government. Federalism became more and more a reality as states began to assert claims for greater control over revenue, more means through which to raise state revenues, and control over the direction and thrust of economic development. Competition for federal funds, disputes over river waters, regional disparities in regard to resources and development, are only some of the differences that heightened inter-state rivalries. State or regional political parties prospered when they campaigned using local (or state) issues as a foil against the national parties, especially during the state Assembly elections. State matters gradually took precedence over national ones. These changes did not become immediately apparent, but were the long term effects of realignment. This is a subject that will be further discussed later in this chapter.

II: Phase Two: 1967-1977

The 1967 election was a watershed in Indian politics. The years between the last election had been fraught with turmoil, beginning with the disastrous Sino-Indian war (October 20 – November 21, 1962), a second war with Pakistan (August 5 – September

³⁶ Myron Weiner and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein provide a short but comprehensive study of the development and expansion of preferential policies, and the political implications of them, in their book, India's Preferential Policies: Migrants, the Middle Classes, and Ethnic Equality, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

25, 1965), and a persisting economic crisis. Congress support had been waning, evidenced by the loss of three Congress stars in by-elections in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. In-fighting within the Congress hierarchy divided the upper ranks of the party machine and effectively displaced Morarji Desai as the primary contender for the Congress presidency. Instead, through clandestine scheming, the presidency went to K. Kamaraj, who, with his troupe of confederates (referred to as ‘the Syndicate’), were later able to select the next two prime ministers of India. The deaths of Jawaharlal Nehru (in May, 1964) and his successor, Lal Bhadur Shastri (January 1966) in office, had precipitated a leadership crisis of sorts for the Congress Party³⁷. Competition within the party had been suppressed when Shastri was selected, but was much more conflictual the second time around. The choice of Nehru’s daughter, Indira Gandhi, as interim prime minister, was due almost entirely to Kamaraj and a coalition of Chief Ministers, who saw her as a malleable pawn that would not only be beholden to the Syndicate but would secure Congress’ victory in the parliamentary elections that were only a year away. The latter goal was achieved, but the former expectation was stillborn almost immediately. Kochanek notes that

Mrs. Gandhi’s election as Prime Minister was viewed by many as an interim arrangement designed to fill the gap until the 1967 General Elections. It was felt that Mrs. Gandhi would enhance the electoral appeal of the party by enabling the Congress to continue to capitalize on the Nehru name. Yet almost from the beginning of her term as Prime Minister of India, it was evident that Mrs. Gandhi was not going to be the puppet some senior Congress leaders had expected.³⁸

³⁷ A detailed account of the internal politics involved in the selection of Shastri, and later, Indira Gandhi, are presented in Stanley A. Kochanek, The Congress Party of India: the Dynamics of One-Party Democracy, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968). See especially chapter 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

Indira Gandhi's first actions were to replace some of the old guard Congress ministers with younger party members. In the year before the fourth parliamentary election the frictions between the Congress President and the Prime Minister were kept in check by the necessity of winning the next election.

Turnout for the 1967 election increased dramatically, from fifty-three percent in the 1962 election to more than sixty-one percent. Badly disorganized and fractionalized, the INC headed to the elections expecting some modest losses to its majority hold over the Lok Sabha, but confident that its hegemonic dominance would nevertheless propel them into a renewed mandate from the voters. Instead, Congress, although still retaining a majority of the seats in parliament, saw its majority reduced from seventy-three percent in 1962 to fifty-four percent in the 1967 election³⁹. Six opposition parties shared thirty-five percent of the seats, a smattering of small parties another ten percent, and independents won the highest percentage of votes that they would ever again win in a national election, almost fourteen percent of the seats⁴⁰. In addition, Congress lost power in six state assembly elections, and in three states lost its majority, having to succumb to being the coalition leader in multi-party governments.

The dramatic reduction to Congress' majority have been attributed to a number of factors that were at play prior to the 1967 elections, some of which are episodic, such as

³⁹ Once again the electoral system played a part in the final results. The total percentage of votes for the INC only dropped by four percent (44.72% in 1962 to 40.92% in 1967), but the configuration of the vote was markedly different. The anti-Congress vote was more organized and opposition parties had cooperated in forging alliances in a number of constituencies, thereby presenting a 'united' front against the INC, channeling discontent into a single stream that rewarded the opposition.

⁴⁰ Independent candidates continued to compete in subsequent elections, but the likelihood of winning continued to decrease. The percentages of winning independents in each Lok Sabha elections are: 1952 – 15.9%; 1957 – 19.4%; 1962 – 11.1%; 1967 – 13.7%; 1971 – 8.4%; 1977 – 5.5%; 1980 – 6.4%; 1984 – 8.1%; 1989 – 5.2%; 1991 – 4.1%; 1996 – 6.28%; 1998 – 2.37%; 1999 – 2.74%. Data from the Election Commission.

the poor performance of the economy, inflation, food shortages, regional and local disturbances and events, and the border wars with China and Pakistan. However, the structural causes were more long lasting and influential. These included rampant factionalism (caused by and a product of) the weakening of centralized power within the Congress Party, resulting in the breakdown of consensus building and arbitration as the modus operandi of the INC, and the ensuing defections from the state party organizations. Another factor was the skill of opposition parties to ally with each other to directly challenge the Congress candidates. Instead of fighting among themselves they collaborated to win seats and share power, at least in the state assemblies. Kochanek, in a postscript to his study, saw a positive consequence, writing that

the election opened new possibilities for a number of non-Congress parties. For the first time since independence many opposition parties feel they have a genuine chance to win power. The effect has been a moderation of policy positions in those parties which see themselves as potential all-India rivals to a Congress which they see as eventually and inevitably doomed to collapse.⁴¹

Additionally, these parties would be more committed to the democratic process when they share the experience, the tribulations, as well as the benefits of governing.

Democracy would be deepened as more groups had a stake in the system.

Demographics also contributed to the shifting support of the INC. The 1967 election was held almost twenty years since independence. A new generation had come of age, having had no personal experience with the independence movement and did not have the same emotive connection to the veteran politicians of that era. Demographics

⁴¹ Kochanek, op.cit. 446.

would also play a role twenty years later when the voting age was lowered to eighteen, bringing an influx of younger people into the electorate⁴².

The immediate reaction of Congress to the 1967 election debacle was to try to reconstruct the party organization, especially at the national level. This was to be a Herculean task as ill will between the Prime Minister (Indira Gandhi) and the Congress President (Kamaraj) intensified. The two adversaries first split over appointments to the cabinet, composition and membership of the Congress Working Committee, and the selection of the new President of India. Having eked out a narrow victory in these battles, Indira Gandhi then set out to consolidate her power when, in December, the election of a new Congress president tested her mettle. Refusing to support Kamaraj, Mrs. Gandhi asserted her power by denying him a third term, but her influence was still tenuous enough that she had to cede ground and accept a compromise candidate rather than her outright choice. This strategy of challenge, exert power, back-pedal, and thrust again helped advance Gandhi's agenda, shift power to the office of PM, and impair the dominance of the party organization. Within two years her maneuverings had succeeded in fractionalizing the party completely. On November 12, 1967, Indira Gandhi was expelled from the party for 'indiscipline', splitting the party into two distinct parties. The old guard, represented under Moraji Desai and containing the organizational rump of the party, became the Congress (O). Mrs. Gandhi headed the parliamentary portion of the party, two thirds of which supported her in the confrontation. With support from

⁴² The 62nd Amendment passed in 1988 lowered the voting age to eighteen. The 1989 election was the first when eighteen year olds were allowed to vote, increasing the electorate from 400 million to 500 million. Almost two thirds of the electorate is now under the age of forty (data from *The Hindu*, 3 June, 1996) and eight percent (56 million people) are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one. Unlike in the United

opposition parties, Mrs. Gandhi was able to retain the prime ministership and regroup, forming her own party, Congress (R), later to be renamed Congress (I).⁴³

This schism marked another shift in the party system. To retain control, Gandhi, recognizing that Congress(O) controlled most of the state party organizations, decided to hold national elections separately from the state Assembly elections. To that end, she called for new parliamentary elections to be held in March, 1971, one year early, purportedly to gain a 'fresh mandate'. Bypassing the state party machines, Indira Gandhi appealed directly to the voters, campaigning under the slogan 'garibi hatao' (eliminate poverty), a populist approach that proved to be enormously successful. In the 1971 election Congress (R) won a resounding victory, winning 352 seats (44 percent of the vote), and Congress (O) received a thorough drubbing, winning only ten percent of the total vote and a bare sixteen seats⁴⁴. When, in 1972, the Assembly elections reaffirmed her victory by rewarding Congress (R) by delivering fourteen out of sixteen states into her fold, Indira's control over power was nearly complete. Party organizations in the states and at the national level were beholden to her, and appointments were made only with her direct approval. Promotion within the party was by appointment rather than election, eroding even further the democratic structure of the Congress Party. The party was an extension of her own power and popularity and sycophants yielded to her

States, the youth in India tend to vote. In a poll conducted by India Today, taken during the 1999 election, 82% of this group intended to vote. India Today, (27 September, 1999), p. 12, 15.

⁴³ The parenthetical O, R, and I are for 'Organization', 'Requisition', and 'Indira', respectively. Congress (R) was re-labeled (I) in January 1978 to distinguish Indira's faction from the proliferating Congress schisms that abounded after the Emergency and the first year of Janata Party rule.

⁴⁴ Suresh K. Tameri, in a book exalting the victory of Indira Gandhi, extols the virtues of Indira's battle for dominance, referring to her as a lone champion of the poor and downtrodden, and the challenger of all those reactionary elements that sought to thwart her ('Indira versus the rest'). See The Wonder Elections 1971: Indira Versus the Right, (Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1971).

authority. Party members with independent bases of power were replaced with Indira Gandhi's own candidates, further consolidating her power within the party apparatus.

However, events beyond her control sabotaged this scenario. Economic disasters led to massive demonstrations and threatened to topple the government. Mrs. Gandhi regarded opposition, whether within or outside of her party, a critical media, and popular mobilization as anti-system attacks on her and on the state itself. The final straw came when Mrs. Gandhi was convicted of election fraud⁴⁵ for her 1971 campaign; she declared a State of Emergency the next day, June 25, 1975, and ended democratic rule in India for the next nineteen months. Arrests of opposition party leaders (and Congress dissidents), censorship of the media, suspension of the Constitution, and detention of demonstrators were the immediate actions undertaken by Mrs. Gandhi within the first hours of the Emergency.

Surprising as the declaration of the Emergency had been, so too was the sudden cessation. In mid January, 1977, new elections were called, jailed politicians were released, curbs on the press were lifted, and civil rights were re-instated. The March, 1977 election punished Mrs. Gandhi for her abuse of power and elected a coalition government to rule India.

The past ten years had witnessed changes that would have lasting repercussions on party system relationships. The cautious optimism with which the beginning of this

⁴⁵ The particulars of the conviction are covered in Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraised, Henry C. Hart, ed. (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1976). The election fraud conviction consisted of 'violating the corrupt practices law' in her 1971 campaign. From the evidence it appears that the infractions were minor, consisting of using government officials for performing electoral duties. At the time, the foreign press dubbed the infractions as 'trivial' and 'trifling'. Regardless of the severity of her infractions, the penalty required that the results of the election be voided, and Gandhi would be barred from electoral politics for a period of six years. (see pages 2-4). However, Mrs. Gandhi was granted the right to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. This was an option she choose not to exercise.

phase had begun, with opposition parties gaining control in various states, had been quashed. This period distinguished itself from the earlier one in several ways. First, instead of the individual parties becoming more institutionalized, they become more fragmented. The INC had not reconstituted itself as a democratic, pyramidal organization after its 1967 losses. Instead it became tightly centralized with power held by a single person. Lines of communication flowed downwards as edicts to be carried out but little information seeped upwards. Conflict management became unfeasible as the highly centralized party tried to control all aspects of party politics in a federal system of government. The result was mounting disorder in the state parties, with chief ministers seeking Delhi's protection to stay in office and party workers viewing the party hierarchy as deliberately provoking factionalism in order to augment central party control.⁴⁶ As Indira Gandhi sought more central government control over the affairs of the state she pushed through programs that limited states' autonomy, restricted private enterprise, and imposed central government policies onto the social realm. As Indira's policies became more socialist the centrist elements within the party broke off (or were expelled), ending any semblance of the former 'umbrella' image.

Opposition parties fared little better. In states that had non-Congress governments the ruling parties, most of them coalition governments, could not maintain discipline or

⁴⁶ See Stanley A. Kochanek, "Mrs. Gandhi's Pyramid: The New Congress", in Indira Gandhi's India, a Political System Reappraised, Henry C. Hart, ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976), pages 93-124. For a descriptive analysis of how a chief minister (in Maharashtra) was undermined by Gandhi see James Manor, "Where Congress Survived: Five States in the Indian General Election of 1977", Asian Survey, XVIII, 8 (August, 1978), 785-803. Also see Bhagwan D. Dua, "Federalism or Patrimonialism: The Making and Unmaking of Chief Ministers in India", Asian Survey, XXV: 8, (August 1985), 793-804.

implement policies. State parties split into new parties, and fragments of parties joined together to form new parties or short-lived coalitions. The DMK, the premier party in Tamil Nadu, split in 1972, with the AIADMK ousting the DMK as the ruling party in that state in 1977. The Communist party (CPI) had already split in 1964 over whether it should cooperate with the INC, the CPI supporting cooperation and the newly formed Communist Party of India (Marxist), CPM, opposing the INC. The CPM emerged as the stronger party but with primarily a state-based constituency in the states of West Bengal and Kerala. A weakened CPI split again in 1981 over the CPI endorsement of Mrs. Gandhi during the Emergency, with the new party, the AICP (All India Communist Party) continuing to support Gandhi. The Lok Dal, formed in 1975 by the merger of seven separate parties, all of which had very different constituent bases, was to become one of the major supporters of the Janata Party coalition government in 1979.

Defections among all parties began to characterize the party system in general. Sudarshan Agarwal, the secretary-general of the Rajya Sabha (upper house of Parliament) in 1982, chronicles the shamelessness with which the defectors acted during the period from 1967 to 1971:

Since ... 1967, from among the 4000 Members of the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies in the states there had been some 1969 cases of defection. By the end of March 1971, approximately 50 percent of the Legislators had changed their party affiliations, and several Legislators did so more than once. In the case of state Assemblies, as much as 50 percent of the total number of Legislators changed their political affiliations at least once. ... Almost each month a state government fell due to the change in party allegiance by Members. In all the states and union territories there were more than 1000 cases of defections and counter-defections, some having defected as many as five times. ... That the lure of office played a dominant part in this 'political horsetrading' was obvious from the fact that out of 210 defecting Legislators of the various states during the first

year of ‘defection politics’, 116 were included in the Councils of Ministers in the governments which they helped to form.⁴⁷

The age of defections continued almost unabated well into the 1980s, when an anti-defection bill was passed⁴⁸. The law slowed defections but did not completely eradicate them, and had only a minor effect on the splintering and merging of parties, a problem that was to plague India’s party system for at least another decade.

The call for new elections energized the opposition parties to collaborate and project a united front against Indira Gandhi and her Congress (R) party. The success of the Janata Party coalition in the 1977 polls brings us into the next phase of party development.

Phase III, 1977-1984

1977-1980 Background

The election of March, 1977 was won by a coalition of ideologically opposed parties. Patching together a common electoral platform that promised decentralization of government as well as rural development and economic growth⁴⁹ was secondary to the primary goal that bonded them together during the campaign – win national office and defeat and punish Congress (R), and Indira Gandhi. The Janata Party, India’s first non-

⁴⁷ Sudarshan Agarwal, “The Anti-defection law in India”, The Parliamentarian, (April, 1991) p.23.

⁴⁸ The ‘Anti-Defection Act’ was enacted as the 52nd amendment to the constitutional in 1985. Although needed by the party system to restore some order, the law was specifically sought out by the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi and his closest supporters to assure that he would be able to hold on to his 400 elected MPs, according to the authors of India Decides: Elections 1952-1995, op.cit., 24. They credit the Act as “maintaining the stability of (Rajiv Gandhi’s) government” during his turbulent five year term.

⁴⁹ For a rendering of the Janata Party Manifesto see Appendix H, p. 134 – 140, in Myron Weiner, India at the Polls. The Parliamentary Elections of 1977, (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978). Rescuing India from its ‘Nightmare of Fear’ was, of course, an overarching desire and urgency of these committed democrats, but the *political* impetus to override their schisms was the anticipation of victory and rulership.

ongress government, was a coalition composed of five separate parties: the Jana Sangh (predecessor to the BJP) was identified with mostly middle class urbanites; the Congress (O), the old, conservative remnants from the original party split of 1969 (and still led by Moraji Desai); the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), led by Charan Singh, representing rich, rural, middle castes; the Samajwadi Party, a socialist party, which claimed the rural and urban poor as well as labor union support; and Congress (D)⁵⁰, representing poor and rural Scheduled Castes.

An irony of the Emergency was that it may have actually, in the long run, bolstered democracy. According to Myron Weiner, the Emergency had produced an unexpected consequence that actually boded positively for deepening democracy in India:

during the emergency groups with highly diverse economic interests, ethnic attachments, and ideological orientations came to recognize that they shared a concern with the preservation – or the reestablishment – of procedures under which they could freely deal with the public, with each other, and with those who exercised governmental authority. Political parties with national aspirations but regional bases of support looked up from their local concerns and united. What galvanized them – just as the fight for India’s independence had earlier galvanized the groups that became the Congress party – was an immediate threat to their freedom. In an unexpected and ironic way, Mrs. Gandhi drew the opposition together and turned them into committed democrats.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Congress for Democracy (CDF, or Congress[D]), was formed by a long time Congress loyalist and a minister in Indira Gandhi’s cabinet, Jagjivan Ram, a member of the SCs from Bihar. He resigned as cabinet minister and renounced the Emergency, declaring that his party would support the Janata Party. After his declaration several state Congress leaders and chief ministers followed suit, joining with Ram to condemn the Congress Party and Indira Gandhi. This desertion led to the dismantlement of Mrs. Gandhi’s plans to fill the candidacy slots with her son’s supporters (the Youth Congress). Myron Weiner observed that “Ram’s resignation thus deprived Mrs. Gandhi of the opportunity to redistribute power within the Congress parliamentary party in favor of her son. It also tended to strengthen the position of some of the state Congress leaders, who were now given considerable influence in the allocation of tickets to their own Congress supporters. Moreover, the elimination of the Youth Congress as a significant force in the elections also neutralized the state police – with which many of the Youth Congress leaders were closely allied – as a political force. Finally, Ram’s resignation provided an important psychological boost to the Janata party, for it not only opened up the possibility of substantial Janata inroads into the Harijan and Muslim vote but also created the possibility of further defections from the Congress party.” *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

For the first time parties had overcome their narrow interests and made a constructive effort to present a unitary front.

The substantial victory the Janata coalition had achieved in the Lok Sabha elections was repeated in many of the state assembly elections held in June 1977. An optimism that the party system could be evolving into a two party system took hold of some observers, but only briefly. Almost immediately upon taking office the coalition began faltering, a momentum that accelerated after the assembly elections the following spring (March, 1978). Ideology certainly played a role in the breakdown of the coalition as well as the ineffectualness of the government to rule, but the almost immediate crumbling of the government came about because of the rivalry among the leaders and their various parties within the coalition. The factions within the Janata national coalition differed from the core supporters in the Janata state parties, leading to increasing conflicts between the Center and the states. By mid 1979 the incompatibility of the ruling parties was unbreachable. Prime Minister Morarji Desai was forced to step down to prevent the government from falling, only to be replaced by Chaudhury Charan Singh (of the BLD), who served in office for a mere twenty-four days, finally resigning on August 21, 1979. New elections were called for, and in January, 1980, Indira Gandhi and her Congress (I) party won a new mandate, campaigning under the slogan, 'elect a government that works'. The complete fracturing of the Janata coalition allowed the Congress (I), with Indira Gandhi at the helm, to return to power with two-thirds of the seats in the Lok Sabha. India's experiment with a non-Congress government had been a dismal failure. It was also a period that plummeted India into a decade of increasing violence, chaos, turbulence and disintegration.

1980-1984

Mrs. Gandhi returned to the prime minstership but the political landscape was markedly different from the one she had been ousted from less than three years before. All of the parties were burdened with rampant intraparty conflict. The parties were fraught with decay and fragmentation. The conjuncture of a rapid increase in participation by and mobilization of the population with a decline in party and governmental capacities to deal with the rising demands led to mounting instability. Mrs. Gandhi's centralization of power continued to be the major organizing principle around which she dealt with state level parties, but, as Lloyd I and Susanne H. Rudolph observed,

Indira Gandhi's emphasis on centralisation had a paradoxical effect: the more authority was centralised, the less effectual it became as it lost its legitimacy among the constituencies it was meant to control and restrain. We also know that the context of centralisation has fundamentally changed in the 1980s, when almost half the states of India are in opposition hands, and no amount of party centralisation can bring them under control.⁵²

Legitimacy, party organization, and stability seemed to be in short supply for all the parties. Inter – as well as intra – party competition was fervid, especially as the electorate responded to the disorder by ousting its incumbents. For the first time incumbents were more likely to lose elections than be reelected, thereby resulting in massive turnovers of legislators at both the national and state level. Vote banks, the bane of democracy but the backbone of the Congress (I) party, had begun to erode as local elites were replaced, increasing unpredictability of election outcomes. Splintering of parties led to even further proliferation of parties. In addition, most of the new parties

⁵² Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, "Organisational Adaptation of the Congress", in Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics; volume I: Changing Bases of Congress Support, Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy, eds. (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), 96.

were regionally based. Indira Gandhi's centralization of power boomeranged at the state level, provoking regional parties to emerge to assert regional interests and stem the incursions on state autonomy. Federalism had been weak under the best of circumstances but this period exposed it to be almost a sham. President's Rule was imposed more than seventy times from 1977 to 1984⁵³. This surge in the numbers of times state governments were dissolved is due in part to the incapacity that the states had to maintain law and order within their borders, the inability of the coalition state governments to continue to govern, and the increase of secessionist or rebel groups in some of the states; however, part of it was a repetition of Indira's meddling in state affairs and her determination to control the reins. Whatever the causes, or the justification, of invoking President's Rule, states saw it as an intrusion on their fragile autonomy⁵⁴.

Congress (I) was back in power but was a decaying, hollow, shell from what it had been in previous decades⁵⁵. It had lost its vantage position as party of the masses, of the disaffected, of the minorities, and Muslims⁵⁶. Other parties now competed for these segments of the electorate. Instead of aggregating a wide spectrum of the electorate,

⁵³ Ishtiaq Ahmed, State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia, (New York: Pinter, 1996), 104.

⁵⁴ For a cogent article on the antics of Mrs. Gandhi in regards to states see Bhagwan D. Dua, "Federalism or Patrimonialism: the Making and Unmaking of Chief Ministers in India", Asian Survey, (XXV, 8: August 1985), 793-804.

⁵⁵ This is a theme that is reiterated by scholar after scholar. Some were savvy enough to recognize this trend as it was happening, but others quickly caught up. James Manor was an early critic of Mrs. Gandhi and an astute analyst of the Indian political system. For a scathing indictment of how the Congress party had been decimated by Indira Gandhi, see James Manor, "Party Decay and Political Crisis in India", The Washington Quarterly (Summer 1982), 23-40.

⁵⁶ This trend is iterated by Mahendra Prasad Singh, in "The Congress in the 1980 and Beyond: Patterns of Recruitment, Strategies of Mobilisation and Inter-Party Alignments", in Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics, Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy, eds., (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990). Singh notes that since the 1970s "Sikhs, Muslims and the scheduled castes have gradually tended to drift away from the party. The linguistic minorities outside their territorial states, however, still seem to hold onto the Congress. Territorially grouped linguistic, religious and tribal minorities – having won states of their own in the federal union where they now constitute regional majorities – have contributed to the creation of segmented

parties began ‘specializing’, catering to communal interests. After the demise of the Janata coalition the various segments sought electoral viability in appealing to sectors. For the most part these parties remained dependent on personalistic rule, unable to transform themselves into institutionalized parties. An exception was the Jana Sangh, which had reorganized after the 1980 election to form the BJP. It became a tightly organized party that seized an opportunity to capitalize on growing sectarian conflict, touting the message of Hindutva. It relied on the extremist, but highly disciplined, organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS), as its core of activists.

After Congress (I) lost Assembly elections in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in January, 1983, the party, but particularly Mrs. Gandhi, decided that to win the Lok Sabha election, due in January 1985, Congress (I) would have to usurp the nationalist, and Hindu chauvinist, position from the BJP. Confrontational posturing was to be the new strategy, emphasizing the anti-national character of opposition parties. James Manor postulates that Congress (I)’s move to the right

was probably based on a curious belief by Mrs. Gandhi that only she (and her son, Rajiv) stood between India and serious communal strife. So, still more curiously, she apparently believed that, by catalysing communalist sentiments, by becoming the main mouthpiece for Hindu communalism, she was protecting India from the dangers of it. She appears to have rationalized this dangerous quest for short-term political advantage by concluding that communalism was safe only in her hands and that by taking it up, she could disarm it as she had leftist sentiment after 1969.⁵⁷

At least, according to Manor, this is how some persons in the Congress (I) camp tried to provide a ‘benign explanation’ for the shift to outright, confrontational, nationalist rhetoric and policy. Certainly Mrs. Gandhi believed it to be good electoral strategy. It

diversities, diminishing the manoeuvrability of the Congress government at the centre and proportionately augmenting the prospects of regional autonomy movements....” (72)

would undermine the BJP and other conservative parties (such as the Lok Dal), and it would further differentiate the Congress (I) from the other parties. Having achieved no real policy gains during her latest term of office, she had few options for campaign fodder.

Centralization of power has been cited as a major characteristic of Indira Gandhi's leadership. Paul Brass, who has been a harsh critic of Gandhi's tactics, and of centralization in general, came to the conclusion that she was not the only Congress leader that has used central authority to undermine the autonomy of states. When re-evaluating the phenomenon he came to this conclusion:

Although the centre intruded into state politics on critical occasions in the 1950s and early 1960s, it seemed to me that state politics then were largely autonomous and were becoming more so and the most important linkages for building power in Indian politics were between the state and the districts. In the last decade, however, the center has become increasingly intrusive into both state and local politics even to the point of establishing direct linkages between the National leadership in Delhi and influential leaders in district politics, by-passing the state government and party in the process. In retrospect, in fact, I feel now, that I underemphasized the role of the center even in the earlier period on such matters as breaking state governments and supporting or not supporting particular state leaders and the consequences of central intervention for the strength of state Congress organizations and the stability of state government.⁵⁸

Congress' increasing centralization of power was impelled by its unrelenting drive to stay in power, at the very least in New Delhi. Gone were the conciliatory ploys and mediating traits of the old Congress system. Faced with the centrifugal realities of the party system, as well as the social forces, of the 1980s, the tactics adopted led to a final rupturing of the 'Congress system', and, on October 31, 1984, the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

⁵⁷ James Manor, "Parties and the Party System", in *State and Politics in India*, op.cit., 114.

⁵⁸ Paul R. Brass, *Caste, Faction and Party in Indian Politics*, Volume I, (Delhi: Chanakya, 1984), 10.

BACKGROUND

Indira Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards prompted a wave of sectarian violence against the Sikh minority. To this day the government promises to fully investigate the details of the violence and uncover the rumored (and quite a bit of empirical evidence of) governmental sanction for the riots. Amid this turmoil, Indira's son, Rajiv Gandhi, was sworn in as Prime Minister, and, two months later, in late December, he won a substantial victory in the parliamentary elections⁵⁹. Rajiv's leadership began on a more conciliatory and accommodative note, both towards opposition parties and to rival factions within Congress. Although his campaign had echoed the same nationalist and communal messages his mother had initiated (adding an even more virulent anti-Sikh sub-text), his post-election confidence ushered in a period of defusing rather than stoking communal tensions. Uncertainty mixed with hope as the new prime minister, dubbed 'Mr. Clean', began his tenure in office.

Rajiv Gandhi's stupendous victory has been frequently seen as the result of the 'sympathy factor', an overestimation in the view of James Manor.⁶⁰ Of more importance was the disunity of the opposition to rally its forces against Congress. In part, this was due to the suddenness of the event. Mrs. Gandhi's assassination, in effect, also 'swept the rug out' from under the opposition. But the reality was that the opposition was so hopelessly divided that they would probably have been unable to muster together any

⁵⁹ Congress (I) won 48 percent of the vote, 77 percent of the seats, in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. See G.G. Mirchandani and K.S.R. Murthi, Massive Mandate for Rajiv Gandhi, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1985), for a detailed description of the election and its results.

⁶⁰ James Manor, "The Indian General Election of 1984", Electoral Studies, (4:2, August 1985), 149-52.

credible alternative regardless of how much more time they had had. Manor cites several factors that were more significant, such as Rajiv's youth and newness to politics, the fear of national disintegration, and the backlash against minorities, encouraged and abetted by the Congress (I) campaign. "The 1984 election was decided at the level of anxieties, images, evocations, and symbols. The result bespoke an aggrieved and fearful assertiveness together with a desperate need for hope and some prospect of renewal in government."⁶¹

Rajiv Gandhi used his mandate to begin resolving some of the more potent problems bequeathed to him from his mother. Accords were reached with the political leaders in three regions that had been rife with violence, Punjab, Assam, and Mizoram. The peace was short-lived however, and the regions again erupted in armed conflict. The novelty of Mr. Gandhi's inexperience wore thin as he showed himself less and less able to control the conflagrations that were smoldering throughout India. The Congress party continued its demise as he substituted his own youthful comrades into cabinet and advisory posts, dismissing his mother's cadre of veterans. Robert Hardgrave, in assessing Rajiv Gandhi's leadership style, accuses him of being arrogant, disrespectful of institutional norms, and centralizing power even more than his mother had. His frequent reshuffling of cabinet ministers and perfunctory dismissals sapped the party and the government of any coherent program of action and plunged the country into further crisis.⁶² Cutting taxes for the wealthy and allowing the importation of luxury items without making substantive changes in the economy that would affect the poor left him

⁶¹ Manor, "Parties and the Party System", op.cit., 117.

⁶² See Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr. And Stanley A. Kochanek, India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation, 5th ed., (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 265.

open to the charge that he had abandoned socialism. Corruption during this time had reached colossal dimensions, culminating in the Bofors Scandal, a charge levied against Rajiv personally, as well as a number of his cohorts, that they had received kickbacks from a defense deal with a Swedish arms manufacturer. In state elections the opposition parties made inroads, campaigning on ever more populist themes of free water, free electricity, subsidized grain, subsidized fertilizer, and even, in some cases, promises that the state would assume their land debts. The parties went all out to thrash the opposition, to play on communal, linguistic, religious and caste loyalties. By the time the regularly scheduled parliamentary elections were held in December, 1989, relations between the parties were at their all time low.

V.P. Singh, former cabinet minister under Rajiv Gandhi, had resigned⁶³ amid rumors of Gandhi accepting illegal payments for defense contracts. For the upcoming elections he knitted together a melange of parties to form the National Front to compete as a bloc against the Congress (I). Congress (I) won the greatest number of seats (197), a loss of fifty percent of the seats it had won in 1984, but was unable to form a government when it could not secure allies to support it⁶⁴. The National Front eked out enough to

⁶³ V.P. Singh had been Finance Minister where, under the orders of Rajiv Gandhi, he began a program to rout out corruption, enforce tax laws (and payments), and expose illegal practices. He was too efficient for his own good. Rajiv Gandhi, under pressure from his friends, transferred him to the Defense ministry, where he would be less efficient. However, shortly thereafter, several more investigations that had been in the pipeline became public. Because of the seriousness of the allegations, and the ties of the corrupt practices to Rajiv himself, Singh was forced to resign from the cabinet, and was thereafter expelled from the Congress(I).

⁶⁴ Atul Kohli attributes the loss of a Congress majority to the inability of Congress to maintain its traditional base of power, owing to its "failure to follow through on promises to alleviate poverty, and the subsequent abandonment under Rajiv Gandhi of an attitude favoring the poor", in "From Majority to Minority Rule: Making Sense of the 'New' Indian Politics", *India Briefing, 1990*, Marshall M. Bouton and Philip Oldenburg, eds. (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1990), 1-23. He continues: "In contrast to the Congress, both the Janata Dal and the BJP not only maintained their traditional power bases but were also able to broaden them." (19-20). In a similar vein, William G. Vanderbok examines voter volatility to see if Congress has lost votes, or if the opposition instead gained them. He suggests that Congress' success is

form a minority government. The Janata Dal (the revamped Janata Party from 1977 and the BLD, along with Congress defectors), was the heart of the National Front, with the TDP, DMK, and the AGP, all regional parties, rounding out the Front, but it required the support of the BJP and the CPI (M) in order to establish a majority. There was not even a semblance of ideological unity to be found in the artificial coalition, thereby impeding policy making and implementation.⁶⁵ That the National Front government lasted only eleven months was no surprise to most political analysts⁶⁶. The withdrawal of BJP support led to a no confidence vote and the resignation of Singh in November, 1990.

The Samajwadi Janata party leader (Chandra Shekhar) was able to constitute a new government when Congress (I) promised to support it from the outside but this support only lasted a mere four months. New elections were announced for May/June, 1991. During the campaign, Rajiv Gandhi, who was expected to easily win, was assassinated. When Congress (I) won the elections, Narasimha Rao was selected as Prime Minister.

Communal violence was at its most virulent during the mid 1980s to the early 1990s. Two related events contributed to this. First, the V.P. Singh implemented the

dependent on the mobilization of voters, and non-voters, by the opposition. Studying all the elections through 1989 he found that Congress has been fairly consistent at retaining approximately fifty percent of its vote from the last election. The other fifty percent either stay away from the polls or vote for other parties. The same pattern exists for the opposition parties. Where the difference lies is that the opposition parties are more adept at mobilizing either the new voters, or previously non-voters, to go to the polls. When non-Congress parties have competed successfully, they have gained some votes at the expense of Congress, but more of the votes have been 'new' votes. See "Critical Elections, Contained Volatility and the Indian Electorate", *Modern Asian Studies* (24:1), 1990, 173-194.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Mahendra Prasad Singh, "The Dilemma of the New Indian Party System: To Govern or not to Govern?", *Asian Survey* (XXXII:4, April 1992) 303-317;

⁶⁶ See Lewis P. Fickett, Jr., "The Rise and Fall of the Janata Dal", *Asian Survey*, (XXXIII:12, December, 1993) 1151-1162.

Mandal Commission recommendations, and secondly, the BJP embarked on a path that brought its message of Hindutva to the center of Indian politics.

Analysis Of The Effect Of This Period On The Party System

The 1984-1996 period began with a party system that could be labeled as multiparty, perhaps even extreme multipartism, as well as continuing fragmentation. This was a period that could best exemplify a 'de-institutionalization' of the party system. Interactions between the parties became more contentious and less issue oriented, 'rules of the game' were frequently distorted, if not outright ignored. State based parties became more important as Congress declined as an organization. Congress (I), as well as many of the other parties, became less institutionalized as they emphasized local issues, regional autonomy, and sectarian differences. Recruitment, aggregation, and articulation, necessary functions of a mature political party⁶⁷, were severely lacking in most of the discordant parties. Caste, religion, and regionalism were issues around which parties competed. The causes for this are debatable, but a generally accepted explanation can be found in the way in which the disintegration of the Congress (I) party, an integral cog of the party system, effected changes in the other parties.

Characteristics of the Congress (I) Party from 1984-1996

By 1984 Congress was already exhibiting a number of debilitating flaws that only were compounded through the next twelve years. Certainly by the late 1980s the party was in a shambles. As a party it was factionalized and becoming less representative. The authoritarian style of the Gandhis had eroded democratic intra-party relations.

⁶⁷ See Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr. They define these terms as such: recruitment, the task of mobilizing voters; articulation, the communicating of the policies of the party as well as the transmission

Information, a vital necessity to remain cognizant of emergent demands and constituency needs through feedback from the local leadership, was also a scarce resource as communications was increasingly a one-way stream, flowing downwards as edicts but rarely upwards. The hallmark of the old INC, as an appeasing and moderating force for reconciling rival social, economic, cultural and regional interests had been extinguished as Congress (I) instead saw these disparate groups as affronts to Congress supremacy. Unable to cope with the rising contradictions in society at large – those between caste, class, community, region, and issue specific groups – Congress (I) struggled to find a niche that would deliver electoral victory.

As a governing party Congress (I) proved to be inefficient at proposing, initiating, formulating, and implementing policies; its practice of selecting and promoting based on loyalty to the PM rather than on ability resulted in a lack of administrators and bureaucrats capable of or interested in implementation of policies. The democratic deficit in the party was reflected in its governing style as democratic institutions were bypassed or subverted. Congress has lost much of its support among Muslims⁶⁸ and the SC/STs to other parties, indicative of growing discontent with their lack of progress under Congress governments.⁶⁹

of demands from its members to the government; aggregation (which they consider to be the 'distinctive and defining goal of a political party'), combining various interests into specific policy proposals.

⁶⁸ An example of how strongly Muslims felt that they had been betrayed by Congress is that when the Babri Masjid (Mosque) in Ayodhya was destroyed by a rabid crowd, led on by the BJP, in December, 1992, 24% of Muslims interviewed held the BJP fully responsible (versus 35% of the Hindus interviewed), 16% believed that the INC was responsible (15% Hindus), and three times as many Muslims as Hindus believed that both Congress and BJP were equally responsible (23% versus 8%). When asked if the national government (which was Congress controlled) was implicated, three quarters of the Muslims agreed (versus 47% of the Hindus). Source: Pradeep K. Chhibber and Subhash Misra, "Hindus and the Babri Masjid: the Sectional Basis of Communal Attitudes", *Asian Survey* (XXXIII:7, July 1993), 665-671.

⁶⁹ See Andrew Hall, "India After the Elections" *Asian Affairs* (XXI, 3: October 1990), 312-323.

As a unit in the party system Congress (I) was no longer the linchpin that held the system together. The party system became more polarized as populism became the means of mobilizing the population. Congress' ties to an array of elites throughout the country had deteriorated or been severed as elites found other parties willing to court them. Defections were still a problem among parties, even with the anti-defection amendment (52nd amendment, 1985) that had slowed defections. Defections are a sign of an uninstitutionalized party, and, when defections become common practice within many of the major parties, can indicate an uninstitutionalized party system. Within a single party, rampant defections may be a barometer of dissatisfaction with party policies, ideology, leadership, and so forth. A party that lacks the capacity or incentives to keep its members in line, instill party discipline, and/or provide a forum for dissident members to voice frustrations may be moving towards the breakdown of the party, i.e. uninstitutionalization. When defections plague the bulk of the parties within the party system, it is likely that the entire party system is becoming uninstitutionalized. In the 1980 and up to the mid 90s the party system itself was becoming less institutionalized. Defections were too frequently a system of rewards or blackmail to earn personal favors in terms of either promotions or access to patronage handouts. The defectors undermine electorate confidence in the party system and stymie the efforts of the voter to hold a party accountable⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ Bhagwan Dua, "India: A Study in the Pathology of a Federal System", Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, Volume XIV, no. 3, (November 1981).

The relations between Congress and other parties disintegrated as the party vacillated between strategies of pitting one party against the other to joining in alliances⁷¹ with parties Congress was denouncing as nationalist, fascist, communal or corrupt in another state. This period saw less and less inter-party cooperation. Congress was not the only party at fault, however. As the opposition calculated their odds of winning without Congress support they were also less willing to compromise and to modify their stances on issues.

Finally, corruption was so commonplace that, by 1996, dozens of Congress government officials, including Narashima Rao, were being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Subsequent investigations involved members of the BJP, the Janata Dal, and most of the state parties⁷². Campaign finance violations were commonplace, and the association of politicians with criminal organizations in major cities was reported on daily. Indian politics had hit a real low. Even the BJP, regarded as the least corrupt of all the parties, was tainted. The rewards of public service were rich indeed, and sharing in the booty degraded the political process and eroded the polity's faith in the institutions. Aware as some of the public was of the rot, a poll indicated that

⁷¹ After the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, December 1992, the Congress government acted ineptly and tepidly, bringing little government pressure to bear on those responsible. Manju Parikh argues that the Congress, with 28 seats short of a majority in the Lok Sabha, relied on the BJP to vote with it so the government did not fall. He cites a number of instances where BJP votes made the difference in a no-confidence vote. See "The Debacle at Ayodhya: Why Militant Hinduism Met with a Weak Response", *Asian Survey*, (XXXIII, 7: July 1993), 673-684.

⁷² Corruption was so flagrant, and the amount of funds, into the millions of dollars, so immense, that it was a cover story and occupied the bulk of the magazine in seven bi-weekly issues of *India Today*: February 15, February 29, March 15, March 31, July 31, September 15, and December 31. Illegal practices in campaign financing warranted its own issue. The period through 1996 was referred to in numerous publications as the not only the criminalization of politics, but the politicization of criminals, as murders, felons, drug dealers, arms dealers, rapists, and other unsavory sorts were wooed by various parties to either contribute to campaigns or to run for office themselves. For a brief summary of the scandals that wracked the government see Sumit Ganguly, "India in 1996: a Year of Upheaval", *Asian Survey*, (37:2, February 1997), 126-136.

more than half disagreed with the statement that corruption was necessary to survive in politics, and a full three-quarters of those polled believed that the level of political corruption was worse than it had been five years before⁷³. The institutions that had the most favorable public trust were the judiciary, and, unlike in the United States, the press.⁷⁴ The CBI and the Electoral Commission, have also ranked high in the esteem of the public. What should bode poorly for procedural democracy is that the Parliament ranks ‘a distant last’ in public trust.⁷⁵

Reservations

In August, 1990, just eight months after taking office, V.P. Singh embarked on a radical course: implementing the recommendations set forth in the 1980 Mandal Commission Report⁷⁶. With very little consultation with either his own party, let alone opposition parties, V.P. Singh unilaterally issued an edict to reserve an additional 27 percent of government jobs and university admissions for a group called ‘other backward castes’ (OBCs); with the pre-existing, constitutionally mandated, 22.5 percent reservations for the scheduled castes/tribes (SC/STs)⁷⁷ brought the number of reserved positions to almost fifty percent. The reservations were to be based on caste affiliation, not on class and poverty levels. The castes, sub-castes (jati) considered to be OBCs

⁷³ India Today, 15 March, 1996, 39.

⁷⁴ Jonathan Karp, “Appealing Activism”, Far Eastern Economic Review, (21 March, 1996), 17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁶ Formally called the Government of India Backward Classes (Mandal) Commission Report, (New Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1981) B.P. Mandal, chairman.

⁷⁷ Reservations for SC/STs were to be limited for twenty years, but have been renewed every time they came up for expiration. The latest expiration was to have been January, 2000, but on January 25, 2000, the President of India signed the 79th Amendment extending reservations to both the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies until 25 January, 2010. (The Hindu).

numbered well over thirty seven hundred, and applied to more than fifty percent of the population⁷⁸.

The immediate reaction to the announcement was protest: the press condemned the action as polarizing the Indian population on the basis of caste, and the upper castes raged against the policy as discriminatory against them. A flurry of violence, self-immolation and rioting arose, especially among Brahmins, who viewed their prospects of advancement even further curtailed. The subject of reservations has been debated on various levels for decades, but the expansion of reservations to such a huge proportion of the population⁷⁹ brought the debate to a climax. Challenges to the policy were filed in court, delaying implementation. And, although many of the parties (especially the BJP, who believed reservations should only be based on financial and educational deprivation) had criticized the Singh initiative, they all soon found that the prospect of half the population of India being 'indebted' to their party was too promising to pass up. The next years saw a 'one-upmanship' as parties competed with each other over who could promise more for this suddenly 'mobilized' portion of the electorate. When the 1991 election brought Congress (I) back to power, the new prime minister, Narasimha Rao, declared that he was planning to implement the suggestions regardless of court approval, but, in addition, he was adding ten percent more reservations to be distributed "among the

⁷⁸ For an ardent rationalization of OBC rights see a tract written by S.B. Kolpe, Mandal Commission's Report: A Charter of Rights of 50 Crore OBCs and Discussion on Findings and Recommendations of the Second Backward Classes Commission, 1988 (Mumbai, [Bombay]: Clarity Publications, 1997).

⁷⁹ Caste designation as a proportion of the population is estimated as follows: upper (or 'forward') castes, 10-12 percent; OBCs, 52 percent; SCs, 16 percent; STs, 8 percent; non-Hindu minorities, 17.6 percent. The percentages of castes are extrapolations based on census figures. The census does not gather information on caste (only on SC/STs). The figures add up to greater than 100 % because the non-Hindu minorities are frequently members of designated castes also. The last census was held in 1991, with another due in the year 2001.

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.”⁸⁰ Professor Bajpai observed that after the initial

upper caste uproar over the Singh government’s decision to revive and implement the long-forgotten Mandal Commission to raise the quota of educational and government employment openings for the OBCs, in 1991 the Congress, the BJP, and everyone else that had opposed Singh’s approach ended up trying to go one better and ‘improve’ on Mandal for the benefit of the Yadavs and other so called OBCs. In short, while the parties sought identities, the constituencies remained far from identifying with particular parties.⁸¹

After the ‘mandalization’ of politics, caste became a more acceptable means of mobilizing voters, even if this trend was decried by the liberal press and the intelligentsia. Parties that sought greater caste solidarity began to attract more voters, especially in states that had not been previously well mobilized, and where economic and social conditions had not improved for people on the lowest rungs of the caste ladder. Thus, states like Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh saw a shifting away from the Congress (I) to new parties that heralded their appeals to a more and more segmented population. Di Palma warned that “one problem about fixed outcomes: once they become obsolete, as they will over time, there are no rules for renegotiation.”⁸² The inherent truth of this statement is borne out in the problem of reservations in India. As the initial clamor over reservations died down, the demand within states grew to include more and more groups, including middle class groups. Since no criteria was even established for what exactly an OBC was, it was left to the states to establish their own criteria. Groups petitioning for recognition of

⁸⁰ Hardgrave and Kochanek, 194.

⁸¹ K. Shankar Bajpai, “India in 1991, New Beginnings”, *Asian Survey*, (XXXII:2, 1992 February2), 207-216.

OBC status grew yearly, in a virtual 'race to the bottom'. Then, groups that did not qualify began lobbying for special reservations. Christians, Buddhists, Muslims⁸³, and Sikhs have, at some time, demanded that they be granted reservations since they too were victims of discrimination. The eightieth Amendment to the Constitution is now awaiting ratification to reserve thirty-three percent of the seats in the Lok Sabha for women⁸⁴. Promised in the campaign manifestoes of both the BJP and the Congress, it is expected that it will pass in this session of parliament.

Caste oriented parties formed in the 'Hindu heartland', the northern states that had been the preserve of the INC. Although the Janata Dal had been the most national party that propounded the causes of the poor, other parties emerged that eventually displaced the Janata Dal, undercutting its broad base of support by siphoning away the lowest strata of voters. The Samajwadi Party, a socialist party that represents low castes in the northern states of India, increased its membership in UP. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) had been founded as a political party in 1984, with the intention of organizing the SCs. The party began to increase its vote share in several states during and after the 1991 election. In 1989 the BSP won ten percent of the vote in UP, doubled it by 1996, and maintained the increase in 1998. Political power was seen as the only avenue that would raise the living standards, and presumably, dignity, of the Dalits. The word Dalit,

⁸² Giuseppe Di Palma, To Craft Democracies, An Essay on Democratic Transitions, (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1990), 41.

⁸³ See Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "A New Demand for Muslim Reservations in India", Asian Survey, (37:9), September 1997 (852-859).

⁸⁴ The 74th Amendment Act, 1992, already reserves 33 % of seats in municipal bodies (and *panchayats*) for women. It reads in part: "not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to SC and ST of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every municipality shall be reserved for women, and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a municipality".

meaning downtrodden or oppressed, has become the preferred terminology for the SCs, reflecting the degrading and accurate position of the lowest social group in India.

Espousing the needs of the Scheduled Castes and Muslims, the party achieved a small but significant thirteen percent of the vote, almost all of which would have come directly from the Congress' share of support.⁸⁵ The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), another low caste party that broke from the Janata Dal, has emulated the BSP in Bihar, also achieving electoral success by appeals to a large minority caste.

Organizing political parties on the basis of caste is not a simple matter in a country like India. Although caste plays a continuing role in the political (let alone the social and economic) realm, it is not a straight forward path to electoral success. There are several reasons for this. First, even when a specific caste is singled out, caste is not the only consideration that affects a voter's preferences. In the past, vote banks were touted as the shortcut to electoral success, and there is evidence that suggests that was the case. However, vote banks required an overwhelming dominance by a single individual or group (usually a 'superior' caste in the village) to coerce a village or district to vote a particular way enmasse. As the Election Commission has become more reactive to charges of 'booth capturing', and has taken steps to monitor fair elections more diligently, the overt coercion has been reduced. Pressure from within the caste to conform to its leadership was also a means of extracting a specific result from the electorate. But, as the voters have learned that voting secrecy can be maintained, even voters in rural villages have increasingly voted according to their own chosen criteria.

⁸⁵ See Atul Kohli, "From Majority to Minority Rule", *op.cit.*

Another problem for caste-based parties is that there are just too many castes to organize across the country. Castes in India are not just a few monolithic units such as the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, and, at the bottom of the hierarchy, the ‘Untouchables’ (SCs). Rather, castes are further divided into a multitude of jati, sub castes, and sub units of them, and the composition of a district, and certainly of a state, varies broadly. Thus, even if a ‘caste party’ were possible, it would have to re-invent itself across the state. National parties based on caste have had only mediocre and short lived success. Caste-based parties have had an impact on the voting patterns in states but long-term success depends on how well those parties translate promises into programs, and programs into measurable improvements in the lives of their supporters, an achievement sadly missing from most parties. When parties do not perform, incumbents are replaced.

The proliferation of group-specific parties was most apparent in the states, unable to evolve into mass parties with universal appeal throughout the country as a whole. Part of the multiplication of parties could be traced to the increasing importance of regional issues, a result of greater federalism in the country.

Federalism

Federalism took root in the period from 1984 to 1996. This may seem to be a contradiction from what has been argued above – that centralization of power had been practiced by both Indira and Rajiv Gandhi – but nevertheless, federalism had become more of a reality during the last half of the 1980s and continued to expand into the 1990s. There were several causes for this. India’s economy in the 1980s had been plagued with high inflation, high interest rates, high foreign debt and low foreign reserves, high trade

deficits, budget deficits, slow productivity, and a virtual maze of governmental regulations and impediments to private entrepreneurship. In short, there was a mounting economic crisis that had to be addressed. Populist programs propagated by both the central and state governments had depleted their treasuries. Rajiv Gandhi set out to liberalize the economy, a process that had limited political backing and only minor success at the beginning, but began to swing the pendulum away from socialist development (or lack of) to a capitalist economy. The reforms stumbled during the short National Front rule, but began again in earnest during Narasimha Rao's leadership. Faced with massive budget deficits, the federal government decided that states had to accept more fiscal responsibility and decreased cash flows to the state governments. Forced to fend for themselves, states began liberalizing their own economies, opening up their markets to private enterprise and soliciting foreign investment on their own behalf. The new pro-capitalist attitudes in some states began to pay large dividends as their economies improved⁸⁶. Even the state of West Bengal under the leadership of an avowed communist since 1977, Jyoti Basu, set about to woo investors with promises to create a market-friendly environment⁸⁷. As the national government loosened its restrictions on imports, exports, tariffs, regulations and red-tape in general, the states that followed suit saw drastic improvements in their economies as the flood of private

⁸⁶ James Manor notes that "since 1991 the federal system has often aided the cause of economic reform by enabling New Delhi to 'off-load' some of the pain associated with liberalization to state-level arenas, where the resulting tensions are largely quarantined. Many state-level politicians have proven themselves highly adroit at the political management of reform, and some state governments have developed imaginative innovations in economic policy. All of this, combined with the generally cautious and limited nature of the reforms, has helped to make them more politically sustainable." "Making Federalism Work" Journal of Democracy, 9:3, (1998), 21.

⁸⁷ See The Economist, (24 June, 1995), 29-30, and Far Eastern Economic Review, (26 January, 1995, page 28, 2 February, 1995, p 42).

enterprise expanded their economies. Table 14 shows the differences in state domestic growth rates by states over two time periods.

TABLE 14
Annual Rates of Growth of Per
Capita Gross State Domestic Product

STATE	1980-1991	1992-1998
	(% p.a.)	(%p.a.)
Bihar	2.45	1.12
Rajasthan	3.96	3.96
Uttar Pradesh	2.60	1.24
Orissa	2.38	1.64
Madhya Pradesh	2.08	3.87
Andhra Pradesh	3.34	3.45
Tamil Nadu	3.87	4.95
Kerala	2.19	4.52
Karnataka	3.28	3.45
West Bengal	2.39	5.04
Gujarat	3.08	5.04
Haryana	3.86	7.57
Maharashtra	3.58	6.13
Punjab	3.33	2.80
Combined SDP (14 States)	3.03	4.02

source: <http://planningcommission.nic.in/stanfors2000.htm>

The economic success of some states impelled others to devise ways to attract investors, and the competition between states increased. Because some states have been more able (and willing) to adjust to the new economic environment, inequality between states has become more acute. Table 15 lists the inequality among the states over the last twenty years.

TABLE 15⁸⁸
TREND IN GINI COEFFICIENT MEASURING
INTER-STATE INEQUALITY

1980-81	0.152
1981-82	0.152
1982-83	0.152
1983-84	0.151
1984-85	0.154
1985-86	0.159
1986-87	0.157
1987-88	0.161
1988-89	0.158
1989-90	0.175
1990-91	0.171
1991-92	0.175
1992-93	0.199
1993-94	0.207
1994-95	0.205
1995-96	0.230
1996-97	0.222
1997-98	0.235
1998-99	0.233

Mounting inequality among the states has been problematic for the central government as the issue of how to distribute revenue equitably. Poorer states demand a greater portion of the budget, but states that have profited from economic liberalism complain that the “reforming and performing states are being punished for reducing poverty, building infrastructure and controlling their populations.”⁸⁹ The unequal development of states has surely been a mixed blessing – some states are making real strides in reducing overall poverty within their states, while others continue to suffer from multiple disadvantages: high population growth, poor governance, and stagnant economic growth. Table 16 graphically displays the uneven poverty levels in the

⁸⁸ Source: Indian Planning Commission (<http://planningcommission.nic.in/stanfords2000.htm>)

⁸⁹ Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, as quoted in “The Trouble with Wealth”, *Far Eastern Economic Review* (14 September, 2000), 24.

states, from a low of 11.77% of Punjabis living in poverty, to a high of almost 55% of Biharis in poverty. More recent data would likely show even a greater gulf among the states.

TABLE 16⁹⁰
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION IN POVERTY

State	1983	1987-8	1993-4
Bihar	52.22	52.13	54.96
Rajasthan	34.46	35.15	27.41
Uttar Pradesh	47.07	41.46	40.85
Orissa	65.29	55.58	48.56
Madhya Pradesh	49.78	43.07	42.52
Andhra Pradesh	28.91	25.86	22.19
Tamil Nadu	51.66	43.39	35.03
Kerala	40.42	31.79	25.43
Karnataka	38.24	37.53	33.16
West Bengal	54.85	44.72	35.66
Gujarat	32.79	31.54	24.21
Haryana	21.37	16.64	25.05
Maharashtra	43.44	40.41	36.86
Punjab	16.18	13.42	11.77
All 14 States	43.80	39.92	36.25
All India	44.48	38.86	35.97

The central government may still give lip service to national economic schemes but the reality is that states are more responsible for concocting their own economic agendas. As fiscal deficits at the national level increased, New Delhi reduced its involvement in direct economic development in the states, decentralized decision making and allowed states to pursue their own plans. States that have prospered under the new conditions are less willing to allow the central government to impinge on their advances, and advocate further decentralization. These states are also more apt to have stronger

⁹⁰ Source: Indian Planning Commission (<http://planningcommission.nic.in/stanfors2000.htm>)

state parties that play important roles in the formation of coalition government at the national level⁹¹.

Another factor that abetted a stronger federal system was the expansion of the panchayat system throughout the country. Panchayat government, a system of village level governing bodies, had been included in the original Constitution, (Article 40)⁹².

Some states had implemented this directive, with varying degrees of success. Four states, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, had instituted panchayat raj (PR) (council government) in the 1950s. They were touted as instruments that would democratize local development by including the poor and low caste segments of the community, and could better direct the use of development monies to local needs.

According to Sudipta Kaviraj, panchayati raj was introduced as an

opportunity for the rural poor to use the weight of their numbers to overbalance the traditional dominance that small coterries of the economically powerful enjoyed over them through economic means. This was a direct attempt, from the top down, to link democracy with development and to induce ordinary people to link the power of the poor to the instruments of democracy. Unfortunately, the results were surprisingly negative. In most cases, the landed elite used their usurious control over the poorer peasantry to bring them into line and make them cede the formal powers of local self-government to the dominant landed groups. Eventually, the consequence of the local self-government reforms came to be largely the opposite of what Nehruvian reformers had expected. Instead of undermining the economic power of a small rural elite and empowering the poor, it gave to the dominance of that elite itself the dubious seal of electoral approval, adding to economic effectiveness a new form of political legitimacy. It was only later, when politicians in the 1970s sought to mobilize ordinary people in desperate moves to win elections, that the questions of disadvantage and democracy were somewhat more successfully linked.⁹³

⁹¹ For example, Andhra Pradesh and the Telugu Desam (TDP), Tamil Nadu (DMK), Haryana (Haryana Vikas), Maharashtra and Gujarat (Shiv Sena), all provided XXX seats to the BJP coalition in the 1999 election.

⁹² The following statement is in the Directive Principles of State Policy: "the State shall take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."

⁹³ Sudipta Kaviraj, "Dilemmas of Democratic Development in India", in Democracy and Development, Theory and Practice, Adrian Leftwich, ed., (Cambridge, MA.: Polity Press, 1996), 124.

Experiments in panchayat raj in the 1960s and 1970s in West Bengal and Karnataka were also deemed to be unsuccessful. Attempts by the districts to channel resources through the village units were thwarted by bureaucrats at higher levels, and funding was erratic. Even elections to the panchayat boards were postponed or nullified, further de-legitimizing the councils in the eyes of the electors. The overall effect of the panchayat experience was below expectations. A careful analysis of actual benefits showed that “the benefits of development were being cornered by organized vested interest groups in the PR bodies at the expense of the rural poor. ...Power in the districts is enjoyed mainly by dominant castes and the interests of the poor are sacrificed to the interests of the district leadership.”⁹⁴ Hoshiar Singh faulted the demise of local government to the conflict between state and national governments to retain control over development projects.

During the Rajiv Gandhi government efforts were undertaken to drive through a new constitutional amendment to establish panchayats, with clearer guidelines and authority, but the act failed to pass the upper house of parliament. Singh suggests that the reason for its defeat was because state governments distrusted New Delhi, interpreting the empowerment of panchayat rule as an undermining of state autonomy, state control, and the creation of more firmly established strings between the local unit and the center. The National Front government amended the act by making the states responsible for oversight⁹⁵, resolving one of the major state concerns, but the government

⁹⁴ Hoshiar Singh, “Constitutional Base for *Panchayati Raj* in India”, *Asian Survey*, XXXIV:9 (September, 1994), 818-827.

⁹⁵ Andrew Hall “India After the Elections”, *Asian Affairs* (XXI:3), October 1990, 321.

was dissolved before action could be taken. It was not until 1991 under the Rao government that panchayat rule again was introduced.

Panchayat rule was formally legitimated with the passage of the seventy-third Amendment on 24 April, 1993. Panchayats have been slowly evolving into units that are more representative and more attuned to the needs of the particular community. The constitutional amendment provided that one third of the seats on village councils were to be filled by women, as well as one-third of the SC/ST seats⁹⁶. Through these local and district councils, a wider array of people are becoming politically involved⁹⁷. The tasks for the village and municipal councils include not only approving (or rejecting) development plans, but also acting as intermediaries between their constituents and the bureaucracy. Disgruntled citizens have direct access to air grievances and seek resolution of their complaints. Decentralization is gaining credence as local governments become more democratized and accountable.

For federalism to exist two features are considered essential: independent sources of revenue for the states, and devolution of power. The changes of the last decade have increased the capacity of the states to raise their own revenues, and the insertion of panchayat governments have strengthened the bonds between local and state governments. The centralizing efforts of New Delhi have abated in the last decade. As a cause or effect of more state autonomy, the secessionist movements that marred most of the 1980s and early 1990s have been subdued. Center-state relations have improved as the national government allows states to pursue their own development plans. And,

⁹⁶ Article 243T(3) of the Constitution.

because the ruling party is dependent on states' parties to remain in power, the inclination to intrude into state matters will be curtailed. This may be one of the strengths of the coalition government that has defined the last period of party development, the years from 1996 to the present.

Phase V: 1996 – 1999

Federalism, Coalition Governments, And Fragmentation Of Party Alliances.

The period from 1996 to 1999 was a real test for the stability of India. Three separate elections produced five prime ministers⁹⁸. Atal Behari Vajpayee, leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was prime minister three times in this short period, and at this time is the current prime minister, leading a coalition of fourteen other parties, thirteen of which are state parties. Besides the 182 seats the BJP won on its own, the government is propped up by an additional 120 seats from its allies, giving the government a majority with 302 of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha.

The turmoil of the last four years is indicative of a sea change in the Indian political party system. The rise of the BJP, from winning a mere two votes in 1984 to winning a plurality of seats in each election since 1996 has confounded and dismayed many political scientists. Concern that a 'religious nationalist' party was raking in

⁹⁷ An article discussing the composition of women in municipal councils has been published by Subhash C. Arora and R.K. Prabhakar, "A Study of Municipal Council Elections in India: Socioeconomic Background of Women candidates in Rohtak, Haryana", *Asian Survey*, (37:10, October 1997), 918-927.

⁹⁸ On 16 May, 1996 A.B. Vajpayee became PM for twelve days, within which time he could not accumulate enough coalition votes to retain office. The United Front then amassed enough votes from a gaggle of parties, and with Congress promises to support the government from outside, and H.D. Gowda stepped into the Prime Ministership. He lasted nine months, and the government was reorganized, putting Inder Kumar Gujral into office on 21 April, 1997. His government lasted until Congress again withdrew support, in November, 1997, requiring new elections in early 1998. This election was narrowly won by the BJP, Vajpayee was again PM, but again, the party could scrape together a bare majority, dependent on thirteen parties, some of them highly unreliable, unpredictable, and irresponsible. This government lasted thirteen months when the government lost a vote of confidence by a single vote.

support from so many varied sources spelled doom for the secular democratic state ignited a flurry of articles and books to explain or portend what was to happen if the BJP ruled. Lacking from the calculus of most observers was the thesis that once parties in India serve in government their positions moderate, their rhetoric is tempered, and their policies resemble the centrist norm⁹⁹. Extremism seems to be a stance only for those parties and individuals out of power, not for those governing. The party manifestoes issued prior to the 1999 election depict ideological centrism by the two major national parties, the INC and the BJP, as shown in the Table 2 (page 73). This may very well be due to the need for parties to join into alliances, frequently with ideologically opposite parties. Parties that had branded the BJP as a pariah only two years before were willing to enter into pre-election partnerships with it in the September/October election after they had all hammered out a common manifesto. The extremist elements that had characterized the BJP in the early 1990s have been removed from the BJP platform. The controversial issue of rebuilding a Hindu temple on the site of the destroyed mosque in Ayodhya was dropped from the BJP agenda, having been rejected by the leadership in this new government. The BJP is still supported by an extremist Hindu organization but the core of its support has shifted, making the BJP less dependent on the RSS for grass roots mobilization. From a middle class, upper caste party it has broadened its appeal. In Orissa, one of the poorest states, BJP support among the Scheduled Tribes has risen from less than 1% in 1980 to electing a BJP representative in three (and a near majority in one other) of its five constituencies in 1999. The alliance partners are state and regional parties.

⁹⁹ See Party Manifestoes in Appendix, (page XXX) and Table 2, page 73 of this dissertation.

What has happened to the party system in the last four years is a readjustment to new circumstances: Congress as a party has disintegrated as an organizational behemoth, leaving in its wake a political vacuum. Politics in India have become so regionalized over the last decade that no party can expect to win a national election unless it forms alliances with state parties. Table 11 (page 191) shows the electoral clout that state parties have brought to bear in the last four elections, almost doubling their seats to 25 percent. However, the numbers do not tell the whole story. The performance of state parties could conceivably have been higher. The pre-election alliances distributed seats in such a manner that the alliance partners did not compete against each other, allowing the national parties to win a greater share of seats.

Congress may be able to revamp and win elections again, but not if it continues to operate under the notion that it can govern alone, using minor parties as mere window dressing. The numbers do not add up. Congress won its fewest number of seats in its history, 113. Over-confidence in its own attractiveness, coupled with a blind spot in understanding the importance of alliances led it to choose its alliances poorly. Of its ten partners, three parties did not win a single seat; only two parties, the RJD and the AIADMK, contributed a sizable chunk of votes (17 total), bringing the total for the alliance to 136.

The party system has become a complicated maze of parties. There are, in fact, two separate but interconnected party systems, one at the national level, and one at the states level. The parties in the states remain regionally oriented, and are unlikely to be able to broaden their bases beyond their limited spheres. Therefore, they have no real

hope of serving in the government except as part of a coalition. They have more power as 'king makers', demanding cabinet posts as reward for supporting the government.

In a country as diverse as India, regional differences are bound to result in a wide array of demands, needs, wants. Much as the early Congressmen wanted to unify the country under a single banner of development, of language, and of party, a maturing electorate would not long be able to abide this uniformity. Cleavages could not always be broached by consensus. Conflict is manifest in a political environment. Federalism as an institutional arrangement helps to limit the scope of conflict within smaller confines. It provides a means by which regional differences can be arbitrated. William Riker, while assessing the merits of different electoral systems, makes a point about federalism that is particularly appropriate in the case of India. He writes that federalism,

entirely apart from its other constitutional significance, is important for restraints on legislatures. It locates authority over nominations for national office in processes and politicians not controlled, or selected by, national officials. Hence, leaders of national political parties cannot force members of the national legislature to follow the policies of the national leaders simply because the national leaders have no control over the nomination, or, more importantly, the renomination of national legislators. This feature of federalism might be described simply as political decentralization, and it seems to be increasingly characteristic of Canada and possibly India.¹⁰⁰

The cacophony of different parties is not an unexpected, nor necessarily, an unwelcome, effect of mobilization of a population that is so heterogeneous. The increasingly important role of a federal system has contributed to the differentiation of parties. The confusion that results at the national level does impede the legislative process, but the tradeoff is more representation of the disparate people.

¹⁰⁰ William H. Riker, "Electoral Systems and Constitutional Restraints", in Choosing an Electoral System: Issues and Alternatives, Arend Lijphart and Bernard Grofman, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1984) 109.

Governance in India lacks leadership, consensus, and efficacy. It is a convoluted maze that retards performance and initiative. However, these failures cannot diminish the significance of the electoral process itself. Rampant competition has forced parties and politicians to mobilize more and more of the population. Participation, in and of itself, has the effect of holding the government accountable and bolstering democracy.

Volume II of II

The Indian Political Party System: a Basis of Indian Democracy

A Dissertation

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Politics Department

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by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Summary and Findings

The objective of this dissertation is to examine whether an institutionalized political party system is a necessary component in the consolidation and maintenance of a democracy. An institutionalized party system was defined as “a stable pattern of interactions among the competing party elites on the one hand and among these elites and the voters on the other.”¹ A great deal has been written supporting the idea that there is in fact a correlation between an institutionalized party system and democratic consolidation. Seymour Lipset stresses that “the centrality of institutionalized party competition” as the essence of democracy, echoing and expanding on the work of E.E. Schattschneider’s assertion that “political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties.”² Parties, in this perspective, are valuable representations of cleavages in a society and provide the means through which these cleavages are identified, aggregated, and articulated. The conflict among parties “helps establish democratic norms and rules.”³

¹ Gabor Toka, “Political Parties in East Central Europe, in Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies. (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 97.

² Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Indispensability of Political Parties”, Journal of Democracy, (11:1; 2000) 48-55, 48.

³ *Ibid.*, 48.

Using India as a case study, the question was explored by analyzing the party system for the last fifty years, and tracing the development of a multi-party system from the original dominant party system that had characterized India's first thirty years. During this time the participatory rates of the Indian electorate has risen steadily, as has the commitment to the electoral process itself. With the numbers of voters increasing more than four fold (from 173 million in 1952 to 620 million in 1999), there has also been an increase in the level of participation, averaging about sixty percent⁴. State elections see an even higher rate of participation⁵. More than two-thirds of the population, regardless of their socio-economic status, when asked if India would be governed better if there were no political parties, legislatures, or elections, rejected this outright⁶. More than half the respondents (58.6%) believe that their votes have an effect on governmental policy making, demonstrating confidence in political parties in general⁷.

In India, the party system has been evolving, from being well institutionalized during the first two decades, traversing backwards towards rather uninstitutionalized, and only recently beginning to swing back towards more institutionalized. However, the latest trend is too nascent to be able to predict whether this will in fact occur. On the question of democratic consolidation, the

⁴ See Table 7, page 100, for data.

⁵ See Table A-13, in Appendix for data.

⁶ See Table A-1 in Appendix.

⁷ Furthermore, persons who have voted for one of the major parties are more likely to believe that their votes have an effect. Data: Left Front voters, 67.9%; National Front, 62.2%; BJP, 61.4%; Congress, 59.4%; Bahujan Samaj Party, 55.8%. Subrata Mitra and V.B. Singh, Democracy and Social Change in India: A Cross Sectional Analysis of the National Electorate, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), 141 and 154.

deepening of the relevance of and affinity for the democratic system itself, (becoming the 'only game in town'), evidence shows that democracy is of increasing importance to the Indian polity.

Because political parties are deemed to be crucial links between voters and the government their role in fostering democratic attitudes was examined to see if the proliferation of parties undermines or bolsters democratic attitudes and practices within the polity. Generally proliferation of political parties has been accompanied by weaker political parties and movement towards the deinstitutionalization of parties and the party system. An uninstitutionalized party is less capable of performing its role in aggregating, articulating, and representing its members, or governing effectively if elected. An uninstitutionalized political system distorts competition and can undermine the democratic process.

Therefore, the proliferation of political parties and the weak institutionalization the party system in India should have led to declining levels of satisfaction within the electorate of parties, of government, and ultimately, in democracy itself.

Instead, support for the democratic system has been steadily increasing. Almost sixty percent of the voters believe their votes matter, and that their participation has an effect (and should have an effect on) policy making.⁸ Thus, the question arises as to whether the institutionalization of the party system is necessary in the consolidation of a democracy.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that the proliferation of political parties contributes to Indian democracy by providing individuals and groups a variety of options through which they can assert claims, demand action, and participate in politics. The lack of a well-institutionalized party system has had a deleterious effect in terms of being able to enact programs and has hindered economic development. Accountability is shrouded in disorder. However, the regard that the Indian voter has for democracy as a process has continued to rise. Despite arduous physical impediments to voting that are endogenous to a large country with a relatively underdeveloped infrastructure, people walk a mile or two in scorching heat and wait in endless lines in order to make their mark on a ballot. The percentages of people voting in every single national election have been increasing since the first election.

The composition of the voters is also a healthy sign of how important elections are to the Indian voters. The numbers of women voting are almost equal to the numbers of men, and in some states, women voters outnumber male voters. Unlike the United States, the poor, the illiterate, the rural, all the portions of the population that are usually underrepresented in American elections, are the most likely to exercise their franchise in India. These figures have steadily increased over the years. When the voting age was reduced to eighteen years, young voters went straight to the polling places, voting in large numbers. This bodes well for the future of the democratic process in India.

⁸ Subrata Mitra and V.B. Singh, 140-141.

Additionally, voters are holding their elected officials accountable. Incumbents are much more likely to be rejected than re-elected by the Indian voter, a trend that began in early 1980 and continues as the voters register their disappointment through their vote. Considering the rates of illiteracy, the relative scarcity of media (although that is growing more available), and the complexity of the ballot, often having several dozen candidates and symbols for each office, the sophistication of the voter is rather remarkable. Voters may not be cognizant of the daily scandals that abound in New Delhi, but they do know whether the candidate delivered on his or her promises. The failure of the government to effectuate programs has contributed to the volatility of the electorate, eroding another criterion of the institutionalization of the party system.

Voting is a means of empowerment and a safety valve to register dissatisfaction. India's elections in and of themselves, are political socialization processes that reinforce democratic controls, make governments accountable, and instill in the electorate the importance of their votes and support. But elections are also more than that in Indian villages. They are a community affair, a burst of color and excitement on an otherwise drab and difficult existence. Walter Hauser and Wendy Singer⁹ studied the popularity of elections in India, describing the process as a 'ritual', a cultural expression of public will and the right to affect the future. The entire electoral process, from vying for party endorsements, attending campaign rallies (not just the rallies of the person one intends to vote for), and

⁹ Walter Hauser and Wendy Singer, "The Democratic Rite: Celebration and Participation in the Indian Elections", *Asian Survey* (26:9, September, 1986), 941-958.

marking the ballot are all part of the ritual, but the elections are also celebratory events that they have become ingrained in the community and social life of many villagers. It is not of course only the festivity of the elections that have endeared the democratic process to so many. Hope percolates among the voters that this time a 'good' government will come to power, one that can, and will, keep the promises they screamed from megaphones only weeks earlier. Hilton Root titled an essay, written on a different subject, "A Liberal India: the Triumph of Hope over Experience"¹⁰, a title that could and often does describe the Indian voter.

Sudipta Kaviraj has observed that

One of the remarkable things about Indian democracy however is that despite considerable dissatisfaction about such issues as the state, economic growth and social conflicts, no social or political group has expressed dissatisfaction with democracy." This seems to confirm Tocqueville's notion that democracy is not merely arguably the best form of government but, once established in a society, it is historically irreversible.¹¹

This evaluation then raises the question: how did democracy in India become so resilient and entrenched despite weak parties and weak institutionalization of the party system? This dissertation suggests that in the first two decades of independence India was fortunate to have an institutionalized party system centered around a predominate political party, the Indian National Congress. After 1967 the institutionalization of the INC, and the party system itself, began to disintegrate. The dissolution of the party system had many causes.

¹⁰ Hilton L. Root, "A Liberal India: the Triumph of Hope over Experience", *Asian Survey* (38:5, May 1998), 510.

¹¹ Sudipta Kaviraj, *India: Dilemmas of Democratic Development*, 133.

First, centralization of power by the Congress Party, and the government which it controlled, resulted in weakened INC state parties and ineffective implementation of policies at the state level, leading to the electoral success of opposition parties in the states. Structural influences fostered regional autonomy and group identities, and gave rise to state parties. Unmet demands were mobilized by other elites and by non-elites and organized into parties, and parties then proliferated. Finally, the incapacity of the ineffectual parties to govern resulted in increasing turnover of elected officials as anti-incumbency attitudes were rife among the electorate. The 1980s and 1990s can be characterized as a period with a weakly institutionalized party system. If institutionalized party systems require that interactions between the competing elites, and the elites and the electorate, are stable, then the national party system in India at this time cannot be deemed institutionalized.

The instability of recent governments, the inefficacy of the governments to produce policies or implement the few programs they do enact, smoldering communal conflicts combined with the rapid rise of caste based parties, as well as the Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, combined with the intractable poverty in India has led many scholars to conclude that India's experiment with democracy will end in failure. The last ten years have seen a spate of books and journal or newspaper articles decrying the decline of the Congress Party as the last bulwark against chaos, partition, or the imposition of a reactionary regime.

It has only been in the last few years that the party system has begun inching its way back towards institutionalization. After the latest election results

were released the mood of analysts began to shift towards more optimism. The New York Times¹², the Times of London, and The Economist, for example, ran stories that looked beyond the clamorous tumult of India's conflicts and saw instead a political system that is evolving. Part of that evolution requires that more, rather than fewer, people become involved in the democratic process. Having studied India for the last three years, it is the opinion of this researcher that in a heterogeneous country like India, the more ways in which voters can engage and the more decentralized the government becomes, the more democratic, and eventually, more stable, the country will be.

This perspective deviates sharply from that of Arend Lijphart. Lijphart credits a consociational arrangement in India as the driving force behind democratic deepening. In this paper I have argued that the breakdown of the Congress system (which is the backbone of Lijphart's consociational model) has altered the party system, brought numerous parties into the political forum, expanded participation, and made democracy more accessible, more valuable, and more necessary to the population as a whole. In short, my interpretation of events is in direct contradiction to Lijphart's..

India's democracy has deepened due precisely because of the competitiveness and turnover of government. Di Palma remarks that democracy's strength lies in the emphasis on process – the “competitive political market giving contestants fairly equal chances to affect and share in outcomes”¹³, not in

¹² For example, a New York Times headline declared “Results Show Voters’ Pragmatism”, and a related article, “Stable Rule Possible in India as Hindu Alliance Wins Vote” (8 October, 1999).

¹³ Giuseppe Di Palma, To Craft Democracies, (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press), 41.

determining fixed outcomes. Consociationalism tries to eliminate the competitiveness of politics and substitute 'negotiated' outcomes. This is paternalistic, even if well meaning. India's downtrodden have already suffered too much from paternalism.

Prospects for democratic stability in India

The expansion of electoral choice and the involvement of people in the democratic process have contributed to the deepening of democratic values in India, but are they sufficient for sustaining democracy in the long term? Although this dissertation has tended to be optimistic, it would be naïve to believe that participation alone will be enough to prop up a corrupt, an inept, or an unstable government indefinitely. Legitimacy, an immeasurable but relevant aspect of stable regimes, is eventually undermined if governments cannot deliver an improving quality of life for the bulk of its citizens. Government performance, especially in a parliamentary system, depends on well disciplined and accountable political parties, i.e., an 'institutionalized' political party system. It seems unlikely that this will come about through either the former model of a one-party dominant model or a two (or two plus) party system. Instead, coalition governments consisting of one national and a coterie of state parties will probably continue to form governments for the near future.

Because it seems unlikely that a well institutionalized party system will develop any time soon, there are some institutional safeguards that could be adopted that would impose an exogenous discipline to the parliamentary system.

In September, 1998, a panel was established to study possible reforms in electoral laws that could further the representativeness, fairness, and transparency of elections and governance. This panel, the Law Commission, spent eight months developing recommendations that were then presented in a report to Parliament in May of 1999.¹⁴ Many of the recommendations are highly controversial, such as barring independent candidates from contesting elections, fixing a five year term for all legislative bodies, re-establishing simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, requiring a winning candidate to amass at least fifty percent of the vote (or face run-offs), and denying any party without at least five percent of the total vote from obtaining a seat. Less contentious recommendations are the constructive vote of no-confidence, termination of reserved seats reserved seats for Anglo-Indians¹⁵, public audits of the financial accounts of all political parties, declaration by all candidates of financial assets (as well as past and pending criminal charges against them), and the tightening of anti-defection laws, disqualifying the candidatures of any defectors from any party or pre-election coalition. Some procedural reforms to stem the splintering of parties could impart to the party system greater institutionalization without sacrificing the integrity of the democratic process.

The enactment of a constructive vote of confidence, borrowed from the German political system, would restrain parties from toppling, or threatening to

¹⁴ "Law Commission Recommends Sweeping Changes in Electoral Laws", [wysiwyg://8/http://www.indiadeclides.com/election99/itoday/archives/reforms.shtml](http://www.indiadeclides.com/election99/itoday/archives/reforms.shtml).

¹⁵ Two seats in the Lok Sabha have been set aside for representation from the Anglo-Indian community, something that had historical merit in the first years of independence, but is little more than an anachronism now.

topple, governments as a blackmail technique or simply to gain extra cabinet posts. The Anti-Defection Act of 1985 helped control the flood of defections but does not apply to pre-poll alliances (coalitions and Fronts), nor is it stringently enforced.

CONCLUSIONS

After considering the democratic experiences of India the conclusion that this researcher has reached is that participation in the democratic process is one of the most important single elements in entrenching democracy. In a country with multiple cleavages, high levels of diversity, and structural inequalities, expanding participation to include minorities, the downtrodden and the marginalized cannot be achieved within a single political party, regardless of how large the 'umbrella' is. The early Congress party could be a 'party of consensus' as long as there was a consensus to be found. The institutionalization of the party (and the system) began to disintegrate when newly mobilized groups were rapidly introduced into the system. The chaos that followed is only now beginning to settle back into a semblance of party system institutionalization.

Institutionalization of the party system fortifies democratic consolidation, but does it 'consolidate a democracy', or is it just an attribute of an already consolidated democracy? Until the substance of the competitiveness within the system itself has been fully formulated it can be expected that parties and party systems will continue to metamorphose. During that metamorphosis it is unrealistic and unlikely that the party system will remain institutionalized.

Delimitation's of study and further research

The scope of this dissertation was limited to a single case, India. It would be a valuable exercise to study other states that have been wrestling with consolidating a democratic regime under similarly complicated and tenacious obstacles. Kenya and Nigeria are both countries that, at independence, had a dominant political party, respected and democratic leadership, and a diverse, divided, population. In these cases opposition parties were suppressed and competition curtailed. In both these examples disorder, poor economic development, and the perpetuation of ethnic and sectoral conflict has been the legacy of their non-democratic governments.

There is a bias in Western political science studies towards valuing order over change and chaos, even if chaos is a temporary condition of readjustment of power equations. Democracy is purported to be the ultimate system of government, but too much of the literature focuses on what conditions are in place in states that already have consolidated and smoothly operating democracies. We forget to emphasize that the democracy is first and foremost a process, not an end. It is in the process that participation and representation play such a valuable role. It may be a greater contribution to understanding democratic consolidation if we were to evaluate democratic systems by how much and how meaningfully the population can and does participate in that process.

APPENDIX

VICEROYS AND GOVERNORS OF INDIA (1856-1947)

1856-62	Lord Canning (last Company Governor-General, first Viceroy)
1864-69	Sir John Lawrence
1869-72	Earl of Minto
1872-76	Earl of Northbrook
1876-80	Lord Lytton
1880-84	Lord Ripon
1884-88	Lord Dufferin
1888-94	Lord Lansdowne
1894-99	Lord Elgin
1899-1904	Lord Curzon
1904	Lord Ampthill
1904-05	Lord Curzon
1905-10	Lord Minto
1910-16	Lord Hardinge
1916-21	Lord Chelmsford
1921-25	Lord Reading
1925	Lord Lytton (2 nd)
1925-26	Lord Reading
1926-29	Lord Irwin (Earl of Halifax)
1929	Lord Goshen
1929-31	Lord Irwin
1931-34	Lord Willingdon
1934	Sir George Stanley
1934-36	Lord Willingdon
1936-43	Lord Linlithgow
1943-47	Lord Wavell
1947	Lord Mountbatten (last viceroy)

INDIA'S PRIME MINISTERS

1947-1964	Jawaharlal Nehru (Congress Party). Died in office, May 27.
1964-1966	Lal Bhadur Shastri (Congress Party). Died in office, January 11.
1966-1977	Indira Gandhi (Congress Party) 24 January 1966-24 March 1977.
1977-1979	Morarji Desai (Janata Party, a multiparty front). March 24-27 July 1979.
1979-1980	Chaudhury Charan Singh ((Janata Party). July 28-14 January 1980.
1980-1984	Indira Gandhi (Congress (I) Party) January 14. Assassinated October 31.
1984-1989	Rajiv Gandhi (Congress (I) Party). October 31 - 1 December 1989.
1989-1990	Vishwanath Pratap Singh (National Front coalition party). December 2.
1990-1991	Chandra Shekhar (Samajwadi Janata Party). November 10-21 June 1991.
1991-1996	Narasimha Rao (Congress (I) Party). June 21 - 16 May 1996.
1996-1996	Atal Bihari Vajpayee (minority Bharatiya Janata Party -BJP). May 15-28.
1996-1997	Deve Gowda (United Front – a coalition of 13 or more parties). June 1.
1997-1998	Inder Kumar Gujral (United Front, now 14 or 15 parties, varies) April 21.
1998- 1999	Atul Bihari Vajpayee
1999 ---	Atul Bihari Vajpayee

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1885 Indian National Congress (INC) founded
- 1905 Partition of Bengal
- 1906 Muslim League formed
- 1906 INC declared self government as its goal
- 1909 Separate electorate for Muslims in Councils
- 1912 Partition of Bengal annulled, capitol shifted to Delhi
- 1915 Gandhi returns to India
- 1915 Congress and Muslim League sign Pact in Lucknow; Congress accepts separate electorate for Muslims, minority, and weightage of vote for minorities.
- 1917 August 20; Declaration of Policy of British Government in India that gradual introduction of responsible government in India by Indians would be an objective.
- 1919 Government of India Act
- 1919 Amristar Massacre
- 1935 Government of India Act
- 1940 Muslim League adopts the 'Two Nations' resolution at Lahore.
- 1947 August 15. Partition of subcontinent and Independence for India and Pakistan.
- 1947 Jawaharlal Nehru becomes Prime Minister. Serves until his death (27 May 1964).
- 1947 War with Pakistan (undeclared), lasting until January 1, 1949.
- 1948 January 30. Mahatma Gandhi assassinated.
- 1950 26 January, Indian Constitution becomes law.
- 1951 Bharatiya Jana Singh (BJS) founded (Indian People's Party)
- 1951 First elections; won by INC; Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru; 100 million votes cast. INC won 45% of vote, 362/489 seats in Lok Sabha; BJS won 3 seats.
- 1957 Second Lok Sabha elections; INC wins 48% of the vote, BJS 6% (4 seats).
- 1957 Swatantra Party (Freedom party) founded.
- 1962 Third Election; INC wins 361/494 seats, BJS wins 14 seats. 216 million votes cast.
- 1962 Indian-China border war.
 - 1964 Lal Bahadur Shastri becomes Prime Minister after Nehru's death; Shastri died in office, 11 January 1966.
- 1965 Second war with Pakistan (August 5-September 23).
- 1966 January 24. Indira Gandhi (Nehru's daughter) becomes PM.
- 1967 February. Fourth national elections, 520 seats available. INC wins 41 % of popular vote (#seats), BJS wins 9.5%, and 35 seats; Non-Congress parties win and set up coalition governments in eight states.
- 1969 Congress Party expels Indira Gandhi for 'indiscipline'; party splits; majority rally behind Indira's 'new Congress party (Congress @, for requisition).
- 1971 March. Fifth Lok Sabha election. Congress @ (then I, for Indira) wins 44% of vote; Congress (O) under Moraji Desai wins only 10%. Indira campaigns on slogan 'eliminate poverty'.
- 1971 December. War with Pakistan

- 1971 Bangladesh wins independence from Pakistan after Indian invasion of East Pakistan.
- 1974 May 18, India explodes its first nuclear bomb.
- 1975 12 June. Indira Gandhi found guilty of two counts of campaign malpractice relating to her 1971 election. Banned from holding or running for elected office for six years.
- 1975 26 June. State of Emergency proclaimed by Indira Gandhi and President of India.
- 1975 Indira Gandhi reconvenes Parliament. Emergency extended 'permanently'. The 28th and 29th Amendments are adopted by Parliament that prevents the courts from repealing the Emergency, exonerates the Prime Minister, the Vice-president and the house speaker from all 'past and future criminal charges', and makes the Amendments themselves immune from Supreme Court review. The amendments passed unanimously.
- 1976 Elections 'postponed'.
- 1977 18 January. Indira Gandhi called for new elections, thereby revoking the emergency.
- 1977 March. Elections. The Janata Party won a 43% plurality, ousting Congress for the first time after thirty years of rule. Moraji Desai PM. (multi-party coalition).
- 1979 19 July, Moraji resigned in face of no confidence vote. Charan Singh chosen PM, but government falls within weeks. New elections were called for January 1980.
- 1980 Congress (I) party, with its leader, Indira Gandhi re-elected. (351/542 seats) Sanjay Gandhi, Indira's son, elected from UP. Sanjay dies in plane crash in June, his seat taken over by his brother, Rajiv Gandhi.
- 1984 June 5-6. Operation Blue Star, Attack on Golden Temple and Amritsar (Punjab).
- 1984 October 31. Indira Gandhi assassinated (by her Sikh bodyguards).
- 1984 November. Massive rioting in Delhi, thousands of (mostly) Sikhs killed. Neither police nor military intervene to stop rioting and looting.
- 1984 December. Rajiv Gandhi (Indira's son) elected PM in 'landslide (400/500 seats up for election.)'. Rajiv served until 1989 December.
- 1987 In by-elections for state governments Congress (I) lost most of the north and central states.
- 1989 December - November 1990, V.P. Singh serves as Prime Minister with the National Front (NF) coalition government in power. In November Singh loses confidence vote, resigns post.
- 1990 December, Samajwadi Janata Party assumes control, Chandra Shekhar PM.
- 1991 March. Lok Sabha dissolved, new elections scheduled for May.
- 1991 21 May. Rajiv Gandhi assassinated.
- 1991 June 20. P. V. Narasimha Rao becomes Prime Minister, Congress (I). BJP is the major opposition party with 120 seats, up from 80 seats in 1989.
- 1992 December 6. Babri Masjid (Ayodhya, UP) destroyed by Hindu militants.
- 1993 January-March. Massive communal rioting and violence following the destruction of the of the Babri Masjid.
- 1993 BJP is defeated in Assembly elections in four states.
- 1994 11 March. Supreme Court declares the suspension of BJP governments in HP, MP, and Haryana legal. Rules that the President's power to suspend state

- governments is open to judicial scrutiny.
- 1996 A. B. Vajpayee selected prime minister after his party, the BJP, win a plurality in the May election. After thirteen days his government falls, replaced by a coalition of thirteen minority parties, the United Front (UF) with Deve Gowda as PM.
- 1997 Deve Gowda ousted as PM April 11, replaced by I. K. Gujral, also part of the UF.
- 1997 August 15. India celebrates its 50th year of independence.
- 1997 November. I.K. Gujral resigns. New elections called for in March, 1998.
- 1998 March. BJP wins 177 seats with 25% of the vote; combined with its pre-election allies, the alliance garners 250 seats and 36.2% of the vote (out of 545 seats). BJP asked to form government. It is a coalition government consisting of at least 20 parties. A.B. Vajpayee becomes PM.
- 1999 April 17. BJP government falls.
- 1999 May. Kargil war – border dispute between India and Pakistan.
- 1999 September-October. Elections. NDA [BJP alliance] wins with a clear majority of votes (298 seats). Vajpayee is again selected as PM.

Official Indian languages according to the Eighth Schedule, Articles 344(1) and 351.

1. Assamese
2. Bengali
3. Gujarati
4. Hindi
5. Kannada
6. Kashmiri
7. Konkani
8. Malayalam
9. Manipuri
10. Marathi
11. Nepali
12. Oriya
13. Punjabi
14. Sanskrit
15. Sindhi
16. Tamil
17. Telugu
18. Urdu

Breakdown of population (Percentage) CASTE:

Upper (Forward) Castes: 16.1
OBC 43.7
SC 15
ST 7.5
Non-Hindu Minorities 17.6

India's Religious Makeup:

Hindu 82
Muslim 12.1
Christian 2.3
Sikh 2.0
Buddhist and Jain 1.2

LIST OF PARTICIPATING POLITICAL PARTIES, 1991-1999

[Abbreviation and Party name]

NATIONAL PARTIES

BJP Bharatiya Janata Party
BSP Bahujan Samaj Party
CPI Communist Party of India
CPM Communist Party of India (Marxist)
INC Indian National Congress
JD(S) Janata Dal (Secular)
JD(U) Janata Dal (United)

STATE PARTIES

AC Arunachal Congress
ADMK All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AGP Asom Gana Parishad
AIADMK All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AIFB All India Forward Block
AIIC (T) All India Indira Congress (T)
AIMIM All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen
AITC All India Trinamool Congress
ASDC Autonomous State Demand Committee
BJD Biju Janata Dal
BKKPBhartiya Kisan Kamgar Party
CPI (ML) Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
DMK Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
FBL All India Forward Bloc
FPM Federal Party of Manipur
HPDP Hill State People's Democratic Party
HVC Himachal Vikas Congress
HVP Haryana Vikas Party
INLD Indian National Lok Dal
JKN Jammu & Kashmir National Conference
JMM Jharkhand Mukti Morcha
JP Janata Party
KEC Kerala Congress
KEC(M) Kerala Congress (M)
LS Lok Shakti
MDMK Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
MGP Maharashtra Gomantak Party
MPP Manipur People's Party
MSCP Manipur State Congress Party
MUL Muslim League Kerala State Committee

NCP Nationalist Congress Party
NTRTDP(LP) NTR Telugu Desam Party (Lakshmi Parvathi)
PDM People's Democratic Movement
PMK Pattali Makkal Katchi
PWPI Peasants and Workers Party of India
RJD Rashtriya Janata Dal
RPI Republican Party of India
RSP Revolutionary Socialist Party
SAD Shiromani Akali Dal
SAP Samata Party
SDF Sikkim Democratic Front
SHS ShivSena
SJP Samajwadi Janata Party
SJP(R) Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya)
SP Samajwadi Party
SSP Sikkim Sangram Parishad
TDP Telugu Desam Party
TMC Tamil Manila Congress
TMC(M) Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar)
UDP United Democratic Party
UGDP United Goans Democratic Party
UMFA United Minorities Front, Assam

REGISTERED (Unrecognised) PARTIES

ABBP Akhil Bhartiya Berozgaar Party
ABHM Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha
Shiromani Akali Dal
Himachal Vikash Congress
Loktantrik Congress
MGR Anna DM Kazhagam
Manipur State Congress Party
Rashtriya Janata Dal
Rashtriya Lok Dal
Nationalist Congress Party
Jammu and Kashmir National Conference
SADM
BBM
Indian National League

POLITICAL PARTIES REPRESENTED IN THE LOK SABHA 10th-13th

	YEAR:	<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1998</u>	
<u>1999</u>					
<u>NAME OF PARTY</u>		<u>Seats</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Seats</u>
<i>National Parties</i>					
Bharatiya Janata Party	120	161	178	182	
Indian National Congress		244	138	141	114
Communist Party of India (Marxist)		35	32	32	33
Bahujan Samaj Party		3	11	5	14
Janata Dal		59	46	6	0
Janata Dal United		---	---	---	21
Janata Dal (Secular)		---	---	---	1
Communist Party of India		14	12	9	4
TOTAL NATIONAL :		475	403	371	369
<hr/>					
<i>State and registered Parties</i>					
ABLTC		---	---	---	2
AC		---	---	2	---
ADC		1	---	---	---
ADMK		---	---	18	10
ADK		11	---	---	---
AGP		1	5	---	---
AIC(T)		---	4	---	---
AIC(S)		---	---	1	---
AIMIM		---	1	1	1
AIRJP		---	---	1	---
AITC		---	---	---	8
ASDC		---	1	1	---
BBM		---	---	---	1
BJD		---	---	9	10
CPI(ML)(L)		---	---	---	1
DMK		---	17	6	12
FBL		3	3	2	2
HLD[R]		---	---	4	---
HVC		---	---	---	1
HVP		1	3	1	---
ICS(SCS)		1	---	---	---
INLD		---	---	---	5
JD(G)		1	---	---	---

JKN	---	---	3	4
JMM	6	1	---	---
JP	5	---	1	---
KCM	1	---	---	---
KCP	1	3	---	---
KEC	---	---	---	1
KEC(M)	---	1	1	1
LS	---	---	3	---
MADMK	---	---	---	1
MDMK	---	---	3	4
MAG	1	---	---	---
MIM	1	---	---	---
MPVC	1	---	---	---
MRP	1	---	---	---
MSCP	---	---	1	1
MUL	2	2	2	2
NCP	---	---	---	8
NPC	1	---	---	---
PMK	---	---	4	5
PWPI	---	---	1	1
RJD	---	---	17	7
RLD	---	---	---	2
RPI	---	---	4	---
RSP	4	5	5	3
SAD	---	8	2	8
SAD(M)	---	---	---	1
SAP	---	8	12	---
SDF	---	1	1	1
SHS	4	15	6	15
SJP[R]	---	---	1	1
SP	---	17	20	26
SSP	1	---	---	---
TDP	13	16	12	29
TMC(M)	---	20	3	---
UGDP	1	---	---	---
UMFA	---	---	1	---
WBTC	---	---	7	---
INDEPENDENTS	1	9	6	6
<hr/>				
TOTALS	534	543	543	543
<hr/>				

1999 election:

BJP & pre-election partners (NDA): 298

Congress (I) and allies: 134 seats

Left Front: 42 seats

87

Other [a total of 14 parties]: 64 seats

1998 election:

BJP & pre-election partners: 252

Congress (I) and allies: 168 seats

United Front (alliance of 9 parties):

TABLES

Table A-1¹

**BETTER GOVERNMENT WITHOUT PARTIES,
ASSEMBLIES AND ELECTIONS? (in percent)**

Response	1971	1996
Yes	14.2	11.4
No	43.4	68.8
Can't say/Don't know	42.4	19.8

¹ Subrata Mitra and V.B. Singh, Democracy and Social Change in India: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of the National Electorate (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), 144.

TABLE A-2²
 SOCIAL BASIS OF RESPONSE TO QUESTION:
 "DO YOU THINK THAT THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS COUNTRY COULD
 BE RUN BETTER IF THERE WERE NO PARTIES OR ASSEMBLIES AND
 ELECTIONS WERE NOT HELD?"

Not Better Government without Parties	1996
Very poor	61.5
Illiterate	61.6
Sikh	62.7
56+ years	63.2
Female	64.0
OBC	65.4
Scheduled Tribe	66.3
Scheduled Caste	67.3
Urban	68.1
Hindu	68.2
ALL INDIA	68.8
Rural	69.0
25 years or less	71.3
Upper Class	71.6
Muslim	72.1
Male	73.4
Christian	73.4
Upper Caste	73.9
College & above	74.1

Table A-3
PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN IN NATIONAL
PARTIES VIS-A-VIS OTHERS³

PARTY	Women Candidates			In percentages		VALID VOTES
	CONTESTED	WON	FORFEITED DEPOSITS	WON	FORFEITED DEPOSITS	
BJP	25	15	1	60.00	4.00	7989139
BSP	11	1	9	9.09	81.82	3673237
CPI	4	1	3	25.00	75.00	1451460
CPM	5	3	2	60.00	40.00	1909340
INC	51	14	13	27.45	25.49	15749212
JD(S)	5	0	5	0.00	100.00	1613001
JD(U)	3	1	2	33.33	66.67	765840
TOTAL	104	35	35	33.65	33.65	33151229
STATE PARTIES	55	13	26	23.64	47.27	17309505
REGISTERED PARTIES	47	0	46	---	97.87	14175207
INDEPENDENT	78	1	76	1.28	97.44	23516700
TOTALS	284	39	183	17.25	64.44	88162641

² Ibid.

³ Data from Election Commission of India.

TABLE A-4⁴
ANNUAL RATES OF GROWTH PER CAPITA
GROSS STATE DOMESTIC PRODUCT

STATE	1980-1991	1992-1998
	percent per annum	percent per annum
Bihar	2.45	1.12
Rajasthan	3.96	3.96
Uttar Pradesh	2.60	1.24
Orissa	2.38	1.64
Madhya Pradesh	2.08	3.87
Andhra Pradesh	3.34	3.45
Tamil Nadu	3.87	4.95
Kerala	2.19	4.52
Karnataka	3.28	3.45
West Bengal	2.39	5.04
Gujarat	3.08	5.04
Haryana	3.86	7.57
Maharashtra	3.58	6.13
Punjab	3.33	2.80
Combined SDP (14 States)	3.03	4.02

⁴ source: <http://planningcommission,nic.in/stanfors2000.htm>

Table A-5⁵
Trend in Gini Coefficient Measuring
Inter-State Inequality

1980-81	0.152
1981-82	0.152
1982-83	0.152
1983-84	0.151
1984-85	0.154
1985-86	0.159
1986-87	0.157
1987-88	0.161
1988-89	0.158
1989-90	0.175
1990-91	0.171
1991-92	0.175
1992-93	0.199
1993-94	0.207
1994-95	0.205
1995-96	0.230
1996-97	0.222
1997-98	0.235
1998-99	0.233

⁵ Source: Indian Planning Commission (<http://planning.commission.nic.in/stanfors2000>).

Table A-6⁶

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION IN POWERTY

State	1983	1987-8	1993-4
Bihar	52.22	52.13	54.96
Rajasthan	34.46	35.15	27.41
Uttar Pradesh	47.07	41.46	40.85
Orissa	65.29	55.58	48.56
Madhya Pradesh	49.78	43.07	42.52
Andhra Pradesh	28.91	25.86	22.19
Tamil Nadu	51.66	43.39	35..03
Kerala	40.42	31.79	25.43
Karnataka	38.24	37.53	33.16
West Bengal	54.85	44.72	35.66
Gujarat	32.79	31.54	24.21
Haryana	21.37	16.64	25.05
Maharashtra	43.44	40.41	36.86
Punjab	16.18	13.42	11.77
All 14 States	43.80	39.92	36.25
All India	44.48	38.86	35.97

⁶ Source: Indian Planning Commission (<http://planningcommission.nic.in/stanfors2000>)

Table A-7⁷
Percent of Population below Poverty Line

YEARS	RURAL %	URBAN %	NATIONAL %
1983	45.31	35.65	43.00
1986-87	38.81	34.29	37.69
1987-88	39.23	36.20	38.47
1988-89	39.06	36.60	38.44
1989-90	34.30	33.40	34.07
1990-91	36.43	32.79	35.49
1991-92	37.42	33.23	36.34
1992-93	43.47	33.73	40.93
1993-94	36.66	30.51	35.04
1994-95	41.02	33.50	38.40
1995-96	37.15	28.04	35.00
1996-97	35.78	29.99	34.40

⁷ Ibid.

Table A-8⁸
LITERACY RATES IN STATES
with state annual rate of Growth.

STATE	Literacy Rates by percentage			Annual Rates of Growth (by %)	
	OVERALL	MALE	FEMAL E	1989-91	1992-98
Andhra Pradesh	52.2	64.1	39.3	3.34	3.45
Arunachal Pradesh	41.6	55.1	32.7	-----	-----
Assam	52.9	61.9	43.0	-----	-----
Bihar	38.5	52.5	22.9	2.45	1.12
Goa	75.5	83.6	67.1	-----	-----
Gujarat	61.3	73.1	48.6	3.08	5.04
Haryana	55.8	69.1	40.5	3.86	7.57
Himachal Pradesh	63.9	75.4	52.1	-----	-----
Karnataka	56.0	67.3	44.3	3.28	3.45
Kerala	89.8	93.6	86.2	2.19	4.52
Madhya Pradesh	44.2	58.4	28.8	2.08	3.87
Maharashtra	64.9	76.7	52.3	3.58	6.13
Manipur	59.9	71.6	47.6	-----	-----
Meghalaya	49.1	53.1	44.9	-----	-----
Mizoram	82.3	85.6	78.6	-----	-----
Nagaland	61.6	67.6	54.7	-----	-----
Orissa	49.1	63.1	34.7	2.38	1.64
Punjab	58.5	65.7	50.4	3.33	2.80
Rajasthan	38.6	55.0	20.4	3.96	3.96
Tamil Nadu	62.7	73.7	51.5	3.87	4.95
Uttar Pradesh	41.6	55.7	25.3	2.60	1.24
West Bengal	57.7	67.8	46.6	2.39	5.04
ALL INDIA	52.2	64.1	39.3		6.20
all India RURAL	44.7	57.9	30.6	-----	-----
all India URBAN	73.1	81.1	64.1	-----	-----

⁸ data is a compilation from Election Commission of India and Indian Planning Commission (<http://planningcommission.nic.in/stanfors2000>).

TABLE A-9⁹
EFFICACY OF VOTE (in percent)

RESPONSE	1971	1996	1999
Has effect	48.5	58.6	63.0
Makes no difference	16.2	21.3	18.0
Don't Know	35.3	19.1	20.0
<i>Vote Has Effect</i>		1996	
Illiterate		47.0	
Scheduled Tribe		47.8	
Very Poor		50.4	
Female		50.8	
Aged 56 and above		51.9	
Rural		56.9	
OBC		58.0	
Hindu		58.0	
<i>ALL INDIA</i>		58.6	
Scheduled Caste		60.0	
Muslim		60.3	
Aged 25 years or younger		60.8	
Upper Caste		61.5	
Upper Class		62.1	
Urban		64.1	
Male		66.2	
Christian		66.4	
College and above		79.6	

⁹ Source: Subrata Mitra and V.B. Singh, Democracy and Social change in India: a Cross-Sectional Analysis of the National Eelctorate, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), 141. 1999 data from www.frontlineonline.com

Table A-10¹⁰

Party Support by Caste
Percentage Of Party Support Deriving From Specific Castes

Caste	BJP			INC			Left/United Fronts			BSP		
	1998	1996	1991	1998	1996	1991	1998	1996	1991	1998	1996	1991
Forward	40	33	36.4	26	29	32.2	6.0	17	5.7	0.0	1	---
OBC	24	23	20.8	21	25	30.6	6.0	25	15.9	6.0	2	---
Dalit (SC)	13	11	11.4	31	31	44.1	12	21	9.8	12.0	16	---
Adivasi (ST)	18	17		39	47		7.0	15		7.0	2	---
Muslim	02		3.5	31		46.3	10		24.9	10.0		---

¹⁰ Table a compilation of data from Robert Hardgrave, "The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict: India", Journal of Democracy (IV,4: October 1993), 430; and Frontline (www.frontlineonline.com/fl16230).

Table 11¹¹
Party Support by Class

Economic Status	Party									
	BJP		INC		UF		LF		BSP	
	1998	1999*	1998	1999*	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999
High	38	52	22	33	12	----	3	4	0	1
Middle	29	49	26	32	17	----	6	6	2	2
Poor	21	38	28	37	18	----	7	6	5	4
Very Poor	24	30	30	40	21	----	11	11	4	5

* in 1999 figure includes party with its allies

¹¹ Source: derived from information from India Today, at website: www.india-today.com/itoday, and from Frontline, www.frontlineonline.com/fl1623/16230315.

TABLE 12¹²
VOTER PARTICIPATION BY STATE: 1991-1999

States	1991	1996	1998	1999
Andhra Pradesh	61.42	63.02	66.0	68.97
Arunachal Pradesh	51.28	55.04	59.16	72.43
Assam	61.06	78.50	61.06	76.91
Bihar	60.35	59.45	64.63	66.67
Goa	42.39	56.33	61.16	45.11
Gujarat	44.06	35.92	59.30	47.01
Haryana	65.84	70.48	68.99	63.67
Himachal Pradesh	57.42	57.58	66.35	56.77
Karnataka	54.81	48.96	64.92	65.92
Kerala	73.32	71.11	70.66	70.17
Madhya Pradesh	44.36	54.06	61.74	54.88
Maharashtra	48.75	52.45	56.85	61.06
Manipur	69.65	75.04	74.38	65.79
Meghalaya	53.75	61.62	74.38	56.14
Mizoram	58.64	73.41	69.55	65.41
Nagaland	77.07	88.32	45.41	76.25
Orissa	53.81	59.22	58.03	55.62
Punjab	23.96	62.25	60.07	56.11
Rajasthan	47.25	43.40	60.26	53.92
Tamil Nadu	63.92	77.43	57.95	57.96
Uttar Pradesh	49.24	46.50	55.50	53.40
West Bengal	74.67	82.66	79.23	75.03
TOTAL	56.93	57.94	61.97	59.88

¹² Data from Election Commission of India.

Table 13¹³
VOTER TURNOUT by State and Gender
13th LOK SABHA ELECTION, 1999

State	Male Electors	Female Electors	Percentage of total electors voting
Andhra Pradesh	24788747	24893021	68.97 %
Arunachal Pradesh	319263	289911	72.43 %
Assam	7448373	6833662	71.26 %
Bihar	31162536	27660724	61.43 %
Goa	462160	446640	45.11 %
Gujarat	15224419	14288070	47.01 %
Haryana	6015212	523479	63.67 %
Himachal Pradesh	1914918	1871561	56.77 %
Jammu&Kashmir	2721240	2300349	32.40 %
Karnataka	18293998	16831756	65.92 %
Kerala	10787134	11267665	70.17 %
Madhya Pradesh	24361655	22543728	54.88 %
Maharashtra	24361655	22543728	61.06 %
Manipur	670771	699117	65.79 %
Meghalaya	593600	584662	56.14 %
Mizoram	224734	223904	65.41 %
Nagaland	505399	450515	76.25 %
Orissa	12509733	11677757	55.62 %
Punjab	8294313	7423142	56.11 %
Rajasthan	16363383	14703075	53.92 %
Sikkim	131594	121786	82.53 %
Tamil Nadu	24036772	23696516	57.96 %
Tripura	929599	866456	68.14 %
Uttar Pradesh	56383558	46440212	53.40 %
West Bengal	24858279	22780449	75.03 %
TOTAL	324681059	295713006	59.88 %

¹³ Ibid.

THE ANTI-DEFECTION LAW¹⁴

Salient Features of the Constitution (52nd Amendment) Act, 1985

12.8 The Tenth Schedule to the Constitution of India was incorporated by the Constitution (52nd Amendment) Act, 1985. It came into force on 1.3.1985. The legislative intent behind the enactment was to curb and control the menace of crossing of the floor by the elected representatives of the people in legislatures. The broad outlines of the Anti-Defection law as contained in the 10th Schedule of the Constitution are summarised below:-

(i) A member would be disqualified for being a member of the House concerned if (a) he voluntarily gives up his membership of his political party and (b) if he votes or abstains from voting contrary to any direction (whip) issued by his political party without obtaining prior permission of the party or his voting or abstention had not been condoned within 15 days from the date of his voting.

(2) The Speaker or Chairman is made the arbitrator in deciding the question of disqualification under the law. (The provision to oust Court's jurisdiction in the matter has been struck down by the Supreme Court).

(3) The Provision would apply to independent members also.

(4) A nominated member who is not a member of any political party on the date of his nomination would be escaping disqualification only if he joins a political party before the expiry of six months.

(5) The provisions would not apply to members if they constitute a group representing a faction arising out of split provided the said group consists of not less than 1/3rd of the total membership of the legislature party.

(6) The provisions of disqualification would also not apply to members if they become members of a party brought about by merger of his original party and another party provided 2/3rd of the party agreed to such merger. This exemption would also apply to members who opted to function as a separate group not accepting the merger.

12.10 Demands have been made, from time to time, for strengthening the Anti-defection law on the ground that it has not been able to achieve the desired goal of checking defection. It has been criticised on the ground that it allows bulk defections while declaring individual defection as illegal. On the other hand, the law has also been criticised on the ground that it makes serious inroad into basic powers, privileges and

¹⁴ Source: www.nic.parliamentacts.

immunities of members in regard to freedom of speech, freedom of action, which includes freedom of vote also.

EMERGENCY PROVISIONS

356. Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in States.

(1) If the President, on receipt of a report from the Governor of a State or otherwise, is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the Government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, the President may by Proclamation-

(a) assume to himself all or any of the functions of the Government of the State and all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor or any body or authority in the State other than the Legislature of the State;

(b) declare that the powers of the Legislature of the State shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament;

(c) make such incidental and consequential provisions as appear to the President to be necessary or desirable for giving effect to the objects of the Proclamation, including provisions for suspending in whole or in part the operation of any provisions of this Constitution relating to any body or authority in the State :

Provided that nothing in this clause shall authorise the President to assume to himself any of the powers vested in or exercisable by a High Court, or to suspend in whole or in part the operation of any provision of this Constitution relating to High Courts.

(2) Any such Proclamation may be revoked or varied by a subsequent Proclamation.

(3) Every Proclamation under this article shall be laid before each House of Parliament and shall, except where it is a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation, cease to operate at the expiration of two months unless before the expiration of that period it has been approved by resolutions of both Houses of Parliament: Provided that if in any such Proclamation (not being a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation) is issued at a time when the House of the People is dissolved or the dissolution of the House of the People takes place during the period of two months referred to in this clause, and if a resolution approving the Proclamation has been passed by the Council of States, but no resolution with respect to such Proclamation has been passed by the House of the People before the expiration of that period, the Proclamation shall cease to operate at the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the House of the People first sits after its reconstitution unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days a resolution approving the Proclamation has been also passed by the House of the People.

(4) A Proclamation so approved shall, unless revoked, cease to operate on the expiration of a period of [six months from the date of issue of the Proclamation]

Provided that if and so often as a resolution approving the continuance in force of such a Proclamation is passed by both Houses of Parliament, the Proclamation shall, unless revoked, continue in force for a further period of [Six months] from the date on which under this clause it would otherwise have ceased to operate, but no such Proclamation shall in any case remain in force for more than three years :

Provided further that if the dissolution of the House of the People takes place during any such period of [six months] and a resolution approving the continuance in force of such Proclamation has been passed by the Council of States, but no resolution with respect to

the continuance in force of such Proclamation has been passed by the House of the People during the said period, the Proclamation shall cease to operate at the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the House of the People first sits after its reconstitution unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days a resolution approving the continuance in force of the Proclamation has been also passed by the House of the People.

[Provided also that in the case of the Proclamation issued under clause (1) on the 11th day of May, 1987 with respect to the State of Punjab, the reference in the first proviso to this clause to "three years" shall be construed as a reference to [five years].

[(5) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (4), a resolution with respect to the continuance in force of a Proclamation approved under clause (3) for any period beyond the expiration of one year from the date of issue of such Proclamation shall not be passed by either House of Parliament unless-

(a) a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation, in the whole of India or, as the case may be, in the whole or any part of the State, at the time of the passing of such resolution and
(b) the Election Commission certifies that the continuance in force of the Proclamation approved under clause (3) during the period specified in such resolution is necessary on account of difficulties in holding general elections to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned:]

[Provided that nothing in this clause shall apply to the Proclamation issued under clause (1) on the 11th day of May, 1987 with respect to the State of Punjab]

PARTY MANIFESTOES: BJP, INC, CPM

I. BJP and Allies: [NDA]

FOR A PROUD, PROSPEROUS INDIA

AN AGENDA

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

INTRODUCTION

The 1999 General Election is an unnecessary imposition. It was thrust upon the country by a motley combination that put political negativism, narrow personal interests and greed for power far above the national good. The Government led by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee lost the vote in the Lok Sabha on April 17 by just one and that too questionable vote. Despite promising a new government "in five minutes" and futilely attempting widespread defections, this negative coalition led by the Congress failed to come up with any alternative arrangement, forcing the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and fresh elections. A serving, performing Government was needlessly destabilised.

Hardly had the country absorbed the shock of this avoidable uncertainty, then we were faced by Pakistani armed intrusion in Kargil.

The Government rose to the challenge and acted decisively. Faced by this aggression in Kargil, the response of the Government was swift, though measured. The last of the Pakistani intruders were cleared from the Kargil Sector on 27th July. We salute the heroism, dedication and selflessness of our armed forces. We dedicate ourselves anew to preserving the honour and territorial integrity of our motherland. We reiterate our commitment to look after the welfare of the armed forces, and of the dependants of all those that laid down their lives in service of our motherland.

The security of the nation is our paramount duty. In fulfillment of this sacred duty we will ensure that the neglect of defence preparedness by the previous governments during the last decade shall be corrected. The defence of India and the needs of our armed forces is our commitment.

This General Election allows the country a great opportunity of finally putting an end to the era of political negativism, uncertainty and dynasticism. In this hour of national challenge, when the faith of the people in democratic institutions is under test, it is vital that all nationalist forces join hands. This is the moment to look ahead, to a new, resurgent India.

In Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the country has a leader who blends tradition with modernity, a leader who understands India and the world and a statesman who is accepted by all sections of the country. In just 13 months, the Vajpayee Government set new parameters of purposeful governance. In the realms of national security, regional cooperation, economic modernization and centre-state relations, the Vajpayee Government has shown the way forward. Under Shri Vajpayee's leadership the Indian National Democratic Alliance seeks a firm and resounding mandate to complete the unfinished agenda.

The National Agenda for Governance of the National Democratic Alliance constitutes the basis of our joint commitment for a stable Government to take India into the new millennium. On this occasion we appeal for a new political age of reconciliation and accord based on our principled commitment to:

- National Security - ensuring full combat effectiveness of our armed forces;
- National Reconstruction - an end to divisiveness and a moratorium on contentious issues;
- Dynamic diplomacy - In service of motherland to obtain for India its rightful place in the comity of nations;
- Federal harmony - ensuring a partnership of the Centre and States;
- Economic Modernization - harnessing technology for rapid, equitable growth;
- Secularism - the emotional harmony of all Indians and full protection of minorities;
- Social Justice - empowerment of all weaker sections and gender rights;
- Probity - transparency of decision-making and corruption-free governance;

PREAMBLE

When the whole nation was thrown into the vortex of political instability because of the toppling of the Government headed by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, by the irresponsible combination of Congress, the left parties and their old and new found allies; when the whole nation felt that it was duped and deceived by their chicanery because they could not fulfil their boast of an alternative Government in 'five minutes' - even for several days; and when the whole nation was on the verge of losing faith in our democratic system and was getting cynical about politics and politicians; the signatory political parties came together as an act of national commitment and founded the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), under the leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to set the Indian polity on a new course for the future.

The reason for creating the NDA is to lift the spirit of the nation at large, to draw its people together and, most importantly, to rebuild the bonds of common purpose that are the very roots of our democratic polity.

The NDA came into being because of an historic need and realisation amongst us that our young democracy cannot bear the fits and tremors of frequent elections which will undermine the people's faith in the democratic process. Therefore, with a consensus on a common cause and a common set of principles we have sunk our differences to weld ourselves into a solid phalanx of a single dominant political formation and thereby we fulfil the resolve of the Indian people to give themselves a stable, strong and progressive Government.

We are proud that the NDA is representative of both national interests and regional aspirations - after all the NDA is nothing but the mirror-image of our nation's unity in multifaceted diversity, rich pluralism and federalism.

OUR MISSION

The NDA's mission in politics is to build a bond of trust between Government and people. This is the only way a democracy can flourish; but unfortunately has been ignored during the last 50 years of one-party rule.

Therefore, the NDA pledges to the people of India a Government which shares their hopes and anxieties and which will work as partner with all people irrespective of class, caste and religion - not just with a privileged few. This is our contract with the people.

The NDA is new; the NDA is the future and the NDA is a broad-based movement for progress and justice.

Our vision is one of national renewal with modern programmes of change for a resurgent India.

We reach out to the minorities and even at the cost of repetition proclaim that we will safeguard the rights as enshrined in our Constitution. NDA is the political arm of none other than the Indian people as a whole. No one will be cast aside; fairness and justice will be rendered to one and all and we assure you that there will not be any discrimination.

We appeal to our brothers and sisters of the minorities that we whole heartedly

extend our hands of friendship, in these fraternal words:
Let us hold hands and walk together to build a resurgent, modern India.
Let us throw away our old prejudices.
Let us put an end to divisiveness.
Let us have a moratorium on contentious issues.
Let us bind ourselves with bonds of trust and friendship.
We want an India which we all feel part of, in whose future we all have a stake. And we want to enter the new millennium with confidence; not with divisive feelings.
This is our call for reconciliation and it is part of our commitment to the minorities.

AGENDA FOR GOVERNANCE

A Commitment to Good Governance

1. Our first commitment to the people is to give a stable, honest, transparent, and efficient government capable of accomplishing all-round development. For this, the government shall introduce time-bound programmes of needed administrative reforms including those for the Police and other Civil Services.

Economy

2. We will continue with the reform process, give it a strong Swadeshi thrust to ensure that the national economy grows on the principle that India shall be 'built by Indians'; reappraise and revitalise reforms through giving primacy to removal of unemployment, and to an accelerated development of infrastructure, particularly energy and power production. We will bring GDP growth to the 7-8% bracket, and control deficits - fiscal and revenue. We will examine the possibility of enacting a Fiscal Responsibility Act. We will take all such steps as would expedite implementation of policies and programmes in accordance with our national interests; and give to the entire national development efforts a humane face with total eradication of poverty as the ultimate goal. For this 'Berozgari Hatao' - eradicate unemployment - is our call. Swadeshi is not reinventing the wheel. It means that we will facilitate the domestic industry to gain enough muscles to compete with the multinationals in the local and global markets. We want domestic companies to flourish and acquire a Trans National status. At the same time the country cannot do without FDI because besides capital stock it brings with it technology, new market practices and most importantly employment. Our target is to achieve at least \$ 10 billion per year which will commensurate with our growth objectives. The old leftist approach sought complete state control of industry while the rightist approach wanted to leave everything to the market. We reject both. Government and industry must work together to achieve key objectives aimed at enhancing the dynamism of the market with effective and efficient regulatory mechanisms. In fact the issue is not about capitalism or socialism, nor is it about market or less state. It is about better society, about improving the way citizens can demand and obtain all sorts of public goods. It is about dignity for all. We firmly resolve that poverty should be relegated to history like slavery, colonialism, small pox and cholera and we should meet the challenge of mobilising resources for that by undertaking the challenge of restructuring priorities and mainstreaming these priorities into new programmes of pro-poor growth and redistribution towards poverty eradication - That is how we plan to eradicate absolute poverty within this generation - within the first decades of 21st century - and we strongly feel that it is feasible and affordable in fact, it is a moral imperative which we will not miss.

3. We will carefully analyse the effects of globalisation, calibrate its process by devising a timetable to suit our national conditions and requirements so as not to undermine but strengthen the national economy, the indigenous industrial base and the financial and services sectors.

4. We will earmark 60% of the Plan Funds for and effect public investment in agriculture, rural development, irrigation and by diverse incentives, including tax shelters, achieve a quantum leap in agricultural production so that agriculture, horticulture, forestry, food processing, fisheries and so on become the vehicles for

growth resulting in an enhancement of the purchasing power of the people. Effective crop insurance schemes will be introduced. Special efforts will be made in Animal Husbandry, Dairying, particularly in respect of Cow and its progeny. This is one of the routes to generating employment, thus eradicating hunger and poverty in rural as well as urban areas. Subsidies of all kinds will be implemented in such a manner that maximize benefits to all sections of the agricultural population. Development of medium and small scale irrigation projects shall receive priority attention; emphasis for investment will be in accordance with the potential development.

5. We will adopt a National Water Policy which provides for effective and prompt settlement of disputes and their time-bound implementation. We will examine and take time-bound steps to link Ganga - Cauvery rivers. Setu Samudram Canal Project will also be undertaken.

6. We will increase the national savings to 30% of the GDP in the next five years by appropriate incentives and through motivation; encourage Foreign Direct Investment in core areas so that it usefully supplements the national efforts and discourage FDI in non-priority areas.

7. We will institute a comprehensive study of the financial, technological and social security requirements of the self-employed and unincorporated sector; also constitute a Development Bank to promote this largest segment of the national economy which, too, has great employment and self-employment potential. Further, in addition to financial support institutions we will bring into being other institutional systems for providing services, technology and marketing facilities for artisans, the small-scale, village, khadi, powerloom, handloom, handicrafts and such other industries. This and the Agriculture sectors are an untapped source with unlimited scope for generation of employment.

8. We will give a major thrust to infrastructure development, particularly energy and power, by recommending public expenditure in the sector. Towards this we will access long-term funds in the national and international markets, remove administrative bottlenecks, reverse the slowdown in this critical area of national economy thus giving a fresh impetus to growth. Private Sector participation will be encouraged.

9. We will undertake a review of all laws and regulations relating to industry so as to free it from bureaucratic control; institute a system of voluntary compliance with laws, including tax laws; ensure speedy redressal of industrial sickness; arrange for meaningful interaction between industry and government; and revive the capital market as a viable and transparent mechanism for raising capital. We will also expedite comprehensive reform of the PSUs, including restructuring, rehabilitation and divestment.

Trade & Commerce

10. We will focus on specific products in specific growth areas for exports and announce specific packages for horticulture and floriculture EoUs. We intend to strongly support attempts to build a system of trade and economic cooperation through expanded global system of trade preferences (GSTP) among developing countries. We would also assert more robustly India's national interests, especially at the forthcoming review conference of the WTO, scheduled for November, 1999. A healthy commodity exchange system will be established to be managed in an autonomous way.

Labour

11. We will make labour, both organized and unorganized, an equal and proud partner in the production of the nation's wealth and in its progress. Laws relating to equal pay for equal work for men and women shall be strictly implemented.

Eradication of Unemployment

12. Recognizing the right to work of every citizen, the main thrust of the new government will be: 'Berozgaari Hatao' (Eradicate Unemployment). As against the present trend of jobless growth, our government will measure growth by generation

of gainful employment. Our new investment and institutional thrust to agriculture, the self-employed, the unincorporated sector, infrastructure development and housing will act as the vehicles for massive employment creation at all levels.

13. The Alliance will embark upon a strategic pro-poor policy in terms of which those living below the poverty line are not to be pitied but treated as a net resource replete with their own ideas and experience well in tune with local conditions. Every effort will be made to provide them work locally and ensure that schemes for their welfare are competently and honestly administered. They themselves will be treated as participants and facilitators in this noble venture. The services of NGOs, well versed in this field and, preferably originating locally, will also be enlisted wherever considered necessary.

Food Security and Price Stability

14. We will ensure food security for all, create a hunger-free India in the next five years, and reform and improve the Public Distribution System so as to serve the poorest of the poor in rural and urban areas. We will also ensure price stability by all appropriate means and necessary legislation.

Health and Drinking Water

15. We will spare no efforts to ensure that potable drinking water is available to all villages in the next five years. Age old and traditional methods of water utilisation, in both rural and urban areas, will receive urgent attention.

Education for All

16. We are committed to a total eradication of illiteracy. We will formulate and implement plans to gradually increase the governmental and non-governmental spending on education upto 6% of the GDP: thus to provide education for all. We will implement the constitutional provision of making primary education free and compulsory upto 5th standard. Our aim is to move towards equal access to and opportunity of educational standards upto the school leaving stage. We shall strive to improve the quality of education at all levels - from primary schools to our universities.

Housing for All

17. Shelter is a basic human requirement that needs to be met on a priority basis. We are, therefore, committed to evolving a National Housing and Habitat Policy in consultation with State Governments, aimed at providing Housing for all. Towards this end, we shall facilitate construction of 20 lakh additional housing units annually. As in other programmes, the emphasis will be on the benefit to the poor and the deprived.

Empowerment of Women

18. We will legislate for the reservation of 33% of the seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women; also institute plans for providing free education for girls upto college level, including professional courses, so as to better empower women. We will also set up a Development Bank for women entrepreneurs in the small scale and tiny sectors.

Harnessing Yuva Shakti

19. The youth of our country constitute a majority of our population. They are the strength of the family, village, locality and the community, they are also the future of our nation. We will take all necessary steps to mobilise this most idealistic, inspired and energetic section of our society in the mission of nation-building. For this purpose, we shall build national consensus for the creation of a National Reconstruction Corps aimed at environmental protection, ecological tasks, reclamation of waste land, including afforestation, and for spreading literacy. We will have a time bound programme for promotion of sports.

Children

20. We will present a National Charter for Children. Our aim is to ensure that no child remains illiterate, hungry, or lacks medical care. We will take measures to eliminate

child labour.

Population

21. We are committed to achieving population stabilization by 2010 through improved access to primary health services, universalisation of primary education, delivery of contraceptive services to Mohalla/Ward/Basti level and through betterment of educational and socio-economic position of women

22. Schemes for providing income generating training to widows will be worked out in cooperation with the state governments.

23. India today has a much larger population of senior citizens and their numbers are expected to rise substantially. It will be our endeavour to assure them that they continue to remain esteemed and valuable members of society.

Constitutional and Legal Reforms

24. We shall appoint a Commission to review the Constitution of India not only in the light of experience and developments since 1996 but indeed, of the entire post-independence period, and to make suitable recommendations.

25. We are convinced that there is a clear case for devolution of more financial and administrative powers and functions to the States. We will take suitable steps to ensure harmonious Centre-State relations in the light of the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission and also effect decentralisation right upto the grass root level by activating and involving Panchayats and local bodies. States of the Union where the percentage of population below the poverty line has increased during the last five decades shall receive special attention. A Backward Area Commission for each state of the Union to identify least developed areas and recommend comprehensive measures for their development shall be instituted. A Committee will be set up to study the feasibility of treating all 19 languages included in Schedule 8 of the Constitution as official languages. Will examine problems of border states for amelioration and take measures for ensuring a fixed term (5 years) for all elected bodies including legislatures. We will also examine replacing the present No confidence Motion with the German system of "Constructive vote of Non-confidence".

26. We will introduce necessary electoral reforms on the basis of the recommendations of the Goswami Committee, the Indrajit Gupta Committee and the Law Commission Report so as to deal with the malaise of defections, corruption and criminalisation of politics, and to prevent electoral malpractices.

27. Revitalise NE Council; ensure territorial integrity of the states of the NE; special developmental, administrative and security related programmes.

28. We will set up a National Judicial Commission which will recommend judicial appointments in High Courts and Supreme Court and draw up a code of ethics for the judiciary. We will enact legislation to provide an eligibility criteria that the high offices of State-legislative, executive and judicial are held only by naturally born Indian citizens. We will establish a National Register of citizens. We will also introduce a multi-purpose identity card for all citizens.

29. We will undertake all necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the right of franchise of the Armed Forces through proxy voting and or any other method.

Corruption

30. We will enact the Lok Pal Bill with adequate powers to deal with corruption charges against anyone, including the Prime Minister. In the administration of justice, we shall not allow discrimination between the rich and the poor, the empowered and the powerless; restore the majesty of law, and the objectivity of the state.

New States

31. We will give full statehood to Delhi and also create Uttranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh as new States.

National Security

32. In today's unipolar world it is of paramount importance that India constantly maintains and strengthens the state of preparedness, morale and combat

effectiveness of our Armed Forces.

33. The recently established National Security Council will advise the government in this regard and also in the establishment of a credible nuclear deterrence. These are the minimum requirements in this recently inaugurated era of global inequality and increased vulnerability. The NDA will correct the imbalance and budgetary neglect of Defence needs during the last decades by successive governments thus ensuring adequacy of budgetary allocations. We will take effective measures for eliminating all pensionary anomalies. We will revamp the entire system of welfare of ex-servicemen as a tribute to those that laid down their lives for the country.

Internal Security

34. We are committed to ensuring the safety and security of all citizens in all parts of the country. For reaching this goal, we will take effective steps to create a riot-free order and a terrorism-free India.

International Relations

35. In the past 13 months the government demonstrated its capability to secure for India a place, role and position in the global arena, commensurate with its size and importance. We have also shown that our desire for peace and friendship should not be interpreted as weakness but as a firm resolve that aggression shall not be permitted to succeed. We have effectively engaged with the international community and obtained a high degree of understanding. This engagement process shall be developed to improve India's standing in the international community.

We will promote and strengthen regional groupings on the lines of SAARC & ASEAN, and reorient our diplomacy to pursue our economic, commercial goals and energy security goals. We will strongly support any attempt to build a system of trade and economic cooperation through an expanded global system of trade preferences (GSTP) among developing countries. We will seek to assert more robustly India's national interests, especially at the forthcoming review conference of the WTO, scheduled for December, 1999. We are committed to making the voice of India as the voice of the developing world.

Genuine Secularism

36. We are committed to establishing a civilised, humane and just civil order; that which does not discriminate on grounds of caste, religion, class, colour, race or sex. We will truly and genuinely uphold and practise the concept of secularism consistent with the Indian tradition of 'Sarva panth samadara' (equal respect for all faiths) and on the basis of equality of all. We are committed to the economic, social and educational development of the minorities and will take effective steps in this regard.

SCs, STs and Backwards Classes

37. The interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes will be adequately safeguarded by appropriate legal, executive and societal efforts and by large scale education and empowerment. We will provide legal protection to existing percentages of reservation in government employment and educational institutions at the Centre and State level. If required, the Constitution will be amended to maintain the system of reservation. We will continue to offer all assistance to the SCs, STs and Backward Classes to ensure their speedy socio-economic development. We will remove the last vestiges of untouchability from our society. Further, we will present a National Charter for Social Justice (Samajik Nyay) based on the principle of social harmony (Samajik Samarasata). We are committed to extending the SC/ST reservations for another 10 years. Reservation percentages, above 50%, as followed by certain states shall be sanctified through necessary legislative measures.

Environment

38. We will establish an appropriate legal framework for the protection of the environment and unveil a National Environment Policy to balance between development and ecology. A Vanvasi Fund for the benefit of Vanvasis shall be established. To discourage poaching of Wild Life a Wild Life Anti-Poaching Authority

shall be established. The Ganga and Yamuna rivers' cleaning programmes shall be revamped and revitalised. Similar schemes for other water bodies shall also be initiated.

Prasar Bharati

39. We will review the Prasar Bharati Act. We will also enact a comprehensive Broadcasting Bill to regulate private broadcasting and to protect Indian interests. We will restrict foreign equity holding in private television broadcasting to 20% (and prevent cross holding to) avoid emergence of monopolies in the media.

Science & Technology

40. For sustainable national development and the long-overdue transformation of India into a modern, prosperous and knowledge-driven nation, we will ensure integration of efforts in the field of science and technology with development programmes in various socioeconomic sectors. We will further speed up the modernization of National Laboratories, strengthen R&D and establish new as well as strengthen existing centres of excellence, so that they continue to constitute an invaluable national asset and also become totally immune to policy fluctuations elsewhere.

Information Technology

41. A new revolution is sweeping the globe - that of Information Technology. We believe that Information Technology is an important vehicle for future development. We are committed to ensuring that India is full and equal partner in its global progress; indeed, that India can be a software superpower. We will, for that purpose, unveil a National Informatics Policy with short, medium and long-term perspective.

A NEW NORM FOR GOVERNANCE BY CONSENSUS

42. Finally, we are convinced that a nation of nearly 100 crore people representing a sixth of humanity cannot be governed on the arithmetic alone of majority and minority. Governance must become unifying, not divisive, in its practice. It is this mindless manner of the domination of the majority that has led to bitterness, hostility and confrontation - and has even made the opposition and ruling parties like permanent adversaries. This destructive trend of politics of negativism and political untouchability which has distorted our body politic in the last few decades calls for an immediate corrective. We will, therefore, strive to develop national consensus on all major issues confronting the nation by involving the opposition parties and all section of society in dialogue. We will also try for a consensual mode of governance as far as practicable.

CONCLUSION

This National Agenda is a sincere and solemn covenant aimed at changing the content and culture of governance of 1 great nation, freeing it of the triple curses of hunger (bhukh), fear (bhay) and corruption (bhrashtachar), and transforming it into a New India that is prosperous, strong, self - confident and at peace with itself and the world. We appeal for the cooperation of all parties and all sections of society in this great endeavour.

Charter of Commitments

& Our Achievements

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

Charter of Commitments

- India shall be built by Indians
- Berozgari Hatao
- Measure growth by generation of gainful employment
- A hunger-free India ¾ Food security for all

- Health for all
- Potable drinking water to all villages
- Eradication of illiteracy
- Primary education to be made free and compulsory up to Class V
- Elimination of child labour
- Present a National Charter for Children
- Comprehensive Administrative Reforms $\frac{3}{4}$ Police & Civil Service

National Security

- Constantly maintain and strengthen the preparedness, morale and combat effectiveness of the Defence Forces
- National Security Council to advise Government on all issues of national security and in establishment of a credible nuclear deterrence
- Correct the imbalance and budgetary neglect of Defence needs in the last decade by successive governments and ensure adequate budgetary allocation
- Take effective measures for eliminating all pensionary anomalies
- Revamp the entire system of welfare of ex-servicemen as a tribute to those who laid down their lives for the country.

Economy

- Revitalize reforms with emphasis on unemployment, infrastructure, agriculture, agro-industry and rural development
- Bring GDP growth to 7-8%
- Control deficits $\frac{3}{4}$ fiscal and revenue; examine possibility of enacting a Fiscal and Revenue Processing Act
- Strengthen national economy $\frac{3}{4}$ indigenous industrial base and the financial and services sectors * Increase national savings to 13% of the GDP
- Reform public sector units.

Agriculture

- Earmark 60% of Plan funds to agriculture, rural development, irrigation, etc
- Subsidies to maximize benefits to all sections of agricultural population
- Promote scientific animal husbandry with emphasis on the Constitutional provision of protecting and improving the breed of the cow and its progeny.

Finance

- Reduce pre-emption of Provident and Insurance funds by the Government and reform institutional framework to enable long term funds for infrastructure projects
- Mandate investments by PFs, insurance companies in the equity markets
- Create strong mutual fund industry for channelising retail savings
- Financial measures for encouraging research in pharmaceutical sector
- Formation of an Investment Promotion Board different in form and features from the present FIPB

Trade and Commerce

- Focus on specific products in exports growth
- Announce specific packages for Horticulture and Floriculture EoUs
- Strongly support attempts to build a system of trade and economic cooperation through expanded Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) among developing countries. Assert more robustly India's national interests, especially at the forthcoming Review Conference of the WTO, scheduled for November, 1999

- Healthy commodity exchange system to be established and managed in an autonomous way.

Industry

- Create a separate tribunal called Commercial Insolvency Tribunal to take up cases relating to winding up of companies and their revival
- Provide services, technology and marketing facilities to artisans, small scale, village, handloom and handicrafts and similar other industries.

Infrastructure

- Development of infrastructure, particular emphasis on energy and transport
- Cold storage facilities to be enlarged and made available at all ports and major airports
- Restructure the SEBs $\frac{3}{4}$ Corporatize, set up Power Trading Corporations, develop national transmission network and further simplify project clearance process
- Reorganize Port Trusts $\frac{3}{4}$ Corporatize major ports, increase operational autonomy, regulated divestment in the port trusts
- Restructure the Delhi Vidyut Board
- Update National Action Plan on Tourism and prioritise tourism development as a core activity.

Food

- Set up a Food Development Bank of India
- Create warehouse space and develop bulk handling facilities. State governments to provide land at concessional rates for this purpose, FCI to subcontract its warehousing to agro-industry
- Prepare a Draft National Storage Policy
- Enhance existing cold storage capacity and also revive sick cold stores.

Labour

- Implement laws relating to equal pay for equal work.

Education

- Grant full autonomy $\frac{3}{4}$ operational and financial $\frac{3}{4}$ to select institutions of higher learning. Gradually reduce state subsidies
- Primary education to be made free and compulsory up to Class V
- Eradication of illiteracy
- Increase governmental and non-governmental spending on education up to 6% of the GDP.

Housing

- Evolve a National Housing and Habitat Policy to provide housing for all.

Women's Welfare

- Legislate for reservation of 33% of the seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women
- Institute Plans to provide free education for girls up to college level including professional courses
- Set up a Development Bank for Women Entrepreneurs in small scale and tiny sectors.

Health

- Control Population and ensure medical care
- Endeavour to provide better deal to senior citizens of our country.

Centre - State Relations

- Appointment of a Commission to review the Constitution to ensure

harmonious Centre-State relations

- Backward Area Commission for each State
- Set up a committee to study feasibility of treating all languages in the VIIIth Schedule of the Constitution as official languages
- Revitalise NE Council; ensure territorial integrity of the states of the NE; special developmental, administrative and security related programmes.

Constitutional and Legal

- Set up a National Commission to introduce electoral reforms on the basis of recommendations of the Goswami Committee
- Enactment of the Lok Pal Bill
- Statutory ceiling on the size of the Council of Ministers
- Legislate provision to ensure that high offices of State $\frac{3}{4}$ Legislative, Executive and Judiciary $\frac{3}{4}$ can be held only by natural born Indian Citizens
- Undertake all necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the right of franchise of the Armed Forces through proxy voting and/or any other method

Research and Development

- Speed up the modernization of National Laboratories
- Strengthen R&D and establish new as well as strengthen existing centres of excellence.

Foreign Relations

- Work towards ensuring for India its rightful place in the comity of nations
- Promote and strengthen regional groupings like SAARC and ASEAN, and
- Reorient diplomacy to pursue economic and commercial goals, including energy security
- Work towards making India's voice as that of the champion of the developing world
- Purposefully pursue good neighbourly relations with all neighbouring countries.

Irrigation

- Adopt a target of 20 million hectares under irrigation in the next five years
- Implement 75% of the existing 300 incomplete irrigation projects within 5 years
- All States to review and announce 5-year water rates.

Human Resource Development

- To expand and strengthen National Reconstruction Corps
- Time bound programme for promotion of sports
- Enact National Fund for the Disabled
- Rehabilitation Policy for those displaced by development projects.

Environment

- Vanvasi Fund to be created for the forest people
- Establish a Wildlife Anti-poaching Authority
- Revitalise the Clean Ganga and Yamuna Programmes.

Energy

- Prepare a National Energy Framework - 2000 for achieving Energy Security.

Information Technology

- Further pursue infotech reforms and R&D to make India a world leader in information technology.

Our Promises and Achievements

ECONOMY

Our Promise in 1998

- Reform process with a humane face and a strong Swadeshi thrust.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Firm movement towards second generation reforms : emphasis on changes in financial sector, greater thrust to infrastructure development, mobilising additional resources through divestment.
- Policy decision to reduce Government share holding in non-strategic public sector units to 26%; Approval of strategic sale of a few companies. Introduction of Foreign Exchange Management Act Bill, Anti-Money Laundering Bill and a Bill permitting private investment in the insurance sector in Parliament. Announcement of Credit Policy to benefit agriculture as well as industrial and service sectors. Announcement of changes in deposit norms for NBSCs.
- Tax compliance ensured - Three innovative schemes, Saral, Samadhan and Samman introduced to simplify tax procedures. Tapping the investment potential of NRIs by announcing the Resurgent India Bonds for infrastructure development.

TRADE POLICY

- Delicensing of 340 items of import by moving them from restricted list to OGL; April 1999 policy delicensed 600 items.
- Unilateral removal of all quantitative restrictions on imports of around 2300 items from SAARC countries with effect from August 1, 1998.
- A Free Trade Agreement concluded on 28th December, 1998 between India and Sri Lanka.
- Payment of interest on dues to exporters for delays in duty drawback/refund of duty beyond two months. ? The scope of Export Promotion Capital Goods scheme at zero duty extended to certain specified bio-technologies and small scale engineering industry.
- Extension of tax holiday for EOU/EPZ to 10 years.
- Permission to set up Private Software Technology Parks (STPs) for exports.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

Our Promise in 1998

- Increase national savings to 30% of the GDP in the next five years through incentives / motivation, encourage FDI in core areas and discourage FDI in non-priority areas.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Projects for electricity generation, transmission and distribution and construction and maintenance of roads, highways, vehicular tunnels and vehicular bridges, ports and harbours have been permitted foreign equity participation upto 100 per cent under automatic route. The automatic route is subject to a ceiling of Rs.1500 crore on foreign equity.
- FDI permissible under Non-banking Financial Services now includes "Credit Card Business" and "Money Changing Business".
- Multilateral financial institutions allowed to contribute equity to the extent of shortfall in NRI holdings within the overall permissible limit of 40 per cent in private sector banks.
- FDI upto 49 per cent equity allowed subject to license, in companies providing Global Mobile Personal Communication by Satellite [GMPCS] Services.

- Unlisted companies permitted to float Euro issues under certain conditions.
- End-use restrictions on GDR/ADR issue proceeds removed except those on investment in stock markets and real estate.
- Indian companies permitted to issue GDRs/ADRs in case of Bonus or Rights issue of shares, or on genuine business reorganisations duly approved by the High Court.

Foreign Institutional Investors

- FIIs permitted to buy or sell treasury bills and Government securities in both primary and secondary markets within overall approved debt ceilings.
- Authorised Dealers permitted to provide forward cover to FIIs in respect of incremental equity investment in India.
- Transactions among FIIs with respect to Indian stocks to no longer require post facto confirmation from the RBI.
- 100 per cent FII debt funds permitted to invest in unlisted debt securities of Indian companies.

FINANCIAL SECTOR

Our Promises in 1998

- Institute comprehensive study of financial, technological and social security requirements in the self-employed and unincorporated sector; constitute a Development Bank to promote this largest segment of the national economy.
- Review of all laws and regulations relating to industry to free it from bureaucratic control.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Prudent regulations for banks tightened to require provisioning for Centre and State Government securities, Government guaranteed loans, and general provision for standard assets.
- Risk weight of 2.5% for market risk of government securities, 20% for state government guaranteed advances in default and 100 per cent for foreign exchange open position.
- Minimum capital to risk-weighted asset ratio [CRAR] for banks to rise to nine per cent by April, 2000.
- Assets in the substandard category to be classified as doubtful after 18 months instead of 24 months, by March 31, 2001.
- Regulatory framework for NBFCs rationalised. Companies which solicit public deposits to comply with revised norms.
- Number of companies whose shares must be traded in de-materialised form increased; Rolling settlement introduced for de-materialised shares.
- Conditions for public issues by infrastructure companies eased.
- Primary issues to be compulsorily through depository mode.
- 100 per cent book building permitted for issues above 25 crore.
- Bill for strong independent Insurance Regulatory authority and opening of Insurance and Pension funds to private companies introduced in Parliament; proposal to allow 26% foreign equity and additional 14 per cent NRI and FII holding.
- Bill introduced in Parliament for amending the Securities Contracts [Regulation] Act, 1956 so as to widen the definition of "Securities" to cover derivative contracts.
- New Bill for Foreign Exchange Management to replace FERA introduced in Parliament.

NRIs

Our Achievement in 13 Months

- Aggregate ceiling for investment in a company by all NRIs/PIOs/OCBHs through stock exchanges made separate and exclusive of investment ceiling available for FIIS.
- Investment limit by a single NRI/PIO/OCB enhanced from 1 per cent to 5 per cent of the paid up capital.
- Aggregate investment ceiling for NRIs/PIOs/OCBs raised from 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the paid up capital of a company. In case of listed Indian companies, ceiling raised to 24 per cent under a General Body Resolution.
- NRIs/PIOs/OCBs permitted to invest in unlisted companies subject to prevailing norms, procedures, and ceiling applicable in case of listed companies.
- Government to finalise a scheme for persons of Indian origin [PIO] for issue of PIOs card to facilitate a visa free regime.

TAXATION

Our Achievement in 13 Months

- All gifts made on or after 1.10.98 exempted from payment of gift tax by Finance Act, 1998.
- Tax holiday increased from 5 to 10 years to industrial undertakings set up in free trade zones and units in the software technology parks.
- Tax holiday benefits extended to inland waterways, inland ports, radio-paging, trunking and EDI Network and domestic satellite service.
- Administrative measures to improve reporting and widening the tax base include:[1] Introduction of simple one page taxpayer-friendly return form called "Saras", applicable to all non-corporate tax payers;[2] making it obligatory for assesses to quote their PAN or GIR number in respect of certain high value transactions;[3] the presumptive taxation scheme, introduced in 1997-98 budget in 12 cities, extended to 23 more cities in India taking the total coverage to 35 cities and two additional economic criteria added; and [4] introduction of a new scheme called "Kar Vivad Samadhan Scheme" to recover the money locked in litigation both in direct and indirect taxes.
- Reduction in import duty on 75 specified machinery from 25 per cent to 15 per cent to encourage investment in information technology sector;
- Reduction in basic import duty to a level of 5% ad valorem on many items related to information technology.
- A number of items which were earlier exempted from excise duty, would not attract nominal duty of 8%.
- Excise duty on a number of products, which attracted a low rate of duty raised by 5 percentage points.
- Coverage of service tax widened to cover 12 more services.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Our Promises in 1998

- Bring GDP growth to 7-8% control deficits, fiscal and revenue.
- Give primacy to removal of unemployment, accelerated development of infrastructure, mainly in energy and power sector.
- Major thrust to infrastructure development particularly energy and power by recommending public expenditure in the sector.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- India Hydro Carbon Vision 2025 conceived and conceptualised. NELP providing level playing field to domestic and international players operationalised. Formulation of National Energy Policy initiated. Special Action Plan[SAP] prepared for rapid improvement in physical infrastructure. Task Force on Infrastructure set up. Electricity Commission Regulatory Act 1998 enacted. Hydro Power Development Policy announced. Policy on mega power plants announced with a view to develop mega sources of power and obtain lower tariffs. Steps taken to ensure resource mobilisation for Power Finance Corporations through syndicated loan issues. Finalisation of power projects agreements with Pakistan. No increase in diesel and kerosene prices to protect the interests of farmers and poor people. Prices of High Speed Diesel reduced. Proposal initiated to delicense petroleum products along with coal and lignite and five year tax holiday for new refineries introduced.
- Coal sector budget for the year 1998-99 increased by 69% in comparison to the revised budget estimates for the year 1997-98. Pension scheme benefiting eight lakh coal employees notified.
- Five world-class international airports with a maximum of 100% foreign equity, adoption of domestic Air Transport Policy, decision taken to allocate cargo handling by private parties. Steps taken by Government to reverse the cross-subsidisation of passenger services from freight earnings in Railways. A number of new trains and services introduced.
- Plan outlay for energy, transport and communications sector increased by 35% as against previous year.
- Announcement of New Internet Service Providers [ISP] Policy, introduction of Global Mobile Personal Communications by Satellite service and constitution of a Group on Telecommunications.
- A Focus Action Group on Private Investment Promotion has been set up by DoT.
- The Electricity Regulatory Commissions Act, 1998 : It fulfills the commitment of providing statutory bodies like Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) and States Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) to bring into effect rationalisation of electricity tariff and transparent policies regarding subsidies for regulation of inter state transmission of energy and promotion of efficiency and environmentally benign policies. CERC has been set up by Central Government and many States have set up/initiated action to set up their regulatory mechanisms.
- The Electricity Laws (Amendment) Bill, 1998 : As transmission was not a separate activity under the Electricity Laws, there was inadequate investment in this sector. Through the Electricity Laws (Amendment) Act, 1998, the lacuna has been removed and the way paved for facilitating more investment in the transmission sector as well as a coordinated operation of the grid system.
- Revised Mega Power Policy : The policy has been introduced to develop mega sources of power utilising economies of scale to obtain lower tariffs and producing power at most economical locations. Mega projects are proposed to be set up both in public and private sector. Specified incentives have been identified which will ultimately help to bring down tariffs and at the same time protect the interests of domestic manufacturers.
- Power Trading Corporation: Power Trading Corporation is being set up primarily to facilitate a single point purchase of power from mega power projects under long-term Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and sale of power to the beneficiary States under long-term agreements.

- **New Hydel Policy** : To augment addition of hydel capacity and also increase the declining share of hydel generation in the generation mix so as to meet peak demand, the new Hydel Policy has been introduced. It lays down a mechanism for increasing investment in this sector to harness the untapped hydel potential.
- **Action Plan for North Eastern States** : An Action Plan for power development in North Eastern States has been formulated with special packages of incentives and investments during the 9th Plan for the North East.
- **Strengthening of Monitoring Mechanism** : Five Task forces have been set up on Thermal, Hydel, Systems, Reforms and Private Power Projects to effectively monitor and achieve the targets in these sectors. These Task Forces have helped the timely, and, in some instances, advance completion of projects.
- **Transfer of Surplus Power from Eastern Region to other Regions** : With sustained efforts, the maximum power transfer effected from surplus Eastern Region rose from 550MW during 1997-98 to 750MW during the year. Energy transfer increased by 42% from 2392 MUs to 3404 MUs.
- **NTPC has attained global stature**. It has become the 6th largest generator, in terms of thermal generation and the most efficient in capacity utilization among top generators in the world.
- **NTPC's Stations at Vindhyachal, Kawas and Gandhar and many functional groups in Head Office achieved ISO-9002 accreditation** during the year.
- **NTPC added 940MW new capacity in 1998-99 against target of 115MW.**
- **NTPC achieved a major milestone in resolving the highly vexed R&R issue of Singrauli region with the World Bank.**
- **To harness the generation potential and speed up Renovation and Modernization of power plants in India and abroad, NTPC signed an MOU with ABB Kraftwerke, AG(Germany) for formation of joint venture company.**
- **120 m US\$ were raised by NTPC through syndicated foreign currency term loan. NTPC also secured offers worth Rs.5710 cr. from Indian financial institutions.**
- **Powergrid added 3240 ckm of Transmission line length which is an all time record. It is 54% higher than the achievement during 1997-98.**
- **Transmission system was maintained at 98.66% availability at par with the best in the world, against target of 98.5%.**
- **Net Profits recorded a quantum jump to Rs.468 cr. as against Rs.337 cr. in previous year.**
- **Powergrid contributed to restoration of power to cyclone hit areas in Gujarat in record time through Emergency Restoration System.**
- **Powergrid has undertaken Optical Fibre Network Development on live Transmission lines, a step towards venturing long distance telecom services.**
- **Moved a step closer to establishment of National Grid with commissioning of 400 KV D/C Jeypore - Gazuwaka line connecting Eastern Region to Southern Region 500MW HVDC B/B station at Vizag was also commissioned.**
- **NEEPCO (North Eastern Electric Power Corporation) is executing hydel projects in difficult conditions in North Eastern States. NEEPCO has achieved self sufficiency in all aspects of Project Management and Implementation during the year. It has geared up to harness Hydro potential in North Eastern Region. Agreements are being entered into for execution of projects identified by State Govts. to tap the power potential in N.E.R. states.**

- Special subsidy of 4% on interest rate on R&M, Ongoing projects/schemes & Missing transmission links and their studies extended to end of IXth plan.
- Additional 1% subsidy for North Eastern States & for States setting up SERCs.
- Loans extended for working capital requirement for State Utilities.
- Loans disbursed to Private Sector; Rs.152.50 cr. during '98-'99.
- Development of Hydro potential facilitated with lower interest rates and larger funding of project cost.
- Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) recorded an unprecedented growth of more than 130% in loans sanctioned by it during the year on various schemes of Villages electrification, Pumpsets energisation etc.
- Financial performance by REC also achieved a record with Profits recording more than 200% increase vis-à-vis that recorded in last year.
- In view of non-availability of fresh OECF funding REC sanctioned all such projects with a total outlay of Rs.357 crores out of its own resources.
- To improve the quality of supply to rural consumers, System Improvement programme was given priority resulting in doubling of disbursements under this programme as compared to the previous year.
- The Indian Electricity Act, 1910 and Electricity [Supply]Act, 1948 amended to provide for private investment in power transmission.
- The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission set up, with enabling provision for states to establish their own independent Regulatory Commissions.
- The Urban Land [ceiling and regulation Act]Act, 1976 repealed.
- Policy for issuing licenses for providing internet services announced. No license fee for the first five years and after five years a nominal license fee of Rupee 1 be charged.
- A National Integrated Highway Project merging the golden quadrilateral connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta with the East-West[Silchar to Saurashtra] and North-South[Kashmir to Kanya Kumari]corridors launched.
- A new Telcom Policy launched.

INFORMATION & BROADCASTING

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- A Sports channel.
- A 24 - hour news channel.
- FM radio for private broadcasters started.
- Rs 430 crore plan for J&K upgradation of facilities for DD & AIR.
- 30% increase in DAVP rates.

POVERTY ERADICATION

Our Promise in 1998

- Expedite implementation of policies and programmes in accordance with national interests with eradication of poverty as the ultimate goal.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Reviewed Plan document for the Ninth Plan to suitably reflect altered priorities enunciated in National Agenda for Governance.
- Major thrust to rural economy; more powers to Gram Panchayat.
- Through Budget announced the Annapurna Scheme for indigent senior citizens; targeted PDS strengthened; four pronged strategy to streamline

employment schemes by greater involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions; convergence of self-employment schemes under a single Swaran Jayanti Gram Swa-Rozgar Yojana; Samagra Awas Yojana launched to ensure integrated provision of shelter, sanitation and drinking water; embracing all existing programmes including Indira Awas Yojana.

AGRICULTURE

Our Promises in 1998

- Analyse effects of globalization and devise time-table to suit our national conditions and requirements.
- Earmark 60% of Plan Funds; effect public investment in Agriculture, Rural Development, Irrigation and by diverse incentives, including tax shelters and achieve quantum leap in agricultural production; Introduce effective Crop Insurance Schemes.
- Special efforts in Animal Husbandry, Dairying to generating employment and for eradicating hunger and poverty from rural and urban areas.
- Continue farm subsidies and make them more direct, efficient and specific.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- 58% more budgetary allocation in respect of Ministry of Agriculture for the financial year 1998-99 provided; New Agricultural Policy being formulated to accord important role to Cooperatives to ensure both high productivity and stable agro-commodities market; Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme, Command Area Development Programme, Watershed Development Programme given higher budgetary allocation. Minimum Support Prices for Kharif and Rabi crops fixed at higher levels. National Crop Forecasting Centre[NCFCC] set up.
- Lending procedures simplified through provision of cash-credit schemes and Kisan Credit Card.
- Rs.1627 crore provided to State Governments as assistance under Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme to benefit farmers during 1998-99. Steps taken for introduction of modern technology in handling, storage and transportation of foodgrains, reducing losses to the minimum possible.
- Sugar industry delicensed; State Governments authorised to increase stock holding limit.
- Policy intervention announced for moderating domestic oil prices. Basic customs duty on edible oils on Open General License reduced from 20% to 10%.
- Evolved a scheme to rehabilitate Milk Unions set up in Operation Flood Areas; New Scheme for Genetic Stock Upgradation of Cattle and Buffalo finalized. Proposal brought up to give statutory status to the Agriculture Authority.
- The 1998-99 budget provided higher subsidy of Rs.6,000 crore on indigenous urea against Rs.5340 crore in the previous budget. Urea price maintained at last years level and made available at a uniform price of Rs.3660 per tonne; Special concessions on decontrolled fertilizers enhanced for Rabi 1998-99.

IRRIGATION

Our Promises in 1998

- Development of small scale irrigation projects with emphasis on investment in this sector.
- Development of small scale irrigation projects with emphasis on investment in this sector.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Launched accelerated irrigation benefit programme, Proportion of loan component to State Governments increased; During 1998-99 more than Rs. 1100 crore of assistance given to 77 projects in 14 states compared to Rs. 952 in the previous year.
- Resolution of the Cavery Water Dispute; Draft National Water Policy finalized. Water sharing on Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh implemented to the satisfaction of both countries. Negotiations on with Pakistan on Tulbal Navigation Project located in J&K.

LABOUR

Our Promise in 1998

- Make labour an equal and proud partner in the production of nations wealth and progress; Strict implementation of laws relating to equal pay for equal work.
- Expedite comprehensive reform of the PSUs including restructuring, rehabilitation and divestment.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Steps taken to ensure compliance towards payment of wages; process for next general verification of the Unions initiated. National floor level minimum wage increased from Rs. 35 per day to Rs.40 per day. The rate of PF contribution increased. Maximum ceiling on gratuity raised. The Tripartite Committee on Employees' Participation in management reconstituted to make it more effective. A Committee of experts set up for studying existing medical facilities system under ESI Scheme and for suggesting necessary ways and means for improvement in medical services.

ERADICATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Our Promise in 1998

- Eradication of unemployment - Berozgaari Hatao.

Our Achievement in 13 Months

- Task Force on Employment: The Government has decided that ten crore people should get employment opportunities over the next ten years.

FOOD SECURITY & PRICE STABILITY

Our Promise in 1998

- Ensure food security for all and create a hunger free India in five years - Reform and improve PDS. Ensure price stability through appropriate means/legislation.

Our Achievement in 13 Months

- Special Action Plan prepared for doubling of food production and making India hunger-free in 10 years. Lowest-ever inflation rate.

HEALTH & DRINKING WATER

Our Promises in 1998

- Ensure potable drinking water to all villages in next five years.
- Achieve "Health for all" by diverse programmes.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Government has decided a technology mission for water. National Water Policy has been formulated.
- A New Health Policy formulated and passed. New impetus to Indian systems of medicine and Homeopathy. Prices of over 500 pharmaceutical formulations and 7 bulk drugs rationalised/revised for benefit of common man.

SOCIAL WELFARE

- Senior Citizens.

- National Policy for older persons announced; 18 mobile medi-care units, 46 new old-age homes and 176 new day care centres opened for older citizens; Secretariat established to sort out common problems of older persons; National Council for Older Persons (NCOP) constituted; Older Age Social And Income Security (OASIS) Project initiated; Pension schemes on the anvil.
- Prevention of Drugs Abuse.
- A special package for de-addiction launched in North East; Major project launched for implementation in collaboration with UNDCP on community based rehabilitation; Comprehensive rehabilitation programme for the North Eastern states; Development of National Centre of Drug Abuse Prevention; Two project agreements wherein UNDCP to provide US\$ 5.5 m over 4 years period for drug demand reduction; National Institute on Drug Abuse Prevention (C-DAP) established; A comprehensive drug demand reduction project launched in the North Eastern states; Scheme for prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drugs) Abuse revised.
- Disability Sector.
- 'Ability India' exhibition organised; 4 Regional Spinal Injuries Centres being set up; Artificial limbs and other aids provided to 3 lakh disabled persons; 27 disability camps organised benefiting 13800 persons during 98-99; Rehabilitation Council of India reconstituted, its activities revamped; 4 small Schemes for NGOs integrated; National Trust Bill for Disabled introduced in Parliament to provide Rs.100 crore for the families of the disabled.
- Welfare of Animals.
- 120 NGOs working for welfare of animals given financial support for purchases of ambulances and building shelter for animals in distress.
- The breeding of and experiments on Animal Rules, 1998 formulated and notified.

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Our Promises in 1998

- Committed to total eradication of illiteracy. Formulation and implementation of plans to increase governmental and non-governmental spending in education upto 6% of the GDP to provide education for all.
- Committed to implementing Constitutional provision of making primary education free and compulsory upto 5th Standard. To move towards equal access to and opportunity of educational standards upto the school leaving stage; Improve the quality of education at all levels.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Budgetary allocation raised to 50%. Launched a new scheme for gender equity by providing free education to girls upto college level including professional and technical courses. The Council of National Literacy Mission Authority revived. Alongwith UGC several measures taken to arrest declining standard in higher education. Revision of pay scales of colleges and university teachers w.e.f.1.1.96, opportunities provided for training and career advancement for teachers. All India eligibility test introduced to attract best talent in teaching profession, academic staff colleges established for re-orientation of newly appointed university and college teachers. 100% tax exemption given for investment in National Culture Fund. GoI decided to celebrate 300 years of the birth of Khalsa. Agreement reached with Pakistan for greater cultural cooperation. India and Sri Lanka agreed to further strengthen cooperation in the field of Education and Culture. Lalit Kala Akademi restructured.

HOUSING FOR ALL

Our Promise in 1998

- Housing for all on a priority basis; To evolve a National Housing & Habitat Policy in consultations with State Governments; Facilitate construction of 20 lakh additional housing units annually.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Urban Land Ceiling Act repealed. Increase in flow of credit to housing sector; Far reaching tax initiatives to promote housing announced in the Budget. Changes proposed in tax treatment of income earned on non-performing assets by housing finance companies. Target for Golden Jubilee Rural Housing Finance Scheme of National Housing Bank [NHB] raised to 1.25 lakh dwelling units from 1 lakh units; NHB to reduce interest rates for small borrowers; and tax free status to a limited amount of municipal bonds each were also announced.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN & CHILDREN

Our Promises in 1998

- Bring in legislation for reservation of 33% of the seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women.
- Plans to provide free education for girls upto college level, including professional courses.
- Set up Development Bank for Women entrepreneurs in the small scale and tiny sectors.
- Present a National Charter for Children with a view to ensure that no child remains illiterate, hungry, or lack medical care.
- Take measures to eliminate child labour.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Integrated Child Development Services [ICDS] Scheme extended. Third Phase of World Bank Assisted ICDS project approved to cover more states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, UP and Andhra Pradesh. Decided to draft proposal for constitution of a National Commission for Children.
- Child Help Line launched through a 24-hr dedicated telephone line; Scheme for street children expanded; A child line Foundation established and over 50,000 street children rescued; Financial support of Rs.5.16 crores given to prevent destitution of children and improve conditions of street children; A Chair instituted at the National Law School, University of Bangalore to bring about necessary amendments in Juvenile Justice Act.

HARNESSING YUVA SHAKTI

Our Promises in 1998

- Mobilise and harness Yuva Shakti for nation-building.
- Build national consensus for the creation of a National Reconstruction Corps aimed at environmental protection, ecological tasks, reclamation of waste land, including afforestation, and for spreading literacy.
- Time bound programme for promotion of sports.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Revision of National Sports Policy and National Youth Policy undertaken. National Reconstruction Corps and
- National Sports Development Fund created. All schemes of the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports revised during 1998-98 to suit present needs. A Welfare Fund created to assist sports persons in indigent circumstances, Pension for Arjuna Awardees. Pension for Medal winners enhanced. Price

money for medal winners raised in Asian and Commonwealth Games.

CORRUPTION

Our Promise in 1998

- To enact Lok Pal Bill.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Introduced in Parliament a path-breaking Lok Pal Bill to fight corruption at high places, bringing in the office of the Prime Minister also within the ambit of the proposed Bill.

NEW STATES

Our Promise in 1998

- Give full statehood to Delhi and also create Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh as new States.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Bills introduced in Parliament towards this end.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Our Promises in 1998

- Give attention to the state of preparedness, morale and combat effectiveness of the Armed Forces and take appropriate remedial action.
- Establish a National Security Council to analyse the military, economic and political threats to the nation and to advise the government. The Council will undertake Strategic Defence Review.
- Re-evaluate the nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons to ensure the security, territorial integrity and unity of India.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Budgetary allocation on defence increased. Revival of the Defence Minister's Committee after more than 20 years.
- The Naga cease fire extended by another year. North Eastern Council restructured with the inclusion of Sikkim with a view that NEC functions effectively as a regional planning body for North East.
- Constituted the National Security Council.
- Five successful nuclear tests conducted at Pokhran on May 11-13, 1998 achieving nuclear weapon capability. Development of second phase of Agni missile undertaken. New vessels added to Navy's fleet. Welfare of the troops and equipping them with the best of equipment given priority. The Siachen allowance increased. Quota of recruitment in Armed Forces from North East doubled. Talks on to secure a lasting peace in North East.
- Successful conclusion of Operation Vijay launched to vacate aggression committed by Pakistan in the Kargil region.
- New relief measures for those disabled/killed in conflict.

INTERNAL SECURITY

Our Promise in 1998

- Committed to ensuring the safety and security of all citizens in all parts of the country, so as to take effective steps to create a riot-free order and a terrorism-free India.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Special joint action plan implemented to counter terrorism in J&K. An innovative four-pronged approach to strengthen the democratic process, isolate the terrorists, neutralise their hostile plans and galvanise development programmes adopted in consultation with the State Government.
- Cooperation with neighbouring States in checking cross-border terrorism.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Our Promises in 1998

- Strive to secure India a place, role and position in the global arena consistent with our size and capability and promote peaceful relationship with all neighbours on a reciprocal basis; Promote and strengthen regional and civilisational grouping on the lines of SAARC and ASEAN and reorient our diplomacy to pursue our economic and commercial goals.
- Formulate our agenda on the WTO issues in the wider perspective of universal goal of creating a world order which is more equitable.
- Promote a system of trade and economic cooperation through an expanded global system of trade preferences [GSTP] among developing countries.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- Successful handling of post-Pokhran II through pro-active diplomacy. At multilateral summits, including SAARC in Colombo, the NAM summit in Durban and the UN General Assembly. Initiative on joint global action against terrorism and dismantling of weapons of mass destruction.
- A firm message to Pakistan that while India seeks friendly relations and can take an initiative such as the "Lahore Bus Journey", we are equally firm in defeating any aggressive intentions.
- Effective management ensured that Pakistan was isolated diplomatically on the Kargil issue and the international community endorsed the Indian stand that Pakistan was the aggressor and aggression must be vacated and sanctity of LoC restored.

SECULAR COMMITMENT

Our Promises in 1998

- To uphold and practice the concept of genuine secularism consistent with the Indian tradition of Sarva Panth Samadara [equal respect for all faiths].
- Committed to the economic and educational development of the minorities and take effective steps in this regard.

Our Achievement in 13 Months

- Nineteen Ninety-Eight saw the lowest incidence of communal violence in the last 10 years.

SCs/STs/BACKWARD CLASSES AND MINORITIES

Our Promises in 1998

- The interests of SCs/STs and Backward Classes will be adequately safeguarded by appropriate legal, executive and societal efforts and by large scale education and empowerment.
- Provide legal protection to existing percentages of reservation in educational institutions at the State level.
- Continue offering assistance to the SCs, STs and Backward Classes to ensure their speedy socio-economic development.
- Remove the last vestiges of untouchability from our Society.
- Present a National Charter for Social Justice [Samajik Nyay] based on the principle of social harmony [Samajik Samarasata].

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- National SC and ST Finance and Development Corporation allocations increased to provide loans at concessional rates.
- Grant of Rs.20.84 cr for North East SC/ST students during each year of the 9th Five Year Plan. The Centrally sponsored scheme of Post Matric Scholarship to students to SCs and STs to continue.
- National SC & ST Finance & Development Corporation, National Backward

Classes Finance & Development Corporation, and NMFDC revamped.

- TRIBES shop established in Delhi to provide marketing support for items produced by Tribal Communities and handicapped persons.
- Five new schemes launched viz.[1] Pre-examination coaching for OBCs;[2]Pre-matric scholarship for OBCs;[3]Post-matric scholarships for OBCs;[4]Hostels for OBC boys and girls;[5] Aid to Voluntary Organisations for welfare of OBCs. The National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation reactivated.
- 95 educational institutions managed by minorities given grants for establishment/expansion of schools/ residential schools/colleges mainly for girls, construction of laboratory buildings, establishment of computer centres/vocational training centre for women, etc.
- Rs.149 lakhs released during financial year 98-99 to improve financial position of Wakfs and Wakf Boards as against Rs.108 lakhs during 97-98 (50% increase).
- Rs.85 lakhs released by Central Wakf Council for Educational Programmes during 98-99.
- National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMFDC) disbursed Rs.59.82 crores for economic development of 19,519 families belonging to minority communities during the year 98-99 against Rs.23.17 crores for 4932 families during the year 97-98 (250% higher than the previous year).
- Rs.2.24 crores spent on providing pre-examination coaching to 6030 candidates belonging to minority communities.
- National Charter for Social Justice based on social harmony prepared.

ENVIRONMENT

Our Promise in 1998

- Establish appropriate legal framework for the protection of the environment and unveil a National Environment Policy to balance development and ecology.

Our Achievements in 13 Months

- National Environment Appellate Authority set up. National Environment Fund created to support environment projects in the country. Proposal to include environment as a separate subject in school curriculum.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Our Promise in 1998

- Ensure usage of Information Technology for future development to make India a Software superpower; Unveil a National Information Policy with short, medium and long-term perspectives.

Our Achievement in 13 Months

- National Task Force on Information Technology & Software Development constituted to formulate National Information Technology Policy with an aim to enable India to emerge as an Information technology superpower within the next 10 years. Blue print already adopted.

II. Indian National Congress (INC)

Indian National Congress

The Congress has tried to project itself as a government that can ensure stability. Highlighting the period from 1991 to 1996, it states that the unprecedented increase in investments in rural and social development is the product of a stable government.

It stresses on secularism and emphasizes that religion cannot be used as an instrument of mobilisation, to whip up passions and sentiments. The Congress vehemently rejects the use of religion for political ends. It rejects the mobilisation of people by stirring up religious passions.

It also emphasizes the need for decentralization and states that the “panchayats and nagarpalikas are not the third tier of development, as they are often perceived. They are in fact, the first tier of our vast democracy”.

With a strong statement- “Every time there has been a non-Congress Government in Delhi, the first and the most immediate casualty has been the economy”, the Congress reiterates its firm commitment to faster economic reforms with a human face.

Reflecting on the Swadeshi movement during the struggle for independence and the fifty years since independence it stresses that “Self-reliance must remain our objective but in the changing times, it must be given contemporary meaning.

Other Highlights

Step up the momentum of public investment in agriculture, especially in the backward and poorer regions.

The eradication of poverty is the single most important objective of national development.

The effective devolution, within the next five years, to the Panchayati Raj institutions of all subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule and to the nagarpalikas of subjects listed in the Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution.

Co-operatives to be liberated from undue political and bureaucratic interference.

Public Distribution System to be substantially to ensure that essential commodities reach families below the poverty line at the subsidised prices.

Separate statutory National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes will be set up.

These will be equipped with administrative, judicial and financial powers.

Measures will be taken to increase the representation of minorities in all public, police and para-military services both in the central and in state governments.

The Constitution will be amended to provide for one-third reservations for women in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Vidhan Sabhas and Vidhan Parishads.

The Congress is committed to the rapid elimination of all forms of child labour.

Special insurance and social security schemes for the girl child among the weaker sections will be launched.

The revenue deficit will be phased out over the next three to four years and the combined fiscal deficit of the Centre and the states will be stabilised at a level below 4% of GDP.

The debt market will be developed as will the retail government gilts market. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs), Venture Capital Funds and Private Equity Funds will continue to be actively encouraged.

The insurance industry will be restructured to enhance the flow of long-term funds to infrastructure development.

A High-Power Commission will be immediately set up to examine and suggest solutions to the multidimensional problems and challenges faced by the seven North-Eastern States.

The Congress stands committed to respecting Article 370 in letter and spirit.

The new states of Uttarakhand, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand will be created without any further delay.

The Congress attaches high priority to the passage of a suitable Lok Pal Bill.

III. Communist Party (Marxist) (CPM)

People's Democracy and its Programme

6.1 Experience shows that there is no hope of emancipation of the people from backwardness, poverty, hunger, unemployment and exploitation under the present bourgeois-landlord rule. The big bourgeoisie since independence has been continuously in State power and has been utilising that State power to strengthen its class position at the expense of the mass of the people on the one hand and compromising and bargaining with imperialism and landlordism on the other. Unlike in the advanced capitalist countries where capitalism grew on the ashes of pre-capitalist society, which was destroyed by the rising bourgeoisie, capitalism in India was super-imposed on pre-capitalist society. Neither the British colonialists during their rule nor the Indian bourgeoisie assuming power after independence attempted to smash it, which was one of the most important preconditions for the free development of capitalism. The present Indian society, therefore, is a peculiar combination of monopoly capitalist domination with caste, communal and tribal institutions. It has thus fallen on the working class and its party to unite all the progressive forces interested in destroying the pre-capitalist society and to consolidate the revolutionary forces within it so as to facilitate the completion of the democratic revolution and prepare the ground for the transition to socialism.

6.2 The Communist Party of India (Marxist) firmly adheres to its aim of building socialism and communism. This, it is evident, cannot be achieved under the present State and bourgeois-landlord government led by the big bourgeoisie. The establishment of a genuine socialist society is only possible under proletarian statehood. While adhering to the aim of building socialism in our country, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), taking into consideration the degree of economic development, the political ideological maturity of the working class and its organisation, places before the people as the immediate objective, the establishment of people's democracy based on the coalition of all genuine anti-feudal, anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist forces led by the working class on the basis of a firm worker-peasant alliance. This demands first and foremost the replacement of the present bourgeois-landlord State by a State of people's democracy. This alone can complete the unfinished democratic task of the Indian revolution and pave the way for putting the country on the road to socialism.

The tasks and programme which the peoples' democratic government will carry out are:

6. 3 In the sphere of State structure: The Communist Party of India (Marxist) works for the preservation and promotion of the unity of the Indian Union on the basis of real equality and autonomy for the different nationalities that inhabit the country and to develop a federal democratic State structure as outlined below:

- i) The people are sovereign. All organs of State power shall be answerable to the people. The supreme authority in exercising State power shall be the people's representatives elected on the basis of adult franchise and the principle of proportional representation and subject to recall. At the all-India Centre, there shall be two Houses -- House of the Peoples and House of the States. Adequate representation to women will be ensured.
- ii) All states in the Indian Union shall have real autonomy and equal powers. The tribal areas or the areas where population is specific in ethnic composition and is distinguished

by specific social and cultural conditions will have regional autonomy within the state concerned and shall receive full assistance for their development.

iii) There shall not be upper Houses at the states level. Nor shall there be Governors for the States appointed from above. All administrative services shall be under the direct control of the respective States or local authorities. States shall treat all Indian citizens alike, and there shall not be any discrimination on the ground of caste, sex, religion, community and nationality.

iv) Equality of all national languages in parliament and Central Administration shall be recognised. Members of Parliament will have the right to speak in their own national language and simultaneous translation will have to be provided in all other languages. All Acts, government orders and resolutions shall be made available in all national languages. The use of Hindi as the sole official language to the exclusion of all other languages shall not be made obligatory. It is only by providing equality to the various languages that it can be made acceptable as the language of communication throughout the country. Till then, the present arrangement of the use of Hindi and English will continue. The right of the people to receive instruction in their mother tongue in educational institutions upto the highest level shall be ensured. The use of the language of the particular linguistic state as the language of administration in all its public and State institutions shall also be ensured. Provision for the use of the language of the minority or, minorities or, of a region where necessary in addition to the language of the state shall be made. The Urdu language and its script shall be protected.

v) The people's democratic government will take measures to consolidate the unity of India by fostering and promoting mutual cooperation between the constituent states and between the peoples of different states in the economic, political and cultural spheres. The diversity of nationalities, languages and cultures will be respected and policies adopted to strengthen unity in diversity. It will pay special attention and render financial and other assistance to economically backward and weaker states, regions and areas with a view to helping them rapidly overcome their backwardness.

vi) The peoples' democratic State, in the field of local administration, shall ensure a wide network of local bodies from village upward directly elected by the people and vested with adequate power and responsibilities and provided with adequate finances. All efforts shall be made to involve the people in the active functioning of the local bodies.

vii) The people's democratic State shall strive to infuse in all our social and political institutions the spirit of democracy. It extends democratic forms of initiative and control over every aspect of national life. A key role in this will be played by the political parties, trade unions, peasant and agricultural workers' associations, and other class and mass organisations of the working people. The government will take steps to make the legislative and executive machinery of the country continuously responsive to the democratic wishes of the people, and will ensure that the masses and their organisations are drawn into active participation in the administration and work of the State. It will work for the elimination of bureaucratic practices in the State and administration.

viii) The people's democratic State will unearth black money; eradicate corruption, punish economic crimes and corrupt practices by public servants.

- ix) Democratic changes will be introduced in the matter of administering justice. Prompt and fair justice shall be ensured. Free legal aid and consultation will be provided for the needy people in order to make legal redress easily available to such persons.
- x) The people's democratic government will infuse the members of the armed forces with the spirit of patriotism, democracy and service to the people. It will provide them good living standards, conditions of service, cultural facilities and education for their children. It will encourage all able-bodied persons to undergo military training and be imbued with the spirit of national independence and its defence.
- xi) Full civil liberties shall be guaranteed. Inviolability of persons and domicile and no detention of persons without trial, unhampered freedom of conscience, religious belief and worship, speech, press, assembly, strike, the right to form political parties and associations, freedom of movement and occupation, right to dissent shall be ensured.
- xii) Right to work as a fundamental right of every citizen shall be guaranteed; equal rights of all citizens and equal pay for equal work irrespective of religion, caste, sex, race and nationality shall be ensured. Wide disparities in salaries and incomes will be reduced step by step.
- xiii) Abolition of social oppression of one caste by another and untouchability and all forms of social discrimination shall be punished by law. Special facilities for scheduled castes, tribes, and other backward classes shall be provided in the matter of service and other educational amenities.
- xiv) Removal of social inequalities and discrimination against women, equal rights with men in such matters as inheritance of property including land, enforcement of protective social, economic and family laws based on equal rights of women in all communities, admission to professions and services will be ensured. Suitable support systems in childcare and domestic work will be part of the thrust to democratise family structures.
- xv) The secular character of the State shall be guaranteed. Interference by religious institutions, in the affairs of the State and political life of the country shall be prohibited. Religious minorities shall be given protection and any discrimination against them will be forbidden.
- xvi) Public educational system shall be developed to provide comprehensive and scientific education at all levels. Free and compulsory education upto the secondary stage and the secular character of education shall be guaranteed. Higher education and vocational education will be modernised and updated. Development of science and technology will be promoted through a whole range of R&D institutions. A comprehensive sports policy to foster sports activities shall be adopted.
- xvii) A wide network of health, medical and maternity services shall be established free of cost; nurseries and creches for children; rest-homes and recreation centres for working people and old-age pension shall be guaranteed. The People's Democratic Government will promote a non-coercive population policy to create awareness for family planning among both men and women.
- xviii) Comprehensive steps will be taken to protect the environment. Development programmes will take into account the necessity to sustain the ecological balance. The country's bio-diversity and biological resources will be protected from imperialist exploitation.

xix) The right of disabled persons to lead lives as full citizens, integrated in society shall be ensured. The right to a dignified life for elderly persons shall be taken serious care of by the State. On the whole, the social rights, considered as fundamental rights, constitute a basic principle of People's Democracy.

xx) The people's democratic State and government will foster the creative talents of our people for developing a new progressive people's culture which is democratic and secular in outlook. It shall take necessary measures to nurture and develop literature, art and culture to enrich the material and cultural life of the people. It will help people get rid of caste, gender bias and communal prejudices and ideas of subservience and superstition. It will promote a scientific outlook and help each linguistic-nationality including the tribal people to develop their distinct language, culture and way of life in harmony with the common aspirations of the democratic peoples of the country as a whole. It will also imbue the people with feelings of fraternity with peoples of other countries and to discard ideas of racial and national hatred.

xxi) The media will be developed with emphasis on a public broadcasting system for the electronic media. Concentration of media assets in private hands and foreign ownership of Indian media assets will not be allowed. Democratic control and accountability will be ensured.

6.4 In the field of Agriculture and the Peasantry

India has an agriculture-based economy with over 70 percent of the people living in the rural areas. Hence, development of agriculture and raising the living standards of the peasantry is the key to the comprehensive development of the economy.

To achieve this objective, the People's Democratic government will:

Abolish landlordism by implementing radical land reforms and give land free of cost to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants.

Cancel debts of poor peasants, agricultural workers and small artisans to moneylenders and landlords.

Develop a State-led marketing system to protect the peasantry from big traders and MNCs and sharp fluctuation in prices. Ensure long term and cheap credit for the peasants, artisans and agricultural workers and fair prices for agricultural produce.

Maximise irrigation and power facilities and their proper and equitable utilisation; promote indigenous research and development in the agricultural sector; assist the peasants to improve methods of farming by the use of better seeds and modern technology for increasing productivity.

Ensure adequate wages, social security measures and living conditions for agricultural workers.

Promote cooperatives of peasants and artisans on a voluntary basis for farming and other services.

A comprehensive public distribution system to supply foodgrains and other essential commodities cheaply to the people shall be introduced.

6.5 India is a huge country with different levels of economic development and varying social, economic patterns. Hence the rapid growth of productive forces necessary for the development of the economy and the steady improvement of the people's living conditions will require that the people's democratic government play a decisive role through public ownership in the key sectors of the economy and the State performing a

regulatory and guiding role in other sectors. The people's democratic economy will be a multi-structural one with various forms of ownership, with the public sector having a dominating position. In view of the big changes in the world economy, the country will firmly strive to strengthen its self-reliant basis while making use of advanced technology from abroad.

6.6 In the field of Industry and Labour: Our industry suffers not only from the low purchasing power of the peasantry but also from the stranglehold of monopoly houses and the increasing penetration of foreign capital and the various forms of domination by the imperialist agencies in almost all spheres of production. Concentration of assets in the hands of monopoly concerns distorts economic development and breeds wide-scale disparities. Dependence on foreign capital and the dictates of international finance capital facilitates exploitation and a distorted form of development which will not meet the needs of the people. In the field of industry, therefore, the people's democratic government will:

Take steps to eliminate Indian and foreign monopolies in different sectors of industry, finance, trade and services through suitable measures including State take-over of their assets.

Strengthen public sector industries through modernisation, democratisation, freeing from bureaucratic controls and corruption, fixing strict accountability, ensuring workers participation in management and making it competitive so that it can occupy commanding position in the economy.

Allow foreign direct investment in selected sectors for acquiring advanced technology and upgrading productive capacities. Regulate finance capital flows in the interests of the overall economy.

Assist the small and medium industries by providing them credit, raw materials at reasonable prices and by helping them in regard to marketing facilities.

Regulate and co-ordinate various sectors of the economy and the market in order to achieve balanced and planned economic development of the country. Regulate foreign trade.

Improve radically the living standards of workers by: a) fixing a living wage, b) progressive reduction of working hours; c) social insurance against every kind of disability and unemployment; d) provision of housing for workers; e) recognition of trade unions by secret ballot and their rights of collective bargaining as well as right to strike; and f) abolition of child labour.

Provide maximum relief from taxation to workers, peasants and artisans; introduce graded tax in agriculture, industry and trade; and effectively implement a price policy in the interest of the common people.

6.7 In the sphere of foreign policy: In order to ensure that India plays its rightful role in the preservation of world peace, against imperialist hegemony and democratisation of international relations, the people's democratic government will:

Develop relations with all countries on the basis of friendship and cooperation.

Strengthen the solidarity and ties between all developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Promote South-South cooperation and revitalise the non-aligned movement to counter the domination of the imperialist countries.

Develop friendly relations and cooperation with the socialist countries and all peace-loving States; support to all struggles against imperialism, for democracy and socialism.

Work for eradicating the threat of nuclear war; work for universal nuclear disarmament; elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction -- nuclear, chemical and biological-- and prohibition of their testing and manufacture; demand the abolition of all foreign military bases; promote international cooperation for the preservation of the environment and protection of the ecological balance.

Make special and concerted efforts to peacefully settle existing differences and disputes and strengthen friendly relations with India's neighbours -- Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Burma. Promote South Asian cooperation.

- Adopted At the Seventh Party Congress of the Communist Party of India held at Calcutta, October 31 to November 7, 1964

Updated by the Special Conference of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) held at Thiruvananthapuram, October 20-23, 2000.

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