

Mao Zedong Leader of the Chinese Communist revolution who dominated Chinese politics from the founding of the PRC until his death.

May Fourth movement Student-led anti-imperialist cultural and political movement growing out of student demonstrations in Beijing on May 4, 1919.

National Party Congress Chinese Communist Party's cumbersome legislative body.

National People's Congress (NPC) China's national legislature.

"one country, two systems" China's guarantee to Hong Kong of fifty years of domestic autonomy as a "special administrative region" after the British colony was returned to China in 1997.

People's Liberation Army (PLA) China's military.

Red Guard Radicalized youth who served as Mao's shock troops during the Cultural Revolution.

Reds versus experts Mao's policy favoring politically indoctrinated party cadres (Reds) over those people who had economic training (experts).

reform and opening Deng's economic liberalization policy, starting in the late 1970s.

special economic zones Enclaves established since 1980 by the Chinese government that have offered tax breaks and other incentives to lure foreign investment.

Sun Yat-sen Founder of China's Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and considered the father of modern China.

"Three Represents" Jiang Zemin's 2001 policy co-opting private entrepreneurs into the CCP.

Tiananmen Square Historic plaza in Beijing where the Chinese party-state crushed the 1989 pro-reform demonstration.

Wen Jiabao China's current premier and head of government.

WEB LINKS

China General Information Base www.chinatoday.com/general/a.htm

Unofficial site offering useful general information.

China's Political System www.china.org.cn/english/Political/25060.htm

Official government site describing the political structure, fundamental laws, rules, regulations, and practices of China since its founding.

A Country Study: China lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cntoc.html

Library of Congress's *Country Studies Series* presents a description and analysis of the historical setting and the social, economic, political, and national security systems of China.

9 INDIA

Head of state: President Pratibha Patil
(since July 2007)

Head of government:
Prime Minister Manmohan Singh
(since May 2004)

Capital: New Delhi

Total land size: 3,287,590 sq km

Population: 1.15 billion

GDP at PPP: 2.99 trillion US\$

GDP per capita at PPP: \$2,700

Human development index rankings: 128



INTRODUCTION

Why Study This Case?

India presents a remarkable and instructive case for the study of comparative politics. This South Asian nation will, within several decades, eclipse China as the world's most populous country. Already it is the world's largest democracy, with more voters in a typical election (some 400 million) than the entire population of any other country in the world except China.

Besides being the largest, India is also one of the most improbable of democracies, and herein lies one of the key puzzles of the case. Scholars most often associate democracy with critical levels of prosperity, mass literacy, urbanization, and national unity. India seemingly disproves each of these factors. One fourth of all Indians live on less than US\$1 a day, and less than half of all Indian women are literate. Paradoxically, poor and illiterate Indians—most often living in rural areas, not cities—are three times as likely to vote as the national average. And despite the backwardness of rural India, satellite dishes have brought television to more than 80 percent of the country's half million villages (though less than a third of rural households own a television).

Most puzzling, perhaps, is how democracy can survive and thrive in a country so dangerously divided by history, language, religion, and *caste*. India has thousands of years of history as an authoritarian, hierarchical culture that has stratified, segmented, and compartmentalized its society. Today, more than 1 billion Indians speak some 325 distinct languages with over 1,500 dialects.¹ They worship over 5,000 gods, and six separate religions have at least 50 million adherents each. Caste divisions still segregate India socially, economically, and culturally. At times, these ethnic and social divisions have erupted into violent conflict and dramatic threats of secession. Given these circumstances, some observers marvel that the country can even stay together, let alone accommodate the cacophony of demands that present themselves.

Others argue that democracy may not be so much the puzzle as the solution. A ponderous but flexible democracy may be the only way of holding this patchworked nation together. Prior to gaining its independence in 1947, India had already been introduced to—if not allowed to participate in—the liberal practices of its British imperial master. As a sovereign nation, India fully adopted the political institutions of British democracy: the Westminster parliamentary model. This system has taken root and flourished, but it remains distinctly Indian. India thus offers comparative political scientists a useful petri dish for studying the transferability of democratic institutions to a post-colonial setting and the challenges facing such a transplant.

In recent years, the greatest challenge to Indian democracy and political stability has come from persistent religious conflict and increasing fundamentalism. As this case will demonstrate, Sikh and Muslim separatism and Hindu chauvinism have threatened the very democratic system that has sought, so far successfully, to accommodate them. India prevailed in its struggle for colonial independence in large part because of one devout Indian's ability to combine the Hindu concept of nonviolence with the liberal notions of tolerance and the separation of religion and state. The charismatic leadership of Mahatma (Mohandas K.) Gandhi and the political secularism of his followers successfully united an ethnically diverse colony in the common cause of democratic nation building.

But as has been the case in nearly all other postimperial countries, modernization has come neither quickly nor easily to India. This huge and still impoverished nation must juggle the maintenance of its notable democracy with the challenges of development and increasing globalization. Although India's urban centers can boast a prosperous and technically savvy elite minority that stands very much in the twenty-first century, its rapid economic development over the past two decades has left much of the rest of the nation behind. So to the many other divisions threatening India's democracy and political integrity, we must add the inequalities of income and opportunity.

To some extent, India shares with most other less developed and newly industrializing countries the multiple and simultaneous threats of ethnic conflict, political instability, and economic inequality. In that regard, India offers insight into the challenges and opportunities that developing countries face. India is important not just because of its relative ability to manage these challenges democratically, but also because its sheer size and growing international prominence guarantee it will have increasing influence in the rest of the world.

Major Geographic and Demographic Features

India looms large in both size and population, surpassed only by China as Asia's largest and most populous country. The country divides relatively neatly into two triangles stacked on top of each other, with the sharp angles pointed to the north and the south. The northern triangle is home to territorial disputes that have led to three wars with Pakistan to the west and ongoing tension with China to the east. The northernmost state of Jammu and Kashmir at the apex of the northern triangle is claimed by both Pakistan and India and remains a volatile tinderbox of ethnic and nationalist dispute. The southern triangle forms a huge peninsula that juts into the Indian Ocean, historically buffering the area from India's neighbors but opening the region to Western trade and, ultimately, imperial conquest.

Both India's climate and its politics have been profoundly shaped by geography. The Himalayas serve as towering sentinels on the northern border, shielding the subcontinent (comprising India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) over the millennia from Siberian winds and Central Asian invaders. The Himalayas (Sanskrit for "abode of snow") are also the source of India's two most important river systems: the Indus, long the cradle of Indian civilization, and the Ganges, a river Hindus value as sacred and worship as a goddess. These rivers and the sheltered climate of India's northern plains have made the north remarkably fertile, sustaining dense levels of civilization.

Crop production in southern India is no less important but riskier because of its dependence on the monsoons: the four summer months of heavy rains. A successful monsoon season—neither too little nor too much rain—can make the difference between drought or flood and famine or feast for many Indians. The **green revolution** of the 1960s and 1970s, with its technologically enhanced crops and cropping methods, improved production dramatically, particularly in the arid regions of the Northwest. Nonetheless, India's rapidly growing population remains highly dependent on an agricultural economy, often called a "gamble in rains."²

Although India possesses a wide range of natural resources, its per capita endowment of oil, timber, minerals, and petroleum reserves is relatively low. More than half of all Indians remain dependent on an agrarian livelihood; only China has more peasants. And only China has more people. The United Nations predicts that India will surpass China as the world's most populous country by 2035 and will continue to grow until 2050, when, it is estimated, its population will peak at roughly 1.8 billion, or, more than one fourth the world's total.

The product of numerous waves of empire building, India's population is racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. The simplest division of Indian society is between the Aryans to the North and the Dravidians to the South, though this division is amplified by linguistic differences. In the North, most Indians speak some variety of Indo-Aryan, which is part of the Indo-European family of languages. Most common among these is **Hindi**, now one of two national languages, the other being English. Most people in the South speak one of four major dialects of the Dravidian language, almost completely distinct from Hindi. English has become the only universal language, but one that is spoken in large part by the elite. Even so, there are more English speakers in India (33 million) than in Canada, a fact of which Western companies drawn to India for the **outsourcing** of a growing range of business processes are well aware.

Historical Development of the State

Civilization on the Indian subcontinent predates a unified Indian state by several thousand years. Three religious traditions and nearly 1,000 years of for-

TIME LINE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Year	Event
1857-58	Sepoy Mutiny put down, and formal British colonial rule established
1885	Indian National Congress created
1947	India gains independence from Britain; India and Pakistan partitioned
1948	Mahatma Gandhi assassinated
1947-64	Jawaharlal Nehru serves as prime minister until his death
1971	India-Pakistan War leads to creation of Bangladesh
1975-77	Indira Gandhi institutes emergency rule
1984	Indira Gandhi launches military operations at Amritsar and is assassinated by Sikh bodyguards
1984-86	Rajiv Gandhi serves as prime minister
1991	Rajiv Gandhi assassinated
1992	Ayodhya mosque destroyed
1996	Electoral victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leads to the rise of coalition governments
1998	Nuclear weapons tested in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
2002	Muslim-Hindu violence breaks out in Gujarat
2004	Congress-led coalition defeats BJP coalition; Manmohan Singh becomes prime minister
2005	India and United States begin negotiating controversial nuclear agreement
2007	Pratibha Patil is elected India's first female president
2008	Muslim terrorist bombings in Mumbai and other Indian cities

eign domination mark the contours of the gradual formation of a sovereign Indian state.

HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, AND ISLAM

Over 3,000 years ago, nomadic Indo-Aryans began migrating eastward from Persia into the northern and central plains of present-day India, subduing the darker-skinned Dravidians, many of whom moved southward. From the fusion of the two cultures emerged the customs, philosophical ideas, and religious

beliefs associated with **Hinduism**. Like other traditional religions, Hinduism governs not just worship practices but also virtually all aspects of life, including the rituals and norms of birth, death, marriage, eating, and livelihood. For roughly the next 2,000 years, India enjoyed relative freedom from outside influence as Hindu traditions, such as polytheism, reincarnation, and the social and political hierarchy of caste, infused Indian society (see "Indian Caste System," below).

It was under the auspices of Buddhism—a second religious tradition, originating in India in the sixth century B.C.E.—that rulers commenced India's

first efforts at nation building. Spreading Buddhism's message of peace and benevolence to subjects of all ethnic groups and social ranks, dynastic rulers unified much of what is now India by the fourth century B.C.E. and remained in power for several hundred years. The development of the silk route by the first century C.E. spread Buddhism eastward to China and beyond. At home, however, Hinduism gradually reemerged as the state religion and has remained India's dominant faith, with over 80 percent of Indians identifying themselves as Hindu. Today, Hinduism is the world's third-largest religious tradition, after Christianity and Islam.

India's 2,000 years of relative isolation gave way to a millennium of foreign domination beginning with marauding Muslim invaders in the eighth century. (Foreign invasion and occupation did not end until India gained its independence from British imperialism and colonialism in 1947.) The arrival of this third religious tradition at the hands of martial Muslim rulers never fostered the kind of tolerance shared by Hindus and Buddhists. But the introduction of Islam to India gave birth to a new religious tradition, **Sikhism**, which combines Hindu and Muslim beliefs. It also sowed the persisting seeds of mutual animosity among India's Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. A final wave of Muslim invaders, descendants of Genghis Khan known as **Mughals** (Persian for "Mongol"), ruled a relatively unified India for several hundred years beginning in the sixteenth century. But by the eighteenth century, Mughal rule had weakened at the hands of growing internal Hindu and Sikh dissatisfaction and expanding Western imperialism.

BRITISH COLONIALISM

The lucrative spice trade beckoned European powers to the Indian Ocean, beginning with the Portuguese and the Spanish in the sixteenth century and then the Dutch and the British by the seventeenth century. Lacking a strong, centralized state, India was vulnerable to foreign encroachment, and the British in particular made significant commercial inroads. In 1600, the British crown granted a monopoly charter to the private East India Company, which over the years perfected an imperial strategy of commercial exploitation. This private merchant company first cultivated trade, then exploited cheap labor, and ultimately succeeded in controlling whole principalities. It did so through a strategy of setting up puppet Mughal governorships, known as nabobs, with British merchant advisers at their side. This **nabob game** greatly facilitated the plundering of Indian wealth and resources.

The British introduced the concept of private property and the English language, and with it science, literature, and—perhaps most revolutionary—liberal political philosophy. Also, as the East India Company lost its monopoly on Indian trade, a growing number of British merchants sought Indian markets for British manufactures, particularly cotton cloth. With British cotton selling at less than half the price of local handmade cloth, this "free" trade

INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM

Like many other premodern societies, India's was divided and compartmentalized for thousands of years according to such categories as birth, region, occupation, and social obligations. However, India's "caste" system (the term derived from the Portuguese *casta*, meaning species or breed) was at once more complex and more flexible than often portrayed. The term *caste* is typically used to refer to two different but related types of social divisions. The first of these affiliations is known as *jati*, which refers to the thousands of separate but not wholly rigid occupational and regional groups and subgroups that divide Indian society (Gandhi, for instance, means *green grocer*). Each category possessed its own detailed rules for the social behavior and interactions involved in such activities as eating, communicating, and marrying. More generally, Indian society was also divided into four broader castes, or *varnas*, including Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (traders and merchants), and Sudras (peasants and laborers). At the bottom of—technically outside—the hierarchy were the so-called **untouchables**. These included two groups: those who performed duties deemed unclean, which involved handling the dead and disposing of human waste, and those aboriginals who lived outside village life, in the mountains or forests (often referred to as "tribals"). The touch or even shadow of these outcasts was considered polluting by high-caste Hindus. Long sanctioned and legitimized by the Hindu religion, British colonial bureaucrats painstakingly cataloged these various classifications and hierarchies in an effort to enhance social order, rendering the castes increasingly rigid over time. In independent India, Hindu elites have used these social divisions to establish political patronage networks and to justify and enhance their dominant position in the caste system. Critics of the divisive and exploitative consequences of caste, however, have made efforts to ease the discrimination associated with it and, in particular, its deleterious effects on the untouchables. Mahatma Gandhi worked tirelessly on their behalf, referring to them as *harijans*, the children of God. India's 1950 constitution not only banned the status known as untouchable but also legislated special "reservations," or affirmative actions, designed to improve the status of these "scheduled castes and tribes." Calling themselves *Dalits* (Suppressed Groups), they now number some 140 million people, or 16 percent of the population.³

put millions of Indian cloth makers out of work. Communication and transportation technology—the telegraph, print media, the postal system, and the railroad (the British laid some 50,000 miles of track)—did much to unify India and give its colonial subjects a shared recognition of their frustrations and aspirations. This was particularly true of those native Indians employed in the colonial military and civil service who were beginning to develop and articulate a sense of Indian nationalism.

Growing economic frustration, political awareness, and national identity led to the **Sepoy Mutiny** of 1857–1858, a revolt sponsored by the Indian aristocracy and carried out by sepoys (Indian soldiers employed by the British). Incited to arms by the revelation that their British-issued guns fired bullets greased in either pork lard or beef tallow (offensive to Muslims and Hindus, respectively), the mutinous Indians failed in large part because they were too divided, both by British design and by the long tradition of religious animosity that split the Hindu and Muslim conscripts. The failure convinced the growing number of Indian nationalists that independence from British colonialism would first require national unity. To British authorities, the mutiny signaled the weakness of nabob rule, the threat of Indian anti-colonialism, and the dangers of liberal ideas and institutions in the hands of the locals. In 1858, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, which terminated the East India Company's control of India and placed the territory under direct and far more harsh colonial rule. Under this British **raj** (rule), civil servants and British troops replaced private merchants and puppet nabobs, and British talk of eventual Indian self-rule gave way to calls for the "permanent subjection of India to the British yoke."⁴ The colony of India became the "brightest jewel in the crown of the British empire."⁵

THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

By the end of the nineteenth century, calls for self-rule had become louder and more articulate, though they were still not unified. Two local organizations came to embody the anti-colonial movement: the **Indian National Congress (INC)**, also referred to simply as Congress or Congress Party, founded in 1885, and the **Muslim League**, founded in 1906. But hopes for a gradual transfer of power after World War I were instead met with increased colonial repression, culminating in a 1919 massacre in which British troops opened fire on unarmed civilians, murdering hundreds and wounding more than 1,000 innocent Indians.

This massacre galvanized Indian resistance and brought **Mahatma (Mohandas K.) Gandhi**, a British-trained lawyer, to the leadership of Congress and the broader independence movement (see "Gandhi and the Indian Independence Movement," p. 335). Gandhi led successful protests and nationwide boycotts of British commercial imports and employment in British insti-

tutions, such as the courts, schools, and civil service. Perhaps most successful of these protests was his 1930 boycott of British salt, which was heavily taxed by the colonial raj. In declaring the boycott, Gandhi led a group of followers on a well-publicized 200-mile march to the sea to gather salt, a violation of the British monopoly. Upon their arrival, Gandhi and many others were jailed, and the independence movement garnered national and international attention.

Gandhi's integrity and example, the charismatic draw of his remarkable strategy of nonviolence, and the growing repressive and arbitrary nature of colonial rule swelled the ranks of the independence movement. Among those who joined was a younger generation of well-educated leaders schooled in the modern ideas of socialism and democracy. Chief among them was **Jawaharlal Nehru**, who succeeded Gandhi as the leader of the INC and became independent India's first prime minister.

Weakened by both economic depression and war, Britain was in no shape to resist Indian independence and entered into serious negotiations toward this end following World War II. The biggest obstacle to independence became not British foot-dragging but disagreements and divisions among India's many interests, most particularly Hindus and Muslims. Fearful that Muslims, who constituted 25 percent of the population, would be unfairly dominated by the Hindu majority, Muslim leaders demanded a separate Muslim state. Negoti-

GANDHI AND THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

Mohandas K. Gandhi, affectionately known by Indians as *Mahatma*, or Great Soul, was born in 1869 and studied law in Britain. He first experienced racism while practicing law in South Africa and was thrown out of the first-class compartment of a train because of his skin color. That event prompted his tactics of revolutionary nonviolent resistance, first practiced against South African discrimination and then perfected in India after his return there in 1914. Upon his return, he adopted the simple dress, ascetic habits, and devout worship of a Hindu holy man and developed his philosophies of *satyagraha* (holding firmly to truth) and *ahimsa* (nonviolence, or love). He argued that truth and love combined in nonviolent resistance to injustice could "move the world." He also taught that Western industrial civilization must be rejected in favor of a simpler life. He led a charismatic nationalist movement embodied in his example of personal simplicity and campaigns for national self-sufficiency. The movement was punctuated by dramatic instances of nonviolent resistance, hunger strikes, and periods of imprisonment. Successful in his campaign to end colonialism, even the Great Soul could not prevent either Hindu-Muslim violence or, ultimately, the partition of Pakistan and India, despite his best efforts. Five months after India achieved independence, a Hindu militant assassinated Gandhi to protest his efforts to keep India unified.

ations collapsed as civil war broke out between militant adherents of the two faiths.

Against this background of growing violence, the British chose **partition**, creating in 1947 the new state of Pakistan from the Muslim-dominated northeast (what would become independent Bangladesh in 1971) and from the northwest and forming independent India from the remaining 80 percent of the colony. This declaration led to the uprooting and transmigration (in effect, ethnic cleansing) of over 12 million refugees—Muslims to Pakistan, Hindus and Sikhs to India—across the hurriedly drawn boundaries. It is estimated that as many as 1 million Indians and Pakistanis were killed in the resulting chaos and violence.⁶ Among the victims of this sectarian violence was Gandhi himself, assassinated in 1948 by a militant Hindu who saw the leader and his message of religious tolerance as threats to Hindu nationalism. Not surprisingly, the ethnic violence that marked partition and the birth of the Indian nation continues to plague Hindu-Muslim relations in contemporary India and India's relations with neighboring Pakistan.

INDEPENDENCE

Like many of the other newly minted countries that would become part of the postwar decolonization movement, independent India faced a host of truly daunting challenges. In India, these included settling some 5 million refugees from East and West Pakistan, resolving outstanding territorial disputes, jump-starting an economy torn asunder by partition in an effort to feed the country's impoverished millions, and creating democratic political institutions from whole cloth. This last task, promised by Nehru and his INC, had to be carried out in the absence of the prosperity, literacy, and liberal traditions that allowed democracy to take hold in the advanced democracies and seemed to many an unlikely prospect. Given India's particular circumstances and its kaleidoscopic social, political, and economic interests—what one author called “a million mutinies now”⁷—such an endeavor seemed particularly foolish.

But unlike many other postcolonial countries, India brought to the endeavor of democratization several distinct advantages. First, its lengthy, gradual, and inclusive independence movement generated a powerful and widespread sense of national identity. Although India had not experienced a thoroughgoing social revolution in the style of Mexico or China, most Indians had come to identify themselves not just by their region, caste, or even religion but also as citizens of the new republic. The legacy of Gandhi's charismatic outreach to all Indians, including outcasts, Muslims, and Sikhs, brought much-needed (if perhaps ultimately short-lived) unity to its disparate population.

Second, although Indians did not control their own destiny under the British raj, the Indian intellectual class was well schooled in both the Western philosophies and the day-to-day practices of liberal democracy. Genera-

tions of the Indian elite had not just been taught in the British liberal tradition; many of them had also served faithfully in the colonial bureaucracy. By the time of independence, Indians for most practical purposes were in fact governing themselves, albeit following the dictates of a colonial power. Indeed, their appreciation of and aptitude for the virtues of democracy made its denial under British imperial rule seem all the more unjust.

Moreover, independent India inherited not just liberal ideas and traditions, it also inherited a sophisticated and generally well-functioning central state apparatus, including an extensive civil service and standing army. The comparison between a relatively democratic India and the more authoritarian Pakistan and Bangladesh is significant. Although all three shared a common British colonial heritage, the territories that would come to constitute Pakistan and Bangladesh had not developed India's degree of centralized state administration during the colonial period. In addition, the Muslim League was much less successful than the Indian National Congress in bringing effective political organization to these regions. When it came time to assert state authority over their respective territories, independent Pakistan and Bangladesh turned more readily to an authoritarian military and bureaucracy, whereas India was able to rely, at least more frequently, upon democratic political parties and politicians.⁸

Finally, the long-standing role of the INC as the legitimate embodiment of the independence movement and Nehru as its charismatic and rightful representative gave the new government a powerful mandate. Like Nelson Mandela's African National Congress, which took its name from its Indian predecessor and swept to power in South Africa's first free election in 1994, Nehru led the INC to a handy victory in India's first general election in 1951. This afforded the INC government the opportunity to implement Nehru's vision of social democracy at home and mercantilist trade policies abroad. The INC would govern India for forty-five of its first fifty years of independence, led for nearly all those years by either Nehru, his daughter, or his grandson.

A NEHRU DYNASTY

Uncle Nehru, as Jawaharlal Nehru was affectionately called, led the INC to two subsequent victories: in 1957 and 1962. But by his third term, Nehru had realized the intractability of many of India's economic and foreign policy challenges and his own inability to transform the nation as quickly as he had hoped. As one scholar observed, “In India, nothing changed fast enough to keep up with the new mouths to be fed.”⁹ Nehru died in office in 1964, and with his death the INC began to lose some of its earlier luster and its ability to reach across regional, caste, and religious divisions to garner support.

Within two years, Nehru's daughter, **Indira Gandhi** (no relation to Mahatma), assumed leadership of a more narrowly defined INC and became

India's first woman prime minister. Far more authoritarian than her father, Gandhi's first decade of rule divided the party between her supporters and her detractors. With her popularity within the party weakening in the 1970s, Gandhi sought support from India's impoverished masses with a populist campaign to abolish poverty. Although the program was highly popular and initially successful, the global oil crisis reversed many of the early economic gains. Riots and strikes spread throughout India, with citizens of all classes complaining of the dangerous dictatorship of the "Indira raj."

Facing declining support, charges of corruption, and calls to step down, Gandhi instead chose in 1975 to suspend the constitution by declaring martial law, or **emergency rule**. The Indian constitution does authorize such a measure, and during the two years of emergency rule, riots and unrest ceased and economic efficiency improved. Nonetheless, Gandhi's swift suspension of civil liberties, censorship of the press, banning of opposition parties, and jailing of over 100,000 political opponents (including many of India's senior statesmen), chilled Indian democracy and prompted widespread (albeit largely silent) opposition to her rule.

When Gandhi surprisingly lifted emergency rule in 1977 and called for new elections, virtually all politicians and the overwhelming majority of voters rallied to the cause of the new Janata (People's) Party in what was seen as an effort to save Indian democracy. This Janata coalition formed the first non-Congress government in thirty years of independence. Although key supporters shared a common interest in rural causes and the party drew its strength largely from rural constituencies, the coalition was unified primarily by its opposition to Gandhi's emergency rule. After two years of factional disputes and indecisive governance, the INC was returned to office—with Gandhi as its leader. Indian voters had spoken, indicating their preference for the order and efficiency of Gandhi's strong hand over the Janata Party's ineptitude.

During Indira Gandhi's second tenure, persistent economic problems were compounded by increasing state and regional resistance to central control and growing ethnic conflict. Demands for the devolution of central authority were sharpest in the Sikh-majority Punjab in northern India, whose leaders had become increasingly violent in their political and religious demands. Violence escalated, and demands for an independent Sikh state of Khalistan heightened. In 1984, Gandhi declared martial law, or **presidential rule**, in the state of Punjab. This state-level equivalent of declaring emergency rule is also constitutionally authorized, permitting the federal government to oust a government and assume national control of that state. Gandhi then launched a military operation on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Sikhism's holiest shrine. Sikh separatists' firebrand leader and some 1,000 of his militant followers ensconced in the temple were killed in the operation, and loyal fol-

lowers swore vengeance. The vengeance came months later, when Gandhi's Sikh bodyguards assassinated her. In what was to become a motif of communal violence, the assassination sparked violent retribution as angry Hindus murdered thousands of innocent Sikhs throughout India.

Indira presided over Indian politics for almost as long as did her father, Nehru, who led the INC and governed India for some seventeen years. But whereas Nehru's legacy was one of national inclusion and consensus building among a wide range of regional interests, Gandhi's rule was far more divisive, intolerant, and heavy-handed. The Indian state she bequeathed to her son Rajiv, who replaced her as leader of the INC, was more centralized and its party politics far more divided. This was not, however, necessarily a negative experience for Indian democracy. For the first time, a viable political opposition was emerging, one capable of standing up to the powerful INC.

Widespread sympathy in the wake of Gandhi's assassination made it natural for the INC to select her younger son, Rajiv (her older son and heir apparent, Sanjay, having been killed in a plane accident), and it assured the Congress Party its largest (and last) majority in the 1984 election. Rajiv Gandhi governed for five years, beginning the shift of India's economic focus away from the social democratic and mercantilist policies of his mother and grandfather. He promoted more liberal market measures, which have been expanded in the decades since. Ethnic violence and political divisiveness persisted, with trouble simmering between Hindus and Muslims in the Punjab and in new hot spots in the border region between India and Bangladesh to the east and between Hindus and ethnic Tamil separatists to the south. During a 1991 campaign, two years after Rajiv Gandhi had been turned out of office by a weak opposition coalition, he was assassinated by a Tamil suicide bomber. The Nehru dynasty thus ended (at least for the time being), and coalition governments became the norm.

COALITION GOVERNMENTS

The decline of the INC's dominance has led to a series of coalition governments typically headed by a national party, such as Congress, but shored up by regional partners. Coalitions of all political stripes have maintained the reforms begun under Rajiv Gandhi and the INC, including economic liberalization and increased political devolution to state governments. The INC's strongest competition has come from the **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**, a party with the potential for nationwide scope and appeal. The BJP has been able to articulate a Hindu nationalist vision, an alternative (some would say a dangerous one) to the vision of a secular India established by the INC at the time of India's founding. Drawing its strength initially from upper-caste

Hindu groups, by the late 1990s the BJP was attracting Hindus of all castes under the banner of Hindu nationalism.

The event that began to galvanize support for the BJP was yet another incident of sectarian violence at yet another temple site. The Babri Mosque, located in the northern Indian city of **Ayodhya**, had been built by Mughals on a site alleged to be the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram. The site was deemed sacred by Muslims and Hindus and for decades has been a point of controversy for local adherents of both faiths. By the 1990s, various Hindu nationalist groups had seized on Ayodhya as both a rallying political issue and a gathering place. In 1992, BJP supporters and other Hindu extremists destroyed the mosque, vowing to rebuild it as a Hindu shrine. This act ignited days of Hindu-Muslim rioting and violence and the killing of many Indians across the country. Repercussions have persisted. In 2002, on the tenth anniversary of the event, in the city of Godhra in the western state of **Gujarat**, Muslims set fire to railcars carrying Hindu activists back from a ceremony at Ayodhya, killing fifty-eight people. Hindu retaliatory violence incited by religious militants in the state of Gujarat killed thousands. The issues continue to simmer, with extremist elements in both the Muslim and Hindu camps regularly taking aim at each other. The year 2008 proved particularly violent, with Muslim terrorist bombings in several of India's large urban centers and a dramatic assault on Mumbai led by a Pakistani-based group that targeted wealthy Indians, Westerners, and Jews.

This communal violence has served to harden positions on both sides and polarize political support. A BJP coalition that had come to power in 1998 remained in office until 2004, when it was turned out by a surprisingly resurgent INC and assorted coalition partners. Organizations loosely affiliated with the BJP have continued to promote divisive Hindu nationalist rhetoric to garner support and have sponsored violence and discrimination against a variety of minority religious and ethnic groups. During its six years in office, however, the BJP coalition governed relatively moderately. It did so both to retain its coalition partners and to promote India's national goals of economic growth and stable relations with neighboring countries. These current domestic and international priorities will be taken up in subsequent sections.

Significantly, the leader of the INC at the time of its surprise return to office in 2004 and reelection in 2009 was **Sonia Gandhi**, the Italian-born widow of Rajiv Gandhi. Although she would have been the logical choice to assume the office of prime minister (and extend the Nehru dynasty), the BJP made her foreign birth a divisive campaign issue. Thus, she stepped aside and allowed **Manmohan Singh** to become the country's first Sikh prime minister. It should be noted, however, that Sonia Gandhi continues to lead the INC and has a son, Rahul, who gained a Congress seat in parliament in 2004, and a daughter, Priyanka, who has also shown political ambitions. Although many judge the

younger sister to be more politically astute, analysts predict that Rahul will someday lead the INC, like his mother, father, and grandfather before him.¹⁰

POLITICAL REGIME

With an electorate approaching 700 million voters, India can easily claim title to the world's largest democracy. But is this democracy genuine? And does it work? Certainly in form it is democratic. Its constitution and other political institutions were modeled explicitly on Britain's Westminster parliamentary system, and few changes to the original blueprint have been enacted. With the exception of Indira Gandhi's authoritarian interlude of the 1970s, the institutions seem in practice to function more effectively and legitimately in India than in many other former British colonies that share a similar institutional inheritance. Indian democracy nonetheless differs in important ways from that of its colonial mentor and other advanced Western industrialized democracies.

Why has democracy fared better in India than, for example, in neighboring Pakistan, a country that shares with India many of the same cultural and historical legacies? Although a full answer to this question is beyond the scope of this work, the well-established stability and near-universal legitimacy of the political institutions discussed below provide an important part of that answer. Three generations of Indian politicians and citizens from across the ideological spectrum have been schooled in the lessons of parliamentary democracy. They function and participate in a system that maintains civil parliamentary debate, a politically neutral bureaucracy, an independent judiciary, and firm civilian control over the military.

Political Institutions

THE CONSTITUTION

Perhaps befitting India's size and population, its constitution is one of the world's longest, enshrining in writing the fundamental principles of Britain's unwritten constitutional order of parliamentary democracy. It establishes India as a federal republic, reserving significant authority for the state governments. During its nearly fifty years of hegemonic rule, the Indian National Congress (INC) limited the autonomy of state governments. The weakening of the INC and the onset of coalition governments have spurred a process of devolution, allowing regional political parties and the states they represent to wrest significant authority from the **Center** (a term referring to India's national government and its capital in New Delhi).

Two controversial tenets of the Indian constitution have certainly enhanced the power of the Center. The first of these authorizes the central

ESSENTIAL POLITICAL FEATURES

- Legislative-executive system: prime ministerial
- Legislature: Parliament
- Lower house: House of the People
- Upper house: House of States
- Unitary or federal division of power: federal
- Main geographic subunits: states
- Electoral system for lower house: single-member district plurality
- Chief judicial body: Supreme Court

government to suspend or limit freedoms during a "grave emergency," when India faces threats of "external aggression or internal disturbance." This emergency rule (nationwide martial law) was invoked twice during international conflicts, with China in 1962 and with Pakistan in 1971. More controversially, Indira Gandhi invoked this clause to institute emergency rule from 1975 to 1977, using it as a blunt tool against her political opponents. After her defeat in the subsequent election, the constitution was amended to limit such a decree to conditions of external aggression or domestic armed rebellion.

Indira Gandhi was not the only prime minister to invoke the second measure, that of presidential rule, which allows the central government to oust a state government and assert direct rule of that state. National governments have employed this measure on more than 100 occasions when ethnic unrest, local resistance, or simply a political stalemate has rendered a state, in the judgment of the Center, ungovernable. Although these measures may seem unusual and have at times been imposed for purposes of political expediency, the violence, disorder, and corruption often associated with regional Indian politics have made presidential rule an important and generally legitimate tool of the central government.¹¹

The Branches of Government**THE PRESIDENT**

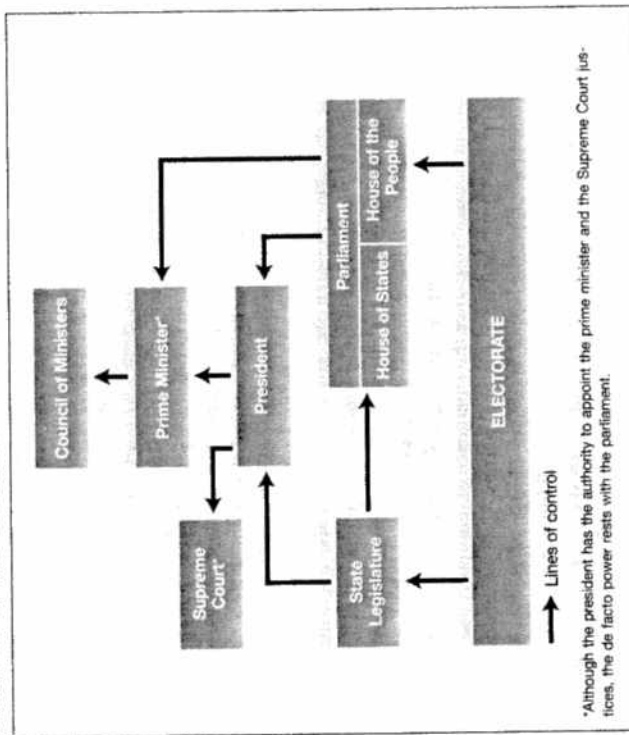
Because India is a republic, its head of state is a president, not a monarch; as in most other parliamentary systems, moreover, the president's role is largely symbolic. The president is authorized to appoint the prime minister, but as with the monarchs of Britain and Japan, this appointment is simply a ceremonial affirmation of the leader of the dominant party or coalition in the parliament. Similarly, while it is the president's role to declare national or state emergency rule, this declaration can be made only on the advice of the prime minister.

The substantive exception to these symbolic tasks has been the president's role following elections that have produced no majority party (which happens more often nowadays). Under these circumstances, the president seeks to identify and facilitate the formation of a workable governing coalition. If that is

not possible, the president dissolves the parliament and calls new elections. An electoral college, made up of the national and state legislators, elects presidents to five-year renewable terms, though many presidents have in effect been appointed by powerful prime ministers. The current president, Pratibha Patil, was elected in 2007 and serves as India's first woman president. Nominated by the governing Congress coalition, her election was unusually contentious because of opposition BJP fears that if an upcoming election returned no majority party, Ms. Patil would give her patron, the INC, the first chance to form a coalition government.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE CABINET

As in the British system, the Indian prime minister and cabinet constitute the executive branch. The prime minister, as head of the government, is responsible for managing the day-to-day affairs of government and is the state's most important political figure. The prime minister has typically been the leader of the party with a majority in the lower house of the legislature or, more recently, a leader from within a coalition of parties that can garner sufficient support

STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT

to constitute a majority, or even a minority, government. To remain in office, the prime minister must retain the confidence of the lower house and may choose to dissolve it at any point and call elections to solidify support for the government.

The prime minister chooses members of the parliament to serve in a Council of Ministers that presides over all government ministries and departments. From this larger council, a smaller and more manageable group of the fifteen to twenty most important ministers meets weekly as a cabinet to formulate and coordinate government policy. The current prime minister, Manmohan Singh, is the country's first Sikh to serve in that office and began his tenure in 2004 and was reelected in 2009 as leader of Congress-led coalitions.

During the years of Congress dominance, the three generations of Nehru prime ministers wielded overwhelming executive power. Although this was most apparent during Indira Gandhi's authoritarian tenure, her father and even her son were also dominant prime ministers who left their personal imprints on the office and on Indian politics. Even during the more recent era of coalition governments in which the prime minister's influence has weakened, the office remains the primary source of policy making and political power.

THE LEGISLATURE

As is true in many parliamentary systems, the lower house, or **House of the People**, dominates India's bicameral legislature. This lower chamber seats 545 members, all but 2 of whom are elected by voters for terms not to exceed five years (the final 2 seats are reserved for Anglo-Indians appointed by the president). Although its size may seem to weaken its effectiveness, India's huge population remains relatively underrepresented. Each representative serves nearly two million people, four times that of a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and twenty times that of a member of Britain's House of Commons!

Like the British lower house, the House of the People serves primarily as a chamber of debate between the government and the opposition. It has adopted many of the rituals and institutions of its colonial model, including a neutral Speaker of the House who presides over Question Time. Seen during the era of the INC's dominance as little more than window dressing for the party in power and its prime minister, the lower house has had an increasingly important political role since the emergence of multiparty coalition governments and the strengthening of regional parties.

As its name denotes, the upper house, or **House of States**, represents India's twenty-eight states and seven territories. All but 12 of its 250 members are elected (the remaining 12 being appointed by the president) to fixed six-year terms. Although the upper chamber technically possesses most of the same powers as its lower counterpart—including the right to introduce legislation—

In practice it has been much weaker. Only the House of the People can introduce bills to raise revenue, and any financial measure the House of States votes down can be enacted with just the support of the lower house. Any other deadlocked legislation is put to a majority vote of a joint session, ensuring that the more numerous lower chamber has the upper hand. Most significantly, the prime minister and cabinet are responsible only to the lower house, which can force the prime minister from office by a vote of no confidence.

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Unlike Britain and more like the United States, India has a Supreme Court with a bench of twenty-six justices, who are appointed by the president and may serve until age sixty-five. Typically, the most senior judge serves as chief justice.

India's Supreme Court is a constitutional court with the authority of judicial review (the right to rule on the constitutionality of acts of the parliament). This power to interpret the constitution is limited, however, by the comprehensive nature of the Indian constitution. Its power has also been limited by the parliament's ability to reverse court decisions by amending the constitution, as it has done on a number of occasions (ninety-two times in six decades). With the exception of the two-year period of Indira Gandhi's emergency rule in the 1970s, when the judiciary was seen as having yielded to the prime minister's political influence both in the appointment of justices and in the suspension of constitutionally guaranteed civil rights, the Supreme Court has enjoyed (and earned) a reputation for fairness and independence.

The Electoral System

As with many of its other political institutions, India's electoral system closely resembles the British model. At the national level, voters use a plurality system to elect representatives to the House of the People, as in Britain and the United States. The country is divided into 543 single-member districts (SMDs), in which the candidate who earns a plurality of votes on the first ballot is elected. The districts are based primarily on geography and population, but some districts are reserved for the scheduled castes and tribes, or so-called untouchables. Members of the upper house are elected for staggered six-year fixed terms by the state legislatures, with seats apportioned according to each state's population.

Whereas this plurality system in the United States and Britain has favored the emergence of few or two nationally based large parties and has penalized smaller parties, this is increasingly not the case in India. The INC certainly used the electoral system to its advantage during its period of dominance, winning clear majorities of seats in the House of the People in most elections

even though it never won a majority of the popular vote (nor has any other party in India's history) and often received little more than a plurality. The largest of the other parties, including the Janata Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have also benefited, winning a higher percentage of seats than votes. The weakening of the INC's hegemony since the 1990s has splintered the national vote, however, and has given new significance to regional parties based on caste or on linguistic or religious identity. This has meant that while two parties tend to dominate each electoral district, these regional and caste-based parties are not nationally dominant.¹² Recent House of the People elections have seated representatives of nearly forty different political parties, none with a majority of the seats and ten parties with over ten seats each (see "House of the People Election Results, 2004 and 2009," p. 352).

Local Government

India's extensive regional diversity and the sectarian conflicts troubling India at the time of its founding led the framers of India's constitution to establish a federal republic that preserved substantial powers for both the various states and the central government. The Center's constitutional powers to declare a national emergency or impose presidential rule on an obstreperous state are muscular examples of central authority. The federal government is also authorized to challenge any state legislation that contradicts an act of the parliament and can even change the boundaries of states as it sees fit. But like their American counterparts, in the day-to-day management of government affairs Indian states retain a great deal of jealously guarded autonomy. Public policies concerning health, education, economic and industrial development, and law and order are largely determined at the state level and vary significantly from state to state. The rise of coalition governments and the growing influence of regional parties in national affairs has only strengthened state power.

India is now divided into twenty-eight states and seven territories, whereas the original division had fourteen states and six territories. This expansion is in large part a nod to powerful state interests and speaks to an important way in which India's federalism differs from the American model. State borders in India reflect in most cases linguistic or ethno-religious differences, which pit regional interests against the Center. This conflict has been most pronounced in states such as Punjab, dominated by the Punjabi-speaking Sikhs, and **Kashmir**, where Urdu-speaking Muslims constitute a majority. However, other ethnic groups have also wielded the mechanisms of state authority to assert state interests against the federal government.

Perhaps the best comparison with Indian federalism is not the United States but rather the historically diverse and linguistically distinct European Union (EU).¹³ Like the English and the Greeks, the Hindi speakers of Bihar

in the north and the Tamil speakers of Tamil Nadu in the south converse in mutually unintelligible tongues and share little common history and equally little interaction. Like the citizens of Sweden and Portugal, their customs, cultures, and traditions vary widely, as do their social and economic profiles. Bihar is impoverished and largely illiterate, whereas Tamil Nadu is relatively more prosperous and technologically advanced. There are no similarly intense contrasts in the United States.

Comparison of India with the EU also points to one of the crowning accomplishments of India's democratic resilience. For all of the local conflict and secessionist violence that India has experienced, the Center has held, and the strife has remained localized. With larger populations and religious, linguistic, and territorial disputes sufficient to rival any of those that led to the numerous wars of Europe (and ultimately prompted the formation of the EU), India has for the most part managed these disputes peacefully and democratically. This is no small feat. And as state-based regional political parties and movements in India continue to strengthen and call for increased devolution, it gives hope not only to the emerging democratic federal system in Europe but also to that in Iraq, Russia, and other areas threatened by centrifugal dissolution.

POLITICAL CONFLICT AND COMPETITION

Despite occasional heavy-handed government restrictions on civil rights and periodic demonstrations of communitarian intolerance and even violence, Indian politics remains vibrant, open, and generally inclusive. Voter turnout typically averages around 60 percent for parliamentary elections. The nonpartisan Freedom House in 2008 deemed India "free," with ratings of 2 in its political rights and 3 in civil liberties (on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 the most free).¹⁴

In fact, given India's size and diversity, some might argue that political competition has been too inclusive. As one Indian journalist complained, "Everyone in India gets a veto."¹⁵ The competition and conflict—typically but not always healthy—reflect the dualism and diversity of India: a prosperous, cosmopolitan, and highly literate minority voting side by side with roughly two thirds of the electorate who cannot read, have their roots in rural villages or urban slums, and may survive on less than US\$1 a day. Both are important components of Indian democracy.

The Party System

During the first few decades of independence, India's party system was stable and predictable. Like Japan's Liberal Democratic Party or Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional, the Indian National Congress presided over a one-party-dominant system that effectively appealed to a broad range of ide-

ological and social groups and co-opted numerous disaffected constituencies, including the poor and minorities. More recently, this system has become far more fragmented, complex, and unpredictable as national opposition parties and regional and even local interests have gained ground in both state and national elections.

THE CONGRESS PARTY

More than just a political party, the Indian National Congress (INC), from its founding in 1885, became the flagship of national independence, commanding widespread appeal and support across the political and even ethnic spectrums. After independence, Jawaharlal Nehru and the INC pursued a slightly left-of-center political ideology of social democracy. This included social policies of "secularism" (more a program of religious equal opportunity than a separation of religion and state) and social reform, continuing the efforts of Gandhi to eliminate caste discrimination.

The party's economic program was marked by democratic socialism, including national five-year plans and state ownership of key economic sectors. These policies earned the support of workers, peasants, and particularly members of the lower castes. At the same time, the INC retained the support of business by respecting private property and supporting domestic industry with mercantilist policies of import substitution. It remained for decades the only party with national appeal.

The INC's dominance began to weaken after Nehru's death, as disagreements grew between Indira Gandhi and party elders in the late 1960s. These disagreements led to divisions within the party and to Gandhi's capture of the dominant faction, known as Congress (I) for Indira, during the 1970s. Gandhi made populist promises to India's poor, vowing to abolish poverty through government programs but never delivered on those promises. By the 1980s, the INC had begun to move away from its traditional priorities of democratic socialism and religious neutrality. Indira Gandhi began promoting Hindu nationalism, and her son Rajiv launched neoliberal economic reforms. These legacies have outlived their architects and have been embraced even more enthusiastically by other political parties.

By the late 1980s, the INC had surrendered its position of primacy, and the single-party-dominant system gave way to a regionalized multiparty system and coalition governments. During this time, the INC alternated rule with various permutations of Hindu nationalist coalitions, controlling the government in the first half of the 1990s and then returning to power in 2004. Although the INC continues to embrace in principle the neoliberal reform program first launched by Rajiv Gandhi, its most recent return to government was in large part a result of its progressive appeal to India's peasantry, a nod to both Nehru's democratic socialism and Indira Gandhi's populism.

THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Opposition to the INC grew during Indira Gandhi's 1970s autocratic interlude, a number of contending parties began to emerge or take on new importance. A coalition of some of these opposition parties, under the name Janata People's Party, ultimately wrested the government from the INC in the late 1970s. One of the smallest of these coalition partners was Jana Sangh, a Hindu nationalist party that left the Janata coalition in 1980 and changed its name to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), or Indian People's Party.

The BJP's popularity climbed rapidly as support for secularism gave way to increasing sentiment for ethnic and religious parties. The BJP won only two seats in the House of the People elections of 1984, but increasing Hindu nationalist sentiment (manifested most violently in clashes with Sikhs at Amritsar in 1984 and with Muslims in Ayodhya in 1992 and in Gujarat in 2002) allowed it to expand its representation to 161 seats by 1996 and form a coalition government, led by Atal Behari Vajpayee. Although the first BJP coalition lasted only twelve days, by 1998 the BJP had become the largest party in the parliament, and Vajpayee and his BJP-led coalition governed from 1998 until turned out of office in the 2004 elections. Despite recent decline in support (the BJP held on to only 116 seats in 2009), it remains, with the INC, one of India's two largest parties.

From its founding, the BJP has been an outspoken advocate of Hindu national identity. It is a member of a larger constellation of more than thirty loosely tied Hindu nationalist organizations known collectively as the RSS (the Hindi acronym for National Association of Volunteers). These religious, social, and political associations vary widely in their acceptance of violence and militancy in promoting Hindu nationalism, but all embrace **Hindutva**, or Hindu-ness, as India's primary national identity and ideal. Whereas some of the more moderate RSS member organizations promote benign patriotism, other reactionary or fundamentalist association members teach a Hindu chauvinist version of Indian history and condone and even train their members in violent tactics of religious and racial discrimination.

Similarly, the BJP itself has both moderate and militant elements. Its elected national leaders tend to downplay the BJP's religious ties, promote the BJP as a more honest alternative to the INC, and emphasize its neoliberal economic policies of privatization, deregulation, and foreign investment. This reputation of honesty and neoliberalism has appealed in particular to India's growing middle class, which is more interested in economic freedom and prosperity than in secular equality. This predominantly Hindu middle class has become frustrated with what it perceives as the reverse discrimination of the INC's secular policies of tolerance of minority religion and caste-based affirmative action.

The extremist and fundamentalist elements in the BJP are more overtly anti-Muslim, contending that India's Muslims were forced to convert by for-

eign invaders and would naturally revert to their native Hinduism in an India permitted to promote its true heritage. They are more prone to violence, praising the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi and the combatants of Ayodhya and Gujarat as heroes and protectors of Indian heritage. Their leaders have been more successful politically at the local and state levels (particularly in the region of India's so-called cow belt in the Hindu-majority north) but have also become important allies in the BJP's efforts to form national ruling coalitions.

The most successful and controversial of the regional BJP leaders is the charismatic and outspoken chief minister (governor) of the state of Gujarat, **Narendra Modi**. Swept to power in the wake of the anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002, Modi was reelected in 2007 and clearly has national aspirations beyond his home state of Gujarat. At the same time, the strident Hindu nationalism championed by Modi and other hard-liners is offensive to many of the allied parties that formed the BJP's governing coalition prior to 2004. National party leaders recognize that the BJP cannot win national elections on the narrow platform of Hindu nationalism, and this has led to squabbling over leadership and continued divisions within the party.

PARTIES OF THE LEFT

India's so-called Left Front consists of a collection of Communist and other left-leaning parties whose popularity seems unfazed by the declining success of Communist parties and countries elsewhere in the world. These parties together have managed to garner on average between 7 and 10 percent of the national vote and typically over fifty seats in the House of the People. This bloc of seats has given the Communist parties a decisive role in the making and breaking of recent coalitions and therefore a certain leverage in government policy, despite their minority status. Following the 2004 general elections, the INC-led coalition required the support of four Communist parties in order to gain a voting majority in parliament. The fragile nature of this arrangement became apparent in parliamentary wrangling in recent years over a controversial nuclear cooperation treaty between India and the United States. Supported by the Congress Party, the deal was adamantly opposed by its erstwhile Communist allies who threatened to withdraw, and then ultimately withdrew, their support from the coalition in 2008. This forced the INC to form ad hoc alliances with other small parties to assemble a majority and to avoid a vote of no confidence that would bring the government down and force a new election.

The leftist parties have, in large part, remained successful because of their willingness to evolve and seek alliances with other parties. Although both of the two largest leftist parties, the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), initially supported violent revolution, over the years both have ultimately embraced peaceful means to achieve Communism. More recently, both have come to look and act much more like social

democratic parties, embracing a mixture of state and private ownership and even promoting foreign investment. Like nearly all other parties in India, these leftist parties rely upon strong local and regional bases of support. The lion's share of party leadership and voting strength has come from the states of **Kerala** in the far south and West Bengal in the far east. Not all political movements on the left, however, have been willing to work within the democratic system. Chief among these radical groups is the Maoist (or guerrilla Communist) insurgency known as **Naxalism**. Named for the region in West Bengal where the movement originated in the late 1960s, the movement has grown in recent decades, particularly in rural areas in several of the poorest states of north-central India. Naxalite recruits are drawn primarily from the low castes, outcastes, and tribal natives largely excluded from India's recent and dramatic economic growth.

REGIONAL PARTIES

The declining dominance of the INC and the rise of coalition governments have given new prominence to regional and local political parties, which have come to dominate in many states and tip the balance in national elections. Moreover, as INC-supported secularism has waned, ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities have become increasingly important rallying points for political interests that are often concentrated by region. For example, states with predominant ethnic or religious identities, such as the Dravidian Tamils in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and the Punjabi Sikhs, have often been led by these regional and state parties. Other parties draw support from lower-caste Indians in several of India's poorer states. In only one of India's six most populated states does either the INC or the BJP hold a majority in the state parliament.

The localized parties also often have sufficient voting strength to control small but influential blocs of seats in the national parliament. In the 2004 election, the INC and the BJP secured less than half the total vote, with state and special-interest parties winning nearly 40 percent. This reflects in one sense a devolution of central power that could be healthy for Indian democracy. But given the diversity of India's interests, it also speaks to the secessionist aspirations and highly localized interests of Indians and may be a sign of dangerous centrifugal forces.

Elections

Campaigns and elections are essential procedures in any viable democracy and are oftentimes dramatic theatrical events. Certainly this is true of India, where all aspects of an election must be measured in superlatives. For instance, in the spring of 2004 nearly 400 million of the eligible 690 million voters flocked to the 700,000 polling stations to cast votes (using over 1 mil-

House of the People Election Results, 2004 and 2009

Party or Coalition	2004 Seats	2009 Seats
Indian National Congress (INC)	145	206
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	138	116
INC and allies (United Progressive Alliance; UPA)	217	262
BJP and allies (National Democratic Alliance; NDA)	185	159
Left Front (LF)	59	24

lion new electronic voting machines). They selected their favored parliamentary candidates from the thousands of choices, representatives of one of six "national" parties or the dozens of regional ones. The task was so huge that polling was spread out over four weeks as election officials and their machines migrated across the country, harvesting votes. Indeed, this four-week election process was longer than the government-limited three-week campaign that preceded it.

Perhaps most amazing was the outcome itself, again testament to the authenticity of Indian democracy. Prior to the 2004 election, it was a foregone and universally held conclusion that the BJP-led coalition would retain its majority and extend its six-year tenure. With strong national economic growth and thawing relations with Pakistan over the troubled issue of Kashmir, the governing coalition called early national elections to capitalize on these successes, campaigning under the motto "India Is Shining." In the weeks prior to the election, BJP leaders were already busy divvying up potential cabinet posts, and INC leaders were offering justifications and finger-pointing for their party's anticipated weak showing.

But Indian voters had different plans, allowing the INC to edge ahead of the BJP with just over one-fourth of total seats. With its coalition partners, the INC gained control of 40 percent of the seats, and, after several days of negotiations, the INC expanded the coalition to include a number of regional, state, and left-of-center parties and secured the outside support of the Communist Party of India. The INC formed a majority coalition government, with Manmohan Singh as prime minister and returned both the coalition and Singh to office in 2009 (see "House of the People Election Results, 2004 and 2009," above).

Civil Society

As the dominance of the INC has faded and political authority has become decentralized, more—and more diverse—interests and elements of Indian soci-

ety have demanded political influence. Although India has conventional civil organizations representing business, labor, and even peasants, these groups tend not to be particularly effective in influencing policy. Labor unions are organized by political party and are therefore fragmented and limited in their effectiveness, although they have done much to champion the interests of labor. Business certainly influences both politics and politicians—corruption is a serious problem among members of India's parliament—but this influence has been held in check by both traditional Hindu and more modern socialist biases against private business. Peasants are plentiful and at times vocal, but their political demands tend to be episodic and particular.

Communal interests representing ethnic, religious, and caste groups have been far more influential in Indian politics than have other factors. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs all have well-organized groups representing their political interests, and each supports its own political party or parties. This is also true of the *Dalits*, or untouchables, who have their own political party and constitute one of India's largest mass movements. Although there is good reason to be concerned about the destabilizing and divisive potential of these religious- and caste-based groups, there is also evidence that their multiple demands have often been addressed substantially (if not fully met) through the political process, thereby defusing civil discord and strengthening the legitimacy of the system.

Less traditional divisions and demands are also taking shape in contemporary Indian civil society, including significant environmental and women's movements. Environmental protests include resistance to development projects, such as the Narmada dam and deforestation, and advocacy of redress for industrial accidents, such as the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal in 1984. Women's movements bridging class and ethnic divisions have organized to protest so-called dowry deaths, which claim the lives of as many as 25,000 Indian women annually.

Another important voice of Indian civil society is the media establishment, arguably one of the largest and most active in the world. It comprises 40,000 newspapers and other periodicals, including some 4,000 dailies, all of which enjoy a significant degree of editorial and political freedom. These figures are all the more impressive when one remembers that nearly a third of Indian men and over half of Indian women are illiterate. Given these figures, India's extensive radio and television networks are even more important conduits of information and have been subject to more careful government scrutiny and control. This oversight has become increasingly difficult, however, as satellite television—now available in 80 percent of India's half million villages—has introduced new competition into the market. India's substantial investment in networking the entire country with broadband cable will also certainly expand avenues for civic communication.

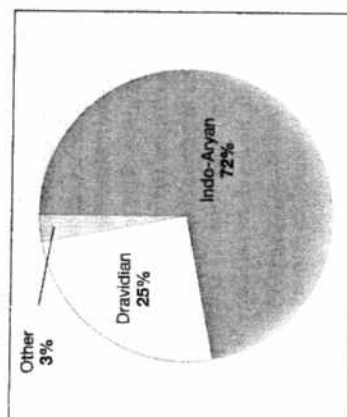
SOCIETY

Ethnic and National Identity

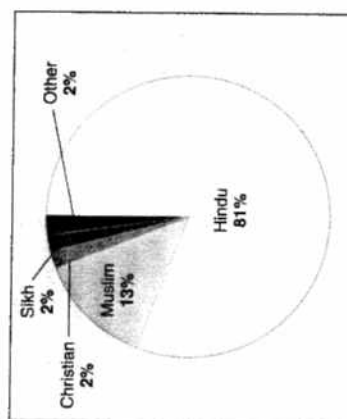
Contemporary India is a "complicated jigsaw" of astounding ethnic and social diversity pieced together by centuries of imperial conquest.¹⁶ Independent India has sought to create from this patchwork imperial raj a unified and secular nation-state. This effort has required of India and its citizens a measure of social tolerance that has not always been available, seemingly leaving the country on the edge of disintegration. Yet for all the communitarian conflict and threats of secession, national unity has prevailed. Before noting the political culture that has at least to some degree preserved this unity, we turn first to the ethnic and social divisions that threaten it.

When the lighter-skinned Indo-Aryans migrated into what is now northern and central India thousands of years ago, they pushed the native, darker-skinned Dravidians southward. Each culture retained separate linguistic and cultural identities that persist to some extent today. Roughly two thirds of Indians (virtually all in the north) speak some variation of the Sanskrit-based language brought by the Indo-Aryans, which now forms some ten distinct languages. The most common of these is Hindi, one of two official national languages, which is spoken by over one third of all Indians. Approximately one fourth of all Indians speak one of the four main Dravidian languages. In all, the constitution recognizes fourteen languages, but at least another thirty languages claim over 1 million speakers each. The only other national language is English. Although only some 3 percent of the population speaks English fluently, as in other polyglot former colonies it has become an essential medium for national politics and commerce.

ETHNIC GROUPS



RELIGION



These divisions are at once exacerbated and moderated by religious differences. Although more than 80 percent of Indians share a common faith, regional and linguistic groups practice their Hinduism in various different ways. The promotion of Hindu nationalism has brought a degree of unity to these groups, but at the expense of some 12 percent of Indians who are Muslim, 2 to 3 percent who are adherents of Sikhism (an amalgam of Hindu and Muslim theologies), and the comparable percentage who are Christian. These religious differences have often acquired political significance, leading at times to assassinations, violent pogroms and bitter reprisals, secessions and threats of secession. The most dramatic flare-ups of sectarian violence have been between Hindus and Muslims, including the initial partitioning of Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India and ongoing territorial disputes in Kashmir as well as the events at Ayodhya in 1992, Gujarat in 2002, and the spate of attacks in 2008. Less dramatically but perhaps even more significantly, India's democracy has fostered the emergence and growth of religious-based political parties that have rallied around these nationalist and separatist sentiments.

As if the linguistic and religious differences were not sufficiently divisive, the hierarchical separation of Indian society into castes remains the most significant of India's social divisions. Although industrialization and urbanization have made the caste system today more permeable and flexible than it once was, it remains socially, politically, and economically important. Although neither class identity nor income inequality are as severe in India as in many other developing countries, those in the lower ranks of India's caste system are typically also the poorest, with the scheduled castes and hill tribes the poorest of the poor. In an effort to redress discrimination against these suppressed groups, or *Dalits*, the government has established affirmative action programs reserving for them jobs, scholarships, and even seats in the parliament.

Although not fully effective in leveling the playing field, these measures have helped the *Dalits* achieve a degree of social mobility and even political organization (including the formation of a regional political party). These policies have become contentious, angering many higher-caste Hindus, who see the measures—along with special protections afforded to minority religious groups—as reverse discrimination. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has seized on this issue in expanding its constituency among the growing Hindu middle class and stirring the embers of Hindu fundamentalism.

Ideology and Political Culture

As with many other elements of Indian politics, India's political culture defies generalization. Nonetheless, two somewhat contradictory values are worth mentioning. On the one hand, Indians tend to identify themselves and their

IN COMPARISON FEARS ABOUT FOREIGN INFLUENCE

Our way of life must be protected from foreign influence.
Percent saying yes:

Country	Percent
India	92
Nigeria	85
South Africa	80
Russia	77
Brazil	77
Mexico	75
China	70
Japan	64
United States	62
Canada	62
United Kingdom	54
Germany	53
France	52

*Data on Iran not available.

Source: Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2007.

politics locally. Indians are tied most importantly to family, occupational group, and their immediate regional linguistic and religious associates. These immediate ties tend to segment and even fragment politics in India, which promotes political awareness and cooperation locally but also causes political friction and even violence between groups. Although such localization may limit the scope of conflict, it also constrains the kind of mobilization that could address pressing national needs.

On the other hand, despite their cultural diversity and contentious politics, Indians continue to identify themselves as Indians and generally support—and see themselves as an important part of—Indian national democracy. So while the bonds of national unity are less powerful than local ties, India's "bewilderingly plural population" nonetheless sees itself as "capable of purposeful collective action."¹⁷ Gandhi and Nehru remain national heroes for most Indians who take their role as citizens seriously and see Indian democracy as legitimate.

Some see in this combined sense of local power and political efficacy a dangerous tendency toward identity politics in Indian democracy. Nehru's secular nationalism has ceded ground to political movements that mobilize supporters in the name of religion or region. Majority Hindus perceive themselves as threatened by minority religions, the prosperous middle class depicts itself as victim of India's poorest outcasts, and Punjabi Sikhs and Kashmiri Muslims clamor for independence. Globalization has further created a sense that Indian identity as a whole is under threat and must be defended. Yet democracy and unity prevail, speaking to India's remarkable capacity to adopt and adapt foreign institutions for its own use. An Indian adage claims that "democracy is like cricket—a quintessentially Indian game that just happened to have been invented elsewhere." There is no question that India has made democracy its own.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

By the time India finally obtained its independence from British imperialism, it had had quite enough of the West's version of liberal free trade. For nearly four decades, successive (mostly INC) governments adopted a foreign policy of mercantilist economic nationalism, promoting **import-substitution industrialization** and restricting foreign investment and trade. Governments also promoted social democratic policies domestically to limit the private sector, redistribute wealth, and give the state the leading role in guiding the economy. These policies achieved several significant results. By the late 1970s, through the technological gains of the green revolution, India had become one of the largest agricultural producers in the world and for most years since then has been a net exporter of food. India established a relatively large—if not broad—middle class, and some niches in the economy and some regions of the country truly prospered.

By the mid-1980s, however, frustration with poverty, corruption, and continued slow growth at home, coupled with the popularity of export-led growth and structural adjustment programs abroad, led successive governments to adopt neoliberal policies of economic reform. Piecemeal efforts during the 1980s to dismantle nearly four decades of mercantilist protectionism gave way to substantial liberalization following a balance of payments crisis in 1991. Although the process was more gradual than the "shock therapy" adopted in Poland or Russia and the results have been less thorough than the reform and opening of China, measures to liberalize foreign trade and investment and to privatize the economy have been significant. Governments weakened India's notorious **license raj**, the mercantilist holdover requiring licensing and approval processes for operating a business and importing and exporting prod-

THE LICENSE RAJ AND THE "HINDU RATE OF GROWTH"

Referring to India's relatively slow rate of development during its early decades of independence, an Indian economist famously compared what he called the "Hindu rate of growth" with the more rapid pace of its East Asian neighbors. Although the phrase would seem to implicate India's non-Confucian culture, most observers agree that the greatest obstacle to Indian growth has been (and in important ways remains) India's huge bureaucracy with its associated red tape and corruption. India's "license-permit-quota raj" was the legacy of an extensive British colonial civil service superceded by independent India's far larger state bureaucracy. To carry out his social democratic vision for India, Nehru established an interventionist state that pursued socialist and mercantilist economic policies, including protectionist measures promoting import-substitution industrialization and far-reaching regulations designed to protect consumers and lift India's poorest. The result was a highly bureaucratized and politicized system of licenses, permits, and quotas governing virtually all aspects of the Indian economy.

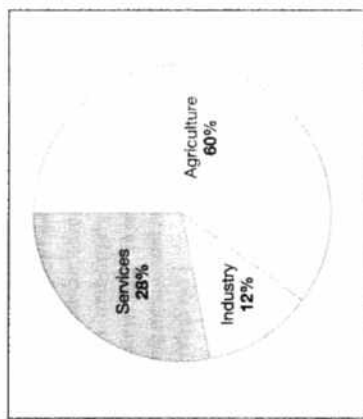
Although some of the most stifling aspects of the license raj were reduced or eliminated with the 1991 liberalization program, much of India's wealth is still "sponged up or siphoned off by a vast tumorous bureaucracy."¹⁸ It still takes an average of three months to secure the permits necessary to start a business in India and much longer than that to secure a license to import a computer. Because Indians have found it so difficult to work within this system, most have little choice but to work around it by paying bribes, which have come to be expected "at almost every point where citizens are governed, at every transaction where they are noted, registered, taxed, stamped, licensed, authorized, or assessed."¹⁹

acts (see "The License Raj and 'Hindu Rate of Growth,'" above). Restrictions on foreign investment have been eased, and many state-owned companies have been sold to the private sector.

The results of the liberalization effort are impressive. In the two decades since the reforms were launched, economic growth in India averaged nearly 6 percent per year (twice the rate for the previous twenty years). In the past few years, economic expansion has neared the frenzied rates of neighboring China, with growth averaging closer to 10 percent per year (and inflation rates to match). Even as the population has continued to grow (too) rapidly, the total number of poor Indians is declining. Trade and investment are up, and Western outsourcing (moving the production of goods and services to another country to take advantage of cheap labor or other savings) has brought jobs and growth to some segments of the Indian economy.

Yet huge economic problems persist. Fully one quarter of India's population remains mired in poverty, living on less than US\$1 per day. Half of India's

LABOR FORCE BY OCCUPATION



children under the age of five are underweight, and the total number of malnourished Indians has hardly dropped in the past ten years. Fully one fourth of the world's undernourished reside in India. Corruption and protectionism persist, and the pollution accompanying India's industrial expansion threatens to undermine the development success India has achieved to date. The World Bank predicts that by 2020, India's water, air, and soil resources will be under greater threat than those of any other nation. An Indian auto manufacturer is now producing the Nano, priced at \$2,500 and billed as "the world's cheapest car." The Indian capital, Delhi, adds 1,000 cars a day to its roads.

Comparing India's development trajectory with neighboring China's is instructive.²⁰ Although China was poorer than India when both countries were established in the late 1940s and remained so through the 1970s, China has dramatically outperformed India since then. Its growth rates have hovered near 10 percent for the past thirty years, population growth has slowed, and trade and investment have skyrocketed. In recent years, China's annual increases in trade have exceeded India's total annual trade.

Part of the explanation for this difference rests in two challenges that continue to perplex India: too many people and too little education. Whereas the growth rate of China's population has slowed to less than 1 percent per year, India's remains closer to 2 percent. This has meant fewer mouths to feed in China and more wealth to spread around. The World Bank has concluded that extreme poverty has been nearly eradicated there.

In addition, China has done a far better job of providing basic education for its citizens. More than 90 percent of Chinese adults are literate, compared with less than 60 percent of Indians. More troubling, less than half of Indian women are literate, compared with over 85 percent of Chinese women. Economists and demographers argue, however, that there may be a silver lining for India: if India can educate its citizens, particularly its women, population pressures will ease as women gain more control over reproductive choices and families deem it rational to limit family size. More important, this demographic liability could become an asset as mouths to feed develop into skilled, competitive workers in the twenty-first-century global economy.

Like China and many other developing countries that have been drawn into the global economy, India faces an additional problem. Although the economy is growing, it is doing so unevenly. Much has been made of India's

recent information technology (IT) boom, and for good reason. Several large Indian computer firms are now globally competitive, and Western companies have flocked to such cities as Bangalore in the south and Hyderabad in the north to take advantage of India's wealth of service workers and English-speaking engineers.

But the IT industry remains largely irrelevant to most Indians. As a whole, it employs fewer than 2 million workers out of a labor force of some 500 million and makes up only 5 percent of India's GDP. Six of India's twenty-eight states receive virtually all of India's foreign investment. Thus it has created for India a dual economy that exacerbates both regional and class tensions. An elite, urban, prosperous, and Westernized middle-class minority sits precariously on top of a huge lower class that is largely rural, illiterate, and in many cases unemployed or underemployed.

If India is to eliminate or at least address this persistent poverty and inequality, stay ahead of its rapid population growth, and perhaps catch up to China and other competitors, scholars and policy makers agree that it must do several things. Among them are improving conditions for its rural population; improving roads, telecommunication, and other aspects of the infrastructure; increasing foreign investment; and above all providing elementary education and basic health care, particularly to Indian girls and women.

There is evidence that this can be done. The state of Kerala, in southwestern India, boasts female literacy rates of nearly 90 percent and fertility rates and population growth far lower than the national average. These are the result, however, not of neoliberal market reforms but of several decades of socialist state policies in education, health care, and land reform that have generally emphasized equality over freedom and state intervention over free-market policies. Although India is not likely to return fully to the social democratic policies of the 1950s, its voters in 2004 chose the INC and its leftist coalition partners with a mandate not to forget them—the majority of Indian voters whom recent economic growth has in many ways left behind.

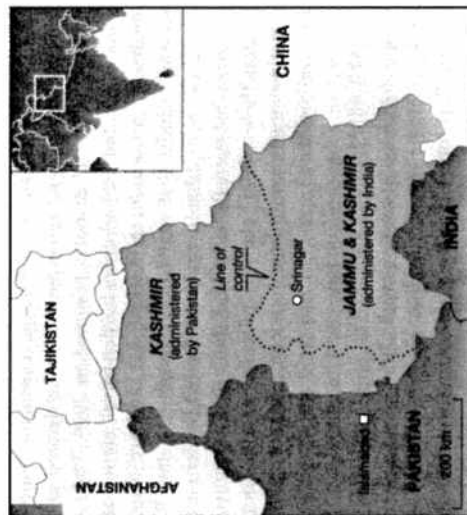
FOREIGN RELATIONS AND THE WORLD

Once India had gained its independence, Jawaharlal Nehru charted for the country a foreign policy of "peaceful coexistence" with its neighbors and "non-alignment" in the superpower cold war that was just then taking shape in the postwar world. In fact, Nehru became a leader of the nonaligned movement of postcolonial developing countries seeking to create a neutral "third world" separate from the American-led Western nations (the first world) and the Soviet-led Eastern bloc (the second world). Unfortunately, the ethnic politics

of partition and the geopolitics of big-power relations derailed this course. In the decades that followed, India fought three wars with neighboring Pakistan and maintained frosty relations with both Communist China and capitalist United States. With the end of the cold war, however, and under conditions of much higher (nuclear) stakes (first China, then India, and finally Pakistan joined the United States as nuclear powers), India's relations have recently thawed with all three of these countries. With growing economic and political clout, India is beginning to command the respect of an emerging great power in both the region and the world.

PAKISTAN AND THE KASHMIR DISPUTE

No issue has haunted India's foreign relations as much as the legacy of partition. The bitter division of India into Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India in 1947 not only soured relations between these erstwhile partners in the independence struggle but also left jagged and festering wounds in the very boundaries between them. At the center of the conflict is the contested region of Kashmir, which is situated on the northern portion of the border between the two countries and is claimed in whole by both nations. On one side of the conflict is the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir; on the other, is the Pakistani-administered state of Kashmir. At the time of partition, Kashmir was the largest of three principalities that had not committed themselves



Source: "A Good Vote in the Angry Valley," *Economist*, 30 December 2008, www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12868164 (accessed 15 January 2009).

to joining either India or Pakistan. The majority of its subjects were Urdu-speaking Muslims whose ethnic sentiments leaned toward Pakistan, but its prince was a Hindu who hoped Kashmir would remain independent. This ambivalence gave way to armed conflict—the first of three undeclared wars between India and Pakistan—within months of the partition.

A year of armed conflict ground to a halt in 1949, and the line of conflict has remained the *de facto* border between the two countries (see “Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute,” p. 361). Pakistan launched a second war in 1965, hoping to sever Kashmir from the rest of India, but the Pakistani advance of surprise was no match for India’s superior forces, and the hostilities ended in three weeks. The third war was waged not over Kashmir but over the struggle for independence in Bangladesh, which was then East Pakistan. Although the original partition created one Pakistan, its eastern and western halves were linked only by a shared religion and were divided by language, culture, and—most troubling—nearly 1,000 miles of Indian territory. Backed by newly acquired Soviet armaments, India came to the aid of the secessionist movement in 1971, forcing Pakistan to accept liberation and Bangladesh independence.

The Kashmir region remains the world’s most militarized border dispute. The level of tension has waxed and waned, but as one author notes, the cease-fire line has continued “to serve as a target range” claiming thousands of lives each year.²¹ With nuclear weapons now potential ammunition for both sides, many political analysts hope that caution will prevail over the “pathological politics” of ethnic hatred.²² There is reason for hope. Substantive peace talks on a negotiated and more permanent settlement of the Kashmir conflict and other territorial disputes resumed in 2004. The two countries have once again permitted limited cross-border travel, signed an agreement to reduce the risk of an accidental nuclear war, and are discussing a gas pipeline from Iran to India that would pass through Pakistan. Following the 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai that prompted cross-border accusations and heightened tensions between Pakistan and India, Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir nonetheless held relatively peaceful state elections, in which voters chose a government committed to accommodation and negotiation, not separatism and violence.

SEPTEMBER 11 AND GREAT POWER RELATIONS

India’s early hopes for peaceful relations with China, its neighbor to the north, were dashed by Chinese expansion into areas of India’s northeastern Himalayan region. Tensions led to the Chinese invasion of India in 1962 to resolve what China viewed as “border disputes,” but what India deemed outright aggression. India claims several territories now held by China—mostly Kashmiri land ceded to China by Pakistan—that are larger in area than

Switzerland. China, in turn, claims three times as much real estate to the east now in the hands of India. Efforts since 1998 to resolve these disputes finally yielded positive results in 2005, when both sides agreed to allow a cross-national committee to resolve this conflict. In 2006, a Himalayan border crossing reopened between the two countries for the first time since the Sino-Indian border war of 1962. Despite this recent thawing of border relations, growing bilateral trade, and China’s claims to support India’s bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, the relationship remains fragile and complicated. India acknowledges China’s claim to Tibet, but at the same time plays host to the Dalai Lama, his government-in-exile, and some 100,000 Tibetan refugees. China has stepped up military incursions into disputed Indian territory and has participated in the construction of naval facilities in both Bangladesh and Pakistan. China has also helped Pakistan keep pace with India’s nuclear capabilities.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States and subsequent war on terror launched by the United States have brought a new dynamic to India’s dealings with China, the United States, and even Pakistan. Historically, India’s relationship with the world’s second-largest democracy has been cool at best. But like China, India saw the benefits of recasting its own struggle with Muslim insurgents as part of a larger global war on terror. The United States responded warmly, lifting sanctions in place since India’s nuclear tests in the 1990s, expanding trade, and—to Pakistan’s chagrin—increasing military sales. Most significantly, in 2005 U.S. President George W. Bush negotiated a nuclear cooperation deal with Prime Minister Singh that permits India to purchase nuclear technology for the first time in three decades, despite India’s refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (see “Current Issues,” p. 364). These actions have put Pakistan in an awkward position: after all, India’s Kashmiri terrorists have been viewed by Pakistan as freedom fighters. But Pakistan has had little choice but to go along with the war on terror, and India has been generally impressed with Pakistan’s recent efforts to rein in Kashmiri insurgents and facilitate peace efforts between the two countries.

Today, India’s diplomatic relations with its neighbors and other powers in the region are for the most part more cordial than they have been at any time since independence. Trade and investment with both China and the United States are booming, and despite tensions stemming from the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, talks between India and Pakistan on resolving disputes and opening and expanding travel and trade links across the blood-stained region of Kashmir are under way. India is one of only a handful of nuclear powers and enjoys a growing economy and increasing influence in global forums. India—with good reason—sees itself, and is increasingly seen by others, as an emerging great power.

CURRENT ISSUES

NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS, COALITION POLITICS, AND U.S.-INDIAN RELATIONS

Perhaps no issue better captures the confluence of domestic and international politics for a rising great power than the controversial nuclear cooperation deal struck between India and the United States. Negotiations began in 2005 on an arrangement that would end the three-decade ban on India's access to peaceful nuclear technology and enriched uranium, a ban first imposed after India refused to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in the 1960s and then developed and tested thermonuclear weapons in the 1970s and again in the 1990s in violation of the treaty. Like Pakistan and Israel, both of which have also refused to sign the NPT, India has long argued that it was unfairly excluded from the nuclear club and claims it maintains nuclear weapons only as a no-first-use deterrent against neighboring China and Pakistan.

The bilateral negotiations held benefits for both countries. The agreement promised India the right to purchase much needed fuel and technology for its civilian nuclear program and to legitimize its membership in the exclusive nuclear club. For the United States, the deal would strengthen ties with a key ally in the curbing of China's expansion and provide American companies access to lucrative nuclear and defense contracts in India. But while leaders in both countries saw the strategic promise of the agreement, domestic politics proved a different matter. Although American nonproliferation critics are many, the real political struggle came in India. The governing coalition forged by Prime Minister Singh's Congress Party in 2004 included a dozen small regional, caste-based, and left-leaning parties and depended on outside support from India's two main Communist parties to maintain its majority. Because the Communist parties are stridently anti-American, they opposed any warming of ties—particularly a strategic partnership—with the United States and rejected the deal from the outset.

Although the agreement did not require the approval of the Indian parliament, the Communist parties repeatedly threatened to abandon the Congress-led coalition and force a vote of no confidence if the government pursued the deal, which also required approval by the United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the 45-member Nuclear Supplier's Group, and the United States Congress. Prime Minister Singh spent three full years trying to bargain with, beg, and threaten his Communist party allies to no avail. Finally, in 2008, Congress abandoned the support of its recalcitrant erstwhile Communist partners, recruited a new parliamentary ally, a regional party, to take its place, and announced it would pursue IAEA approval. Amid charges of treachery and bribery, the new Congress-led coalition survived a vote of no confidence and forwarded the nuclear agreement to the IAEA and

United States Congress. Both bodies approved the deal, affording India access to peaceful nuclear technology and material.

IDENTITY POLITICS AND SECULAR DEMOCRACY

The Congress-led coalition's dependence on a regional political party to salvage its nuclear deal highlights the pivotal role of regional, ethnic, and caste-based politics in what Gandhi and Nehru envisioned would be a unified secular democracy. A spate of terrorist bombings and attacks in major cities across India in recent years offers a more troubling reminder of the politics-by-other-means to which local and sectarian militants are all too willing to resort. Bombings by Muslim extremists in New Delhi in 2005 and Varanasi in 2006 were followed by explosions at Muslim mosques in Mumbai that same year and Hyderabad in 2007. Over a period of three months in 2008, bombs rocked neighborhoods in Jaipur, Bangalore, and Ahmadabad, killing over one hundred and injuring hundreds more. The bombings in Ahmadabad, Gujarat state's largest city, threatened once again to stir the embers of the horrific violence that racked this state in 1992 and a decade later in 2002. Perhaps most dramatic was a sophisticated 2008 assault on Mumbai's city center carried out by a well-trained and well-armed group of Muslim terrorists with clear Pakistani ties. Although casualties were fewer than in the 2006 Mumbai bombings, the 2008 assault targeted luxury hotels and other venues frequented by wealthy Indian and Western elite. One can add to this grim tally of violence the persistent bloodletting in Kashmir and militant movements among disenfranchised tribal groups in eastern India.

This violence is both symbol and substance of the most pressing issue facing India today: Can pluralist politics prevail? Can Gandhi and Nehru's vision of a secular nation embracing all Indians and a democratic polity giving voice to all identities survive? Or will the rise of Hindu chauvinism, the pull of caste, the press of communitarian violence, and the stress of separatist demands fray India at its borders and tear it apart from the center?

Certainly there are reasons for grave concern. The embers from one sectarian clash hardly cool before the next spark is ignited. The Hindu uprising that destroyed the mosque in Ayodhya and the bloody siege at the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar compete with images of the charred corpses of Hindu pilgrims in railcars in Gujarat and the burning parapets of Mumbai's stately hotels. Each of these becomes the justification for yet another round of bloody reprisals and increasingly inflammatory political demands. And yet, the very survival of Indian democracy continues to offer its greatest hope. Despite the violence, Indian pluralist politics has given voice and legitimacy to a welter of demands and preserved relative peace in this multiethnic nation. As one

observer notes in praise of Indian democracy, "All politics is local, and India has an awful lot of localities."²³

NOTES

1. The Indian Constitution identifies 18 official or "scheduled" languages. A massive investigation conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India from 1985 to 1992 identified 75 "major" languages and 325 distinct languages. See www.ansl.gov.in/people_india.htm (accessed 18 July 2008).
2. Stanley Wolpert, *India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 14.
3. For a careful and thorough discussion of the caste system, its origins, evolution, and social and political consequences for India, see Susan Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India: Caste, Society, and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
4. Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. xi.
5. Wolpert, *India*, p. 55.
6. Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).
7. V. S. Naipaul, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (New York: Penguin, 1990).
8. For a useful historical comparison of democracy and authoritarianism in India and Pakistan, see Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
9. Wolpert, *India*, p. 212.
10. "Battling for the Family," *Economist*, 27 September 2007.
11. Bhagwan D. Dua, "Presidential Rule in India: A Study in Crisis Politics," *Asian Survey*, 19 (June 1979), pp. 611–26.
12. Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman, "Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States," *The American Political Science Review*, 92 (June 1998), pp. 329–42.
13. The following comparisons are taken from Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, "New Dimensions of Indian Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (2002), pp. 52–66.
14. See Freedom House's 2008 Indian Country Report at <http://www.freedomhouse.org> (accessed, 14 January 2009).
15. Arun Shourie, "Two Concepts of Liberty," *Economist*, 3 March 2005.
16. Kesavan Mukul, "India's Embattled Secularism," *Wilson Quarterly*, 27 (Winter 2003), p. 61.
17. Mukul, "India's Embattled Secularism," p. 63.
18. "Battling the Babu Raj," *Economist*, 6 March 2008.
19. Edward Luce, *In Spite of the Gods* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), p. 78.
20. A number of the comparative figures for China and India in this and subsequent paragraphs are drawn from "The Tiger in Front," *Survey: India and China, Economist*, 3 March 2005.
21. Wolpert, *India*, p. 235.
22. Ishiaq Ahmed, "The 1947 Partition of India: A Paradigm for Pathological Politics in India and Pakistan," *Asian Ethnicity*, 3 (March 2002), pp. 9–28.
23. "A Tarnished Triumph," *Economist*, 26 July 2008, p. 49.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

- Amritsar** Northern Indian city and location of the Golden Temple, Sikhism's holiest shrine.
- Ayodhya** North-central Indian city where Babri Mosque was destroyed in 1992.
- Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)** Indian People's Party; Hindu nationalist party that governed from 1998 to 2004.
- caste** Hindu hereditary social groupings.
- Center** Term referring to India's national government and its capital in New Delhi.
- Dalits** "Suppressed groups"; formal name of India's outcastes.
- emergency rule** Right of Indian national government to suspend the constitution by declaring martial law.
- Gandhi, Indira** Indian prime minister (1966–1977; 1979–1984) and daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Gandhi, Mahatma (Mohandas K.)** Indian nationalist and leader of the Indian independence movement.
- Gandhi, Sonia** Italian-born wife of Rajiv Gandhi and leader of the Indian National Congress Party.
- green revolution** Technologically enhanced crops and cropping methods that dramatically improved production in India during the 1960s and 1970s.
- Gujarat** Western Indian state in which Hindu-Muslim violence broke out in 2002.
- Hindi** One of two national languages in India.
- Hinduism** India's dominant religious tradition.
- Hindutva** "Hindu-ness"; Hindu nationalism.
- House of States** Upper house of Indian parliament, representing India's twenty-eight states and seven territories.
- House of the People** Lower and more powerful house of Indian parliament.
- import-substitution industrialization** Mercantilist strategy of development in which local production is protected from imports.
- Indian National Congress (INC)** Major Indian political party, began as leading organization of Indian independence movement.
- Kashmir** Contested region in northern India claimed by both India and Pakistan.
- Kerala** Southwestern Indian state governed by Communists, famous for its high rates of literacy, low rates of fertility, and population growth.
- license raj** India's highly bureaucratized and politicized mercantilist system of licenses, permits, and quotas governing virtually all aspects of the economy.

Modi, Narendra Successful and controversial BJP chief minister (governor) of the state of Gujarat.

Mughals Muslim invaders who ruled India for several hundred years beginning in the sixteenth century.

Muslim League Indian Muslim independence organization.

nabob game Strategy of British East India Company for controlling India by setting up puppet Mughal governorships, or nabobs.

Naxalism Radical Maoist (or guerrilla Communist) insurgency in India.

Nehru, Jawaharlal India's first prime minister (1947–1964) and successor to Gandhi as leader of the INC.

outsourcing Moving the production of goods and services to another country to take advantage of cheap labor or other savings.

partition Creation of the new states of Pakistan and India from the South Asian British colony of India in 1947.

presidential rule State-level equivalent of emergency rule in India in which the national government takes temporary control of a state by imposing martial law.

raj Hindu word for *rule*.

Sepoy Mutiny 1857–1858 failed revolt against the British, sponsored by the Indian aristocracy and carried out by sepoys, or Indian soldiers employed by the British.

Sikhism Indian religious tradition combining elements of Hindu and Muslim beliefs.

Singh, Manmohan Prime minister of India (2004–present).

untouchables India's outcaste groups, including those who traditionally performed “unclean” duties and tribal aboriginals.

WEB LINKS

GOI Directory of Indian government Web sites goldirectory.nic.in
Government and Politics of South Asia: South and Southeast Asian Studies, Columbia University Libraries

www.columbia.edu/cu/web/indiv/southasia/cuvl/govt.html

India Democracy www.indiademocracy.com

A nonprofit, pro-democracy site facilitating communication between citizens and elected representatives.

Outlook outlookindia.com A popular weekly newsmagazine.

Parliament parliamentofindia.nic.in

The Times of India timesofindia.indiatimes.com

10 IRAN

Head of State: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (since June 4, 1989)

Head of Government: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (since August 6, 2005; declared winner in a disputed election, June 2009)

Capital: Tehran

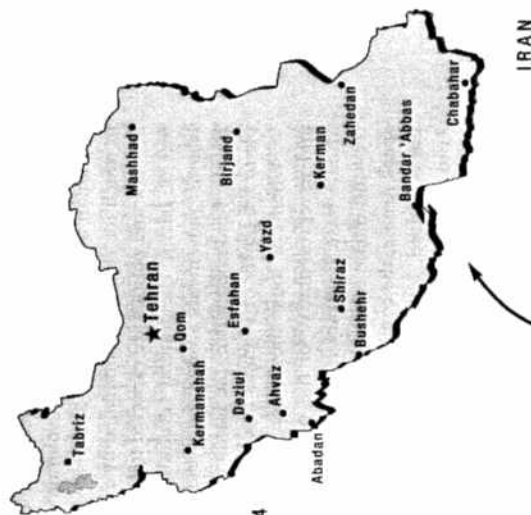
Total land size: 1,648,000 sq km

Population: 66 million

GDP at PPP: 753 billion US\$

GDP per Capita at PPP: \$10,600

Human development index ranking: 94



IRAN

