

TOWARD MODERATE PLURALISM: POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

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Since its independence in 1947, India has maintained its democratic institutions, except for a brief period of 19 months between 1975–77. Elections have become deeply institutionalized and are now the widely accepted way for parties to come to power and form governments. Since the first universal-franchise elections were held in 1952, 12 more elections for the central parliament have been held, as have many more elections for the various state assemblies. Between 1947 and 1999, power has been transferred peacefully to competing political parties seven times at the central (federal) level. Since 1967, the state and central governments have often been formed by different parties. Since 1977, incumbent governments at both levels have repeatedly been thrown out of power. Newspapers have always been free of government control, and television has been free since 1991. Subjecting the government of the day to unsparing scrutiny is viewed as a matter of right by journalists. The judiciary has on the whole maintained institutional autonomy, though it has periodically been pressured to follow the wishes of the executive. The election turnout has continued to climb, at times exceeding turnouts in several advanced Western countries, including the United States. Starting with 45.7 percent in the first general elections in 1952, the turnout grew to more than 60 percent in the 1990s.¹

India's political parties are viewed as both the heroes and villains of the country's democratic experiment. Without their ingenuity, citizen mobilization, and vigorous participation, the democratic system obviously would not have worked. But they are often also accused of

weakening the democratic vigor of the country by practicing "immoral politics," raising funds illegally for campaigns, rarely caring for the poor except in rhetoric, and embracing only instrumental short-term benefits and shunning long-term perspectives on national welfare. On the whole, however, there has been no serious argument against the principle that elections in which political parties freely contest one another should decide who the country's rulers ought to be.

A meaningful discussion of India's political parties and party politics requires that we view both against the backdrop of the nation's salient social cleavages. It is difficult to cram Indian materials into the conventional concepts of parties and party systems developed with West European parliamentary systems in mind. India's extraordinary social diversity and complexity—regional, linguistic, ethnic, religious, economic, and, most distinctively, caste—create multiple and cross-cutting cleavages. Even though India's political institutions are the same as those of many Western democracies (a parliamentary system, a first-past-the-post, or FPTP, electoral system, single-member electoral districts, and federalism), the country's social diversity powerfully influences the evolution of the party system and the political and organizational behavior and electoral strategies of political parties, generating results that are quite different from other parliamentary federal systems.

India's social diversity thus forms the organizing theme of our chapter. How do India's multiple, cross-cutting lines of diversity, in light of the country's federalism and first-past-the-post elections, shape its party politics? Together, the diversity and institutional features of the polity have created an increasingly *plural*—but not sharply *polarized*—party system at the national level. They have also led to a wide and often confusing array of political parties. The system, however, is marked by what Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph have called a persistent centrism.² India's pluralism is of a moderate variety, not one of unmanageable extremes that might take the polity toward disintegration. It tends to moderate extreme centrifugal tendencies, forcing parties and groups to compromise.

In this chapter, we discuss three aspects of India's party politics: the impact of a first-past-the-post electoral system and federalism on political parties; changes in the nature of the party system from a one-party-dominant system to moderate pluralism in the presence of multiple, cross-cutting cleavages; and changes and continuity in the nature of major political parties since 1947. For focus and brevity, we will concentrate on four of the most important national parties: the Congress party, which has ruled India for much of its independence since 1947; the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has become the biggest party in India in the second half of the 1990s; the Janata family of parties, which has been the third most important political force since 1977, but has also shown signs of disunity and disintegration; and finally, the communist left. Although it is small, the communist left has persisted

TABLE 1—INDIA'S RELIGIOUS PROFILE

RELIGIOUS GROUP	% OF POPULATION
Hindus	82.0
Muslims	12.1
Christians	2.3
Sikhs	2.0
Buddhists & Jains	1.2

Source: Census of India, 1991.

and become politically more important, as no one party can any longer dominate the political landscape and form a government on its own. In the more competitive political marketplace of India today, even small players can carry some weight.

In order to set our political discussion in context, we begin with a description of India's social diversity and its main cleavages. In the next section, we will ask why India does not develop a two-party system, which one would theoretically expect from Duverger's law. In the third section, we will describe the changes that have occurred within the party system. In the fourth section, we will discuss the historical evolution, character, ideology, social base, and organizational features of the major political parties—the Congress party, the BJP, the Janata family of parties, and the communist left. Finally, we will pull the various threads together in the conclusion.

Social Pluralism

India has been called the most socially diverse country in the world, with four cleavages—religious, linguistic, caste, and tribal—often noted. These cleavages give a good sense of the larger diversity.

India's religious tapestry is composed of Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, and (pre-Islamic Persian) Zoroastrianism, of which Hinduism and Islam have the largest followings (see Table 1 above). Numbering more than 110 million in 1991 and spread virtually all over the country, Muslims constitute India's biggest minority, though their absolute numbers, in relative terms, amount to only 12.1 percent of the population. Though a smaller minority overall, Sikhs are a majority in one state, and Christians a majority in some smaller states. There is also a Muslim-majority state, Jammu and Kashmir.

The linguistic mosaic is even more varied: Twelve languages are spoken by more than 5 million people each (see Table 2 on the facing page), and another four languages by more than a million each. Since Indian federalism is linguistic, most languages, though not all, have a state of their own, which essentially means that the official language of each state is spoken by a majority of its inhabitants. Each state in the federation thus not only is a linguistic homeland but also contains a linguistic diaspora.

Racial diversity is present, though it has virtually no importance in politics. The tribal-nontribal distinction primarily calls attention to the approximately 8 percent of India's population, excluding Jammu and Kashmir, that lives in central and northeastern India, is itself racially

TABLE 2—LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY MORE THAN 5 MILLION PEOPLE EACH (1991)

LANGUAGE	PERSONS SPEAKING AS MOTHER TONGUE	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION
Hindi	337,272,114	39.85
Bengali	69,595,738	8.22
Telugu	66,017,615	7.80
Marathi	62,481,681	7.38
Tamil	53,006,368	6.26
Urdu	43,406,932	5.13
Gujarati	40,673,814	4.81
Kannada	32,753,676	3.87
Malayalam	30,377,176	3.59
Oriya	28,061,313	3.32
Punjabi	23,378,744	2.76
Assamese	13,079,696	1.55

Source: Census of India, 1991.

diverse, and is heavily dependent on forestlands for livelihood. The tribals have a new name in independent India, the Scheduled Tribes (STs), which essentially means that they are listed in a separate schedule of the constitution for affirmative action.

Of all the social cleavages in India, caste distinctions are the most varied and confusing. Caste is a defining feature

of the Hindu social order. In its pristine purity, which goes back centuries, this social order consisted of a three-fold hierarchy based on birth, amounting to an ascriptive division of labor. At the top were the priests and scholars (the *Brahmins*), the warriors (the *Kshatriyas*), and the businessmen (the *Vaishyas*). Peasants, artisans, and servicemen were the lower castes of the second category (the *Sudras*). A third category, the "untouchables," existed at the bottom of the hierarchy, effectively outside the caste system. Each caste had different rights and privileges; the lower the caste, the fewer the privileges. After independence, the first category (the *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, and *Vaishyas*) came to be known as the upper castes, and the third category (the "ex-untouchables") as Scheduled Castes (SCs). The second and middle category (the *Sudras*) was given a new name—the "other backward castes" (OBCs). Numerically, upper castes today constitute roughly 17.6 percent of the population, the SCs about 16.5 percent, and the OBCs 43.7 percent (see Table 3 on the following page).

How did independent India seek to attack this vertical hierarchy? Reserved quotas in political representation (both in federal and state legislatures), public employment, and institutions of higher education constituted the first track. Only those placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, however—the ex-untouchables (now SCs) and the STs—were given the benefits of affirmative action. These two groups made up 22.5 percent of the total population. As a result, 22.5 percent of the openings in public sector jobs, educational institutions, and legislatures were reserved for the SCs and STs.

The OBCs were originally excluded from the list of beneficiaries. There were two arguments: that the untouchables and tribesmen, not the OBCs, had historically suffered the worst indignities; and that the OBCs, constituting more than 40 percent of the population, had numbers on

TABLE 3—INDIA'S CASTE COMPOSITION

GROUP	% OF POPULATION
Upper Castes	16.1
Lower Castes	43.7
Scheduled Castes (SCs)	16.5
Scheduled Tribes (STs)	8.1
Non-Hindu Minorities	17.6

Note: Since no caste census has been taken since 1931, these figures should be seen as best guesses, not exact estimates. They are sufficient to show the overall magnitudes, however. Also, the upper castes in this calculation include the "dominant castes" that are no longer considered deprived, even though they were ritually not placed in the upper category. *Sources:* Government of India, *Report of the Backward Classes Commission*, vol. 1, 1st part (Mandal Commission Report, 1980), 56; and Census of India, 1991.

affirmative action to the OBCs. An OBC quota of 27 percent, the Commission said, should be added to the 22.5 percent already reserved for ex-untouchables and tribesmen. Half of public employment and half of the seats in higher-education institutions would thus be reserved, and nearly 67 percent of India would be eligible for such reservations. It is this group—the OBCs, the SCs, and the STs—that today's "lower caste" parties have mobilized as a new political constituency. They are not fully united for reasons outlined below, but they are on the whole no longer under the control of upper castes.³

How Political Institutions Have Shaped Parties

Against the background of social diversity summarized above, what are the effects of a first-past-the-post system and federalism on the evolution of party politics nationally and in the states?⁴ Duverger's law—that the FPTP system would inevitably lead to a two-party system⁵—is gradually working itself out at the state level in India, creating two-party or two-alliance systems in an increasing number of states, but it is not leading to a similar outcome at the national or central level.

Table 4 on the facing page summarizes the vote shares of the various leading parties since 1952. In the first five national elections (from 1952 to 1971), India had a one-party-dominated multiparty system in which the Congress party received a plurality of more than 40 percent of the vote, while the second-largest party could win only about 10 percent. This gap enabled the Congress party consistently to win a majority of parliamentary seats. In 1977, however, the party lost for the first time to an alliance of almost the entire opposition. In 1980 and 1984, the Congress recovered its position, but the opposition consolidated into larger chunks. In the 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, and 1999 elections, the Congress plurality

their side, and could use their numbers to influence the distribution of political power in a democracy. In southern India, for example, the OBCs used their numbers democratically to challenge, and later overthrow, the political hegemony of the *Brahmins*. In the 1970s, faced with pressures from below, the government constituted the Mandal Commission to investigate afresh whether affirmative action should cover the OBCs as well. In 1980, the Commission gave its report, recommending the extension of

TABLE 4—VOTE SHARES OF SIGNIFICANT PARTIES, 1952–98 (PERCENTAGES)

PARTY	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999
CONGRESS SPLINTERS													
Congress	45.0	47.8	44.7	40.8	43.7	34.5	42.7	48.1	39.5	36.5	28.8	25.8	28.3
Congress (O)												2.4	2.6
Trinamul Congress					10.4							1.4	0.6
TMC											2.2	1.4	1.6
HINDU NATIONALIST													
BJP	3.1	5.9	6.4	9.4	7.4			7.4	11.5	20.1	20.3	25.6	23.8
Shiv Sena											1.4	1.8	1.6
LEFT PARTIES													
CPI	3.3	8.9	9.9	5.0	4.7	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.0	1.8	1.5
CPI(M)				4.4	5.1	4.3	6.1	5.7	6.5	6.2	6.1	5.2	5.4
ANCESTORS OF JANATA FAMILY OF PARTIES													
PSP	5.8	10.4	6.8	3.1	1.0								
SSP	10.6		2.7	4.9	2.4								
Swatantra			7.9	8.7	3.1								
Janata Party						41.3	19.0						
Janata Party (Secular)						9.4							
Lok Dal (1984)								5.6					
JANATA FAMILY, POST 1989, MAIN FACTIONS													
Janata Dal									17.7	11.8	8.1	3.2	0.9
Samajwadi										3.4	2.9	5.0	3.8
RJD												2.7	2.8
Biju Janata Dal												1.0	1.2
Samata Party												2.2	3.1
BSP												3.6	4.2
MAIN REGIONAL PARTIES (last two are Tamil Nadu parties)													
Akali Dal									3.3	3.0	0.8	0.8	0.7
TDP									1.5	2.0	3.0	2.8	3.7
AIADMK									2.3	1.6	0.6	1.8	1.9
DMK											2.2	1.5	1.7

Party Acronyms: CPI: Communist Party of India; CPI(M): Communist Party of India (Marxist); PSP: Praja Socialist Party; SSP: Samyukta Socialist Party; BSP: Bahujan Samaj Party; TDP: Telugu Desam Party; AIADMK: All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam; DMK: Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam; TMC: Tamil Maanila Congress; WBTC: West Bengal Trinamul Congress; Congress (O): Congress (Organization); RJD: Rashtriya Janata Dal

Notes: 1) The Congress (O), TMC, and WBTC are all sometimes Congress splinter groups; WBTC is currently allied to the BJP. 2) The PSP, SSP, Swatantra, Congress (O), Janata Party and its 1980 splinter, Janata Party (Secular), and Lok Dal are all ancestors of the Janata family of parties of the post-1989 period, which encompasses the Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party, RJD, and Biju Janata Dal. The Samata Party is also a Janata Dal offshoot, but is presently allied to the BJP. 3) The TDP (Andhra Pradesh regional party), AIADMK, DMK (Tamil subnationalist), Akali Dal (Sikh subnationalist, Punjab-based), and Shiv Sena (Hindu nationalist, Maharashtra-based) are significant regional parties. 4) Janata Dal in 1999 denotes the Janata Dal (Secular), while Samata Party in 1999 denotes Janata Dal (United). 5) In general, vote shares for smaller parties are given only for those years in which they are significant or in which the parties are significant for the formation and survival of governments. 6) Earlier names of the same parties, for example, of the BJP, are omitted in the interest of brevity. *Sources:* David Butler, Ashok Lubhi, and Pranay Roy, *India Decides: 1952-1991* (New Delhi: Living Media India Limited, 1995) for 1952-91 data. See also Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1996, to the Eleventh Lok Sabha, Vol. 1 (National and State Abstracts)*, and *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1998, to the Twelfth Lok Sabha, Vol. 1 (National and State Abstracts)*, and *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1999, to the Thirteenth Lok Sabha, Vol. 1 (National and State Abstracts)*, for 1996, 1998, and 1999 data; V. B. Singh, ed., *Elections in India*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994) for data on TDP, AIADMK, and DMK only for 1989 and 1991.

fell to 39.5 percent, 36.6 percent, 28.7 percent, 25.9 percent, and 28.3 percent, respectively—short of the figure needed for a seat majority—resulting in hung parliaments. Simultaneously, the vote shares of the second party or alliance and the third party or alliance rose, thereby narrowing the gap and making the system more competitive. The trend in vote shares has inevitably led to the decline of the hegemony of the Congress party: In terms of vote shares, the party retained its first-place standing even in the 1998 and 1999 elections (its two worst ever), but by less than a 1 percent and 4.6 percent margin, respectively. As Table 5 on the following page shows, in terms of parliamentary seats (a total of 545), it came second in 1996 (with 140 seats to the BJP's 161), in 1998 (with 141 to the BJP's 182), and in 1999 (with 114 to the BJP's 182).

The state-level party system has evolved into a two-party system in most cases, or at least a two-alliance system. In all states except three (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Karnataka), the party systems have become bipolar.⁶ It is, however, a situation of “multiple bipolarities”—with different pairs of parties/alliances dominating in different states. The pattern is as follows: Congress versus the Left Front (West Bengal until 1996, Kerala, and Tripura); Congress versus the BJP (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, and Delhi); Congress versus Janata Dal (Orissa and Karnataka, until 1996); Congress versus the regional party (Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam until 1996, and the northeastern rim states except Tripura); Congress versus the regional party/BJP alliance (Maharashtra in the 1990s, Punjab since 1997, Haryana since 1996, and Orissa since 1998); and one regional party versus another (Tamil Nadu). Electoral victories nationally depend on state-level swings, which can go in opposite directions even in adjacent states.

These results only partially confirm Duverger's law, supporting it at the state level but not at the national level. Why is that so? Let us begin with why Maurice Duverger thought first-past-the-post would lead to a two-party system, and then discuss why India differs from that law-like expectation. According to Duverger, the “mechanical effect” and the “psychological effect” are the two mechanisms responsible for the decimation of third parties and the emergence of two-party systems under FPTP. The mechanical effect is simply that under FPTP, those parties getting above a certain percentage of the vote tend to get overrepresented in terms of seats, while those falling below a certain percentage remain underrepresented or get no seats at all, leading to their eventual disappearance. The psychological effect refers to “sophisticated” (or strategic) voting: Citizens over time vote not for their first preference overall, but for their first preference among parties that have a realistic chance of winning, making the party of second preference triumphant over the least-liked party. In other words, voters do not wish to “waste” their votes on parties with no chances of winning, even if these parties

TABLE 5—BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP) AND INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (INC) IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS, 1952–98

ELECTION YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL VOTE		SEATS WON IN THE LOK SABHA		TOTAL SEATS
	INC	BJP	INC	BJP	
1952	45.0	3.1	364	3	489
1957	47.8	5.9	371	4	494
1962	44.7	6.4	361	14	494
1967	40.8	9.4	283	35	520
1971	43.7	7.4	352	22	518
1977	34.5		154		542
1980	42.7		353		542
1984	48.1	7.4	415	2	542
1989	39.5	11.5	197	86	543
1991	36.5	20.1	232	120	543
1996	28.8	20.3	140	161	543
1998	25.8	25.6	141	182	543
1999	28.3	23.8	111	182	543

Note: Until 1980, the BJP was known as Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS). The BJS merged with the Janata coalition in 1977 and 1980, making it impossible to derive good estimates of its popular vote.

Sources: See Table 4 on p. 211.

best represent their wishes and preferences. Over successive elections, according to Duverger, these two effects would lead to the gradual emergence of two-party systems in FPTP systems.

Some anomalies became evident soon after the law was proposed. Canada and India, for example, had more than three parties, despite FPTP. To explain the anomaly in Canada—a multiparty system that uses the FPTP

electoral formula—Douglas Rae modified Duverger's theory by arguing that FPTP in the presence of federalism could result in a multiparty system nationally.⁷ The capture of provincial-level political power, Rae suggested, was a sufficient incentive for the formation of regional parties. Once regional parties were in the electoral contest as one of the two leading parties in a state or province, the “sophisticated” voter would desert the weaker of the two national parties and vote for the regional party likely to defeat the stronger national party in the state or province. This process would thus keep regional parties alive, allowing them to become third parties nationally.

In an attempt to explain a second major anomaly—the one-party-dominant system of India until 1971—William Riker refined the argument further.⁸ He introduced the concept of the Congress party as a Condorcet winner (a party able to defeat any other party in a pairwise contest because it occupies the median of voters on the ideological spectrum). Such a party's dominance is helped by “sophisticated” voting on the part of those who, on the other side of the ideological spectrum, would vote against its principal local opponent. Riker also argued that these effects are buttressed by “sophisticated” voting on the part of politicians and donors hoping to purchase influence with likely future governments.

However, as we know from the description above, the Congress-dominated multiparty system did not remain stable. In the five general elections from 1989 to 1999, a multiparty system in which no party won a majority in parliament emerged. Moreover, at the state level, two-party or two-alliance systems have gradually stabilized. How does one account

for this? Several potential explanations are possible. One is to note that the Congress party was never, or gradually ceased to be, a Condorcet winner at the state and constituency (electoral district) level.⁹ A second explanation, linked to our central theme of diversity, is to identify a misspecification in Riker's Condorcet winner argument: There is not one (typically left-to-right) ideological spectrum in India, but a multiplicity of social-cleavage-based political polarities, with complex state- and substate-level variations. A third explanation draws on Riker's category of "disillusioned" voting—that is, the larger and more ideologically diverse a party is, the more likely its voters are to desert it for other or new parties, since, employing coalition theory, such a party would generate more internal tensions over spoils and policy.

A fourth explanation, building upon the first three, would be that once rival and new parties have gained strength from such "disillusioned" voting, the federal system would strengthen state-based third parties as in Rae's argument, even as they generate two-party systems at the state level by the logic of the mechanical and psychological effects. These state-level two-party systems would tend to consist of the Congress party and a state-based party, which could vary widely from state to state. The net result would be a national multiparty system rather than a national two-party system. The beneficiaries of "disillusioned" voting are a multiplicity of state-based opponents, rather than a single national opposition party. In short, the effects of federalism and FPTP, in the presence of each other and of India's social diversity, can result in two-party (or two-alliance) systems at the state level, and, at the same time, in an undominated multiparty system nationally.

To summarize, the FPTP system tends to encourage strategies to aggregate votes, at least locally, as this is necessary to win seats. It also tends, for the same reasons, to encourage strategies to aggregate votes at the state and national levels. In a country where there is considerable heterogeneity at constituency levels as well as at the national and state levels, all parties are under pressure to adopt broad social-coalitional strategies and appeal, including even ideological parties of the right (like the BJP) and the left (like the communist parties). The growth of the BJP over the past decade has to a large extent been due to a conscious effort to cultivate new social bases among the OBCs, as well as new regional bases in the west, south, and east of the country.¹⁰ Moreover, in 1998 and 1999, new coalition partners of the BJP have included parties that do not subscribe to some of the BJP's core ideological positions. India's diversity produces these pressures on all political parties, especially the more ideological ones.

What Kind of Party System?

That India does not have a one-party-dominant system any more is no longer in dispute. However, the question of how one should characterize

India's current party system remains unsettled. Is it, given the variety of parties, an example of extreme pluralism, or of what we would like to call moderate pluralism?¹¹ By extreme pluralism, we mean a system with highly centrifugal tendencies. By moderate pluralism, we mean a system that, despite many parties and multiple cleavages, has a primarily centripetal or centrist tendency. In such systems, only those parties that put together a coalition of social groups come to power, and extremist ethnic or religious politics are moderated by the coalitional requirements of power. Extreme pluralism, if present, either breaks down, leading to a violent overthrow of the democracy itself (as was the case in the German Weimar Republic), or tends to get politically stalemated (as occurred in Italy). Moderate pluralism, on the other hand, lacks such disintegrative or immobilizing tendencies.

Which category—extreme or moderate pluralism—best describes the developments in India since 1989? The governments formed in 1989, 1990, 1996, 1998, and 1999 have been minority governments or coalitions of multiple parties, the last two of more than ten. (Such coalitions are normally associated with a great deal of political instability.) India has also seen the rise of Hindu nationalist parties, which can be viewed as "anti-system" parties in that they question secularism, a fundamental doctrine of the national constitution. Finally, there has been a great deal of political violence in India since the early 1980s. Given these three factors—the number of parties constituting the governing coalition, the rise of anti-system parties, and the high levels of recent political violence—"extreme pluralism" would seem to be a more fitting description of the recent trends. Is there any one party that can successfully hold the center? Are the Hindu nationalists not pulling votes to the right wing, thereby undermining the well-known centrism of Indian politics? Though it may be tempting, on a quick analysis, to conclude that India is increasingly heading toward a potentially destructive and extreme pluralism, the logic of the country's party politics in fact indicates the emergence of moderate pluralism.

The best way to illustrate the centripetal character of Indian politics is to analyze in detail the electoral fortunes of the BJP. Indeed, the party's antimorality fervor has often been compared to the antisemitism of the German fascists. It was initially argued that the rise of such prejudicial attitudes and tendencies, if not arrested, would create the same problems for Indian democracy as the National Socialists did for the Weimar Republic in the 1930s. It is now widely accepted, however, that the BJP has moderated, at least outwardly, its ideological militancy of the early 1990s, when, among other such incidents, its supporters and cadres tore down a mosque in Ayodhya.¹² In contrast, for the 1998 and 1999 elections, the BJP sought many electoral allies, of which only one (the Shiv Sena) could be described as a right-wing party; the rest were middle-of-the-road parties. Moreover, the so-called National Agenda for Governance drawn to govern the functioning of the BJP-led government, dropped four

major themes of Hindu nationalism: building a temple in Ayodhya; constructing a common civil code, which minorities have strongly resisted; abolishing the National Minorities Commission; and abrogating Article 370 of the constitution, which allows a greater degree of autonomy, at least in principle, to the Muslim-majority state Jammu and Kashmir.

Why has the BJP become more moderate? For one, Hindu nationalism has had a direct confrontation with three well-known constraints of Indian democracy—region, caste, and alliances. To come to power in Delhi, a party needs 272 out of the total 543 seats in the national parliament. The BJP has been popular primarily in India's north and west, which add up to a mere 320 seats in parliament. To make a serious bid for power on its own, the BJP must win 85 percent of the northern and western seats. This has turned out to be quite impossible, due to the fact that all of these states have significantly large anti-BJP parties. In particular, the lower-caste parties of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have caused formidable difficulties for the BJP. Given these obstacles in the north and west, the BJP came to understand that it could not be a serious contender for power in Delhi unless it penetrated the south and the east. That, in turn, required constructing new coalitions, as the theme of Hindu-Muslim disunity has never had the same resonance in the east and the south as in the north and the west. It is therefore not surprising that instead of its earlier zeal to centralize India—which the south and east have always opposed—the BJP today favors “restructuring center-state relations,” giving a “fairer share of central revenues.”¹³

Secondly, as already explained, the lower castes add up to about 67 percent of India (see Table 3 on p. 210). After the awakening and mobilization of these castes, no party seeking power can make arguments for the revival of the caste hierarchy. In recent years, not only have the Hindu nationalists been doing a great deal of social work with the lower castes and tribes—running schools and hospitals, for example—but lower-caste politicians have also been among the fastest rising personnel in the BJP. Accommodating lower castes means allocating legislative, organizational, and cabinet seats partly on the basis of caste considerations, which the Hindu nationalist ideology, strictly speaking, does not permit. Those who are ideologically pure would rather build a united Hindu community without caste, for caste is widely viewed in Hindu nationalist circles as having been the biggest source, historically, of internal disunity within Hinduism. Paying attention to caste in electoral calculations, they argue, can only strengthen caste consciousness, not eradicate it. On the contrary, the moderates argue that without redressing caste inequities, Hindus cannot be united. The ideology of Hindu nationalism thus needs a modern-day, realistic modification.¹⁴

Finally, there is the vote-seats paradox of a first-past-the-post election system. Though one party can win a majority of seats in parliament with a mere 35–40 percent of the total vote, the same 35–40 percent vote can

yield a substantially lower number of seats if: 1) the opposition gets together; 2) a polarization of votes takes place; and 3) the main political adversary concentrates on a critical minimum of constituencies rather than spreading thin, thus getting more votes in those targeted locales rather than more votes overall. It was just this phenomenon that caused the BJP's loss of power in three of the states it ruled after the 1993 state assembly elections.¹⁵ In some states, several parties got together to defeat the BJP; in other states, BJP's destruction of the Babri mosque polarized the vote, increasing the BJP vote but also the anti-BJP vote. As already stated, the Congress party versus the rest used to be the principal electoral axis of Indian politics. Today, it is BJP versus the others.¹⁶ This shift in axis can help the BJP, as it earlier benefited the Congress party, if and only if the anti-BJP vote splits, as was true of the anti-Congress vote prior to 1991.

If polarization means that enough political parties are willing to come together, before or after elections, to prevent the BJP from coming to power, it stands only to hurt the BJP. This was the cause of the BJP's inability to stay in power after the 1996 parliamentary elections. Being the largest party, it was invited to form a government, but within 13 days, the BJP government fell because it could not persuade a majority of elected legislators to its side. The threat of BJP was not so alarming as to produce electoral coalitions, but it was strong enough to generate postelection coalitions to keep it out of power. Learning from this experience, the BJP put together electoral coalitions for the subsequent 1998 and 1999 elections. This strategy finally produced a BJP-led government, but an alliance for power also necessitated ideological moderation: Those ideologically pure postures that were unacceptable to alliance partners had to be dropped.

To summarize, given the social diversity of India and the marginal relevance of the Hindu-Muslim cleavage in the politics of the south and the east, the BJP has had to make compromises and head toward a center-right position in order to come to power. The system required putting together regional, caste, and religious alliances. If the party had let the extreme right dominate, ideological purity might have been achieved, but the resulting polarization of party politics would have brought the non-BJP parties together, making it difficult if not impossible for the BJP to come to power. Despite the many changes in Indian politics since 1947, ideological centrism remains its center of gravity. There is a large enough space for a center-left or center-right coalition in Indian politics, but not for the extreme right or the extreme left. Only inconceivable exogenous shocks could effectively transform the centrist logic of India's party politics.

Change and Continuity

*The Congress party.*¹⁷ Between 1947 and 1998, the Indian National Congress (previously and henceforth referred to as the Congress party,

or simply Congress) has ruled India for all but seven years. With the exception of 1977, it was the largest party in India for more than four decades after independence, but in the 1996, 1998, and 1999 elections, it lost its leading position—in terms of seats, though not votes—to the BJP. It now holds a mere 28.3 percent of India's vote, whereas in earlier years, its vote share often exceeded 40 percent (see Table 5 on p. 213). The Congress party was founded in 1885 by a group of English-educated Indian lawyers, journalists, businessmen, and other members of the emerging intelligentsia. It gradually grew from a collection of urban-based notables pressing to improve the position of Indians under the colonial regime into a mass movement for independence. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was responsible for this transformation. Influenced by Gandhi's ideas, the Congress became both a party and a mass movement after the First World War, including peasants and workers. It also sought to include all religious communities, castes, linguistic and regional groups, and classes, as well as a variety of ideological strands ranging from soft Hindu nationalism, social conservatism, and pro-native business on the right to radical socialist and near-communist thinking on the left.

The Congress party developed an organizational machinery rooted in nearly all parts of the country. The local notables played a key role, as they controlled the major resources, especially land. Moreover, they were the educated people in a largely poor, illiterate society. Despite the party's encompassing and secular character and its accommodative politics, its major failure during the independence movement was to prevent the rise of alienation among the Muslims of the subcontinent, which led to the growth of the separatist Muslim League and eventually to India's Partition and the birth of Pakistan. It tried to incorporate the Muslims, but it succeeded only partially. In 1947, India had 100 million Muslims; 65 million of them became citizens of Pakistan.

With the partial exception of the Muslims, the Congress was indeed an all-encompassing umbrella party, with an elaborate organizational machinery at the provincial, district, and lower levels. The organization went all the way down to the village level in large parts of the country. It faced parties that were much narrower in social and geographical base, and hence unable to compete with it electorally. These parties at best offered localized challenges.

Internally, the Congress party was a grand coalition of the major political and social forces. What held it together was a set of significant factors: its image as the party that won India its independence; the name recognition and genuine popularity of its leaders, especially Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru; a host of competent provincial stalwarts who had participated in the national movement and managed the party organization at the state level; and an intraorganizational democracy that, however imperfect, allowed all significant voices to be heard,

facilitated internal bargaining and conflict resolution, and accommodated the demands of various groups. Ideologically, the party was centrist, committed to democracy, minority rights, secularism, federalism, and a mixed economy. After independence, it received—and to some extent, won back—the support of the Muslims who had not gone to Pakistan. The Congress party as an internal grand coalition—confronted by a motley collection of smaller, narrower-based parties—was described in its ideal-typical phase (roughly the first two decades after independence) by Rajni Kothari as a “party of consensus” surrounded by “parties of pressure.”¹⁸

At the grassroots level, party membership was open to all who paid nominal dues and were not members of any other political party. This rule opened the party to the masses as primary and active members; the latter category referred to those primary members who qualified by certain criteria of party activism. Above them was a hierarchy of local (subdistrict, or *panchayat*, block), district, state, and all-India Congress committees. The last three were called the District Congress Committees (DCCs), Pradesh Congress Committees (PCCs), and the All India Congress Committee (AICC). At the annual Congress session, held in a different part of the country every year, the delegates were the members of the PCCs. They elected one-eighth of their members to the AICC, to a two-year term. The AICC delegates elected a certain number of their members to the Congress Working Committee (CWC) and the president of the party. Thus at the apex were the party president and the CWC, collectively described as the “high command,” which ran the party at the national level on a day-to-day basis. These structures and the periodic internal elections at all levels facilitated a two-way communication between the leadership and the grassroots level, and resolution of the factional conflict **on personality, caste, and regional, ideological, and other lines of cleavage.**

The organization gradually disintegrated over the issue of “bogus memberships,” as party leaders at all levels—especially the local, DCC, and PCC levels—recruited large numbers of unverifiable members to swell their “vote banks” for party elections. In 1969, there was a big split in the Congress party between the faction led by then-prime minister Indira Gandhi and the leaders in control of the party organization, which led to an organizational crippling of the party from which it still has not recovered. The bulk of the party's office holders in most states stayed with the organizational faction. The organizational stalwarts were opposed to Mrs. Gandhi, but they were not electorally as popular; Mrs. Gandhi used her personal popularity to win national elections and defeat the organizational wing of the party. By the early 1970s, the organizational Congress was decimated in electoral politics, and Mrs. Gandhi's party gradually became recognized as the real Congress party. Charisma tripped organizational coherence.

Confident in her charismatic ability to keep winning elections, Mrs. Gandhi decided to suspend the decades-old organizational principles of the party, in particular the norm of intraorganizational elections. Between 1972 and 1992, the Congress party was progressively turned into what Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond in chapter 1 of this volume call a “catch-all party,” in which office-bearers at all crucial levels were appointed rather than elected by the prime minister and Congress president, both the same person—Indira Gandhi, and later (between 1984 and 1989) Rajiv Gandhi. Party nominations for elections, and increasingly even for state assembly elections, had to be approved, if not decided, by the party high command, specifically Mrs. Gandhi (until her assassination in 1984). The criterion increasingly became one of personal loyalty to the leader above all other considerations. These centralizing tendencies served to weaken the party’s leadership at the state and local levels.

In 1992, after a 20-year gap, organizational elections were finally held. In 1997, they were held again. The latest development in the Congress party is the rise of Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi’s Italian-born widow, now a naturalized Indian. In the 1998 campaign, she sidelined the formally elected party president, who simply could not lead the party organization and had to give in to her rising popularity. In retrospect, it is clear that Sonia Gandhi’s election campaign energized the party organization and prevented a further drift of Congress voters to other parties. After the elections, she was installed by the CWC as both party president and leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, leading to the ouster of the existing party president. In November 1998, her stature rose even further as the Congress party under her leadership and campaign fared extremely well, defeating the incumbent BJP state government in two states and winning the election for the incumbent Congress government in a third state. (There were four state elections in all in November 1998.) In the 1999 elections, however, despite a rise in its vote share to 28.3 percent from an unprecedented low of 25.8 percent in 1998, the Congress party finished with an all-time low of 114 seats. The 1999 elections clearly weakened her political stature.

Sonia Gandhi’s role in the politics of the party is paradoxical. On the one hand, her becoming party president and leader of the Congress parliamentary party in 1998, despite not even having won an election until then, is in line with the long-term deinstitutionalization of the party. However, her declared goal, often stated as party president, has been to rebuild the party organization state by state and at the district levels. At this she has been only partly successful. The coming years will make it clear whether she can translate her remarkable and unexpected popular appeal into organizational rebuilding—and whether the Congress will cease to be a catch-all party. No long-term judgments are possible at this stage. The record in 1998 and 1999 has been mixed: Although the party plunged to an all-time low of 114 seats in the lower house, it

increased its vote share in 1999 and won six state assembly elections in 1998 and 1999, including the important states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and (in a postelection coalition) Maharashtra.

The Congress party’s long-term trend toward organizational decay has been accompanied by a change in party finance and election campaigning styles.¹⁹ Indian laws after 1969 banned company donations to political parties. Since then, there has been an increasing resort to illegal means of raising election funds. In the absence of state funding, the ban on company donations mandated by Mrs. Gandhi left no legal source of large-scale finance for elections, leading to an increasing reliance on kickbacks from licenses and state contracts in a highly regulated economy. The increasingly regulatory policy regime of the 1970s strengthened the political leadership’s hands vis-à-vis the private sector. Mrs. Gandhi’s plebiscitary style of campaigning increased the need for money, devaluing the tradition of door-to-door campaigning. It also led to the centralization of party finance, party-office appointments, and election nominations.²⁰ The increasing reliance on the electronic media, advertising, and whirlwind campaigning accentuated the neglect of the party organization and its year-round grassroots political activity by a multitude of party workers.

The re-legalization of company donations in 1985 made no difference to these trends; by then the system had become too deeply entrenched. Hardly any companies made donations via the legal route for fear of being publicly identified with particular parties and politicians—suicidal in an economy that is still highly regulated, with rapid turnover of the parties in power at the central and state governments. Election finance remains essentially unreformed, despite a reduction in the campaign period to 14 days since the 1996 elections, an increase in the expenditure ceiling for candidates, and the availability of free television and radio time in the 1998 and 1999 campaigns.

The Congress pattern of raising party funds—using the leverage of discretionary regulatory powers at the central and state levels—has been adopted by all of India’s political parties. There have been only a few partial exceptions, especially the BJP and the communist parties. The BJP has historically depended on contributions in relatively small amounts from large numbers of small business supporters, typically raised and spent locally. However, with the rise of the BJP as a major party in the 1990s, its fundraising, though still disproportionately dependent on small business, has shifted toward the Congress pattern. The communist parties function on a relative shoestring budget, dependent on small contributions from party supporters and workers and, reportedly, business contributions mediated by leftist trade unions in states where the communists are in power. Their campaigning, on the whole, is labor-intensive.

The decline of the Congress party has also been due to several social factors. Key segments of the traditional Congress voter base have been

moving to other parties. The first major social constituency to go over to the non-Congress opposition was the emerging rich farmer constituency, largely belonging to “lower castes” or the so-called “middle castes,” in the Green Revolution belt of northwest India. The rising “lower” or “middle” caste peasantry resented the domination of the Congress organization by the “upper” castes.²¹ The second major challenge to Congress dominance came from the regional parties, beginning with the victory of the DMK in the state of Tamil Nadu in 1967. Regional parties have focused on regional or linguistic identity and on demands for greater state autonomy in India’s federal system, which gives extraordinary powers to the central government, including the right to suspend state governments and an overwhelming control over the tax revenue. As the Congress party centralized decision making under Mrs. Gandhi, regional parties gained strength.

The Scheduled Castes (ex-untouchables), constituting 16.5 percent of India’s population, are the third major constituency to move away from the Congress party in several parts of India. Their growing assertiveness and organized political activity in northern India is identified with a new party, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Finally, the Muslims, comprising more than 12 percent of the total population, are the fourth major social constituency to part ways with the Congress party. The alienation of the Muslims began in the late 1980s, when the Congress did not resolutely challenge the rising Hindu nationalist movement, and culminated when the Congress government failed to prevent the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992 by Hindu nationalists. The Muslim vote has gravitated to viable anti-BJP parties where they exist—like the Samajwadi Party and BSP in Uttar Pradesh and the Janata Dal party in Bihar—but has tended to remain with the Congress party in states where it is the only viable anti-BJP formation. Whether the Muslims will return to the Congress party under Sonia Gandhi remains to be seen.

Despite this erosion, the Congress party continues to have a broad, multiclass, multireligious, multicaste, multiregional, and both rural and urban appeal. Its residual base is still probably the broadest among India’s political parties.²² But it is also clear that the Congress failed to absorb and meet the aspirations of newly mobilized interests and identity groups in the way a grand-coalition, umbrella party in a heterogeneous society should ideally be able to do, leading to “disillusioned” voting for new and other parties by voters and a movement away by politicians affiliated with such newly mobilized groups. The Congress party, though much eroded since its heyday of 1947–67, still fits Gunther and Diamond’s description of a “catch-all party” fairly well.

The Bharatiya Janata Party and Hindu nationalism. The BJP eclipsed the Congress as India’s largest party in the 1996, 1998, and

1999 elections. It came to power in March of 1998, though in a coalition of 18 parties, and again in October of 1999, in a preelection coalition of 24 parties. At no point before 1989 did the BJP or its predecessor, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS), receive even one-tenth of the national vote; the average was 6.6 percent. In 1989, this share increased to 11.5 percent; in 1991, to 20.2 percent; in 1996, to 20.3 percent; in 1998, to 25.8 percent; and in 1999, to 23.8 percent (see Table 4 on p. 211). Equally important, support for Hindu nationalism has by now gone beyond the urban trading community, its customary base, to include villagers and the modernized (and modernizing) middle classes.²³ The turning point was in 1991: Hardly known for Hindu religiosity and Westernized in their daily life, nearly 30 retired generals, including a Jewish ex-general, joined the BJP that year, as did a number of former bureaucrats. For a party historically viewed as an obscurantist force, it was a moment of great symbolic significance. Since then, the BJP has enjoyed solid support in most of urban India, receiving 40 percent of the vote in urban areas in its stronghold states in northern and western India. Its support in rural India, though substantial, is not as high.

For any discussion of the BJP, its view of India has to be the starting point. It would be most accurate to describe it as an “ethno-nationalist” party, an example of what Gunther and Diamond call an ethnic party, with its parent organization, the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), sharing features of the fascist party type. It does not fit the description of another of Gunther and Diamond’s categories—the denominational party—for three reasons:

First, Gunther and Diamond characterize the denominational party as not being in complete control of its fundamental ideological principles when it comes to religion: “Interpretation of basic religious beliefs and their applicability to the contemporary world is primarily the function of religious leaders. . . . This can lead to significant intraparty tensions, as when such issues as divorce are placed on the political agenda.”²⁴ In other words, since the basis of the party’s programs is a set of religious beliefs that are determined by a combination of tradition and interpretation by clerics or a religious institution outside of the party itself, the party is not fully in control of its core ideological precepts whenever they are directly linked to religious values. The difficulty with this category with regard to the BJP is that unlike Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, Hinduism has no organized church that is recognized as the authority for positions on such values as abortion, divorce, sexual preference, and artistic expression. Even Hindu personal law on marriage, divorce, property, and the like was codified not by the diversity of Hindu religious leaders themselves, but first by the British, then more fully after independence by Indian politicians in parliament (for example, via the Hindu Marriage Act of 1956). No clerical body has final authority on such matters for all Hindus. It is a religion rooted in doctrinal diversity.

Second, the beliefs of the BJP and RSS—since the mid-1920s for the RSS and since the early 1950s for the BJP (then called the BJS)—were never determined by tradition, by Hindu clerics, or by any outside religious institution. Indeed, the RSS-BJP can be considered a departure from traditional Hinduism. While many religious leaders are prominent in the affairs of the party, they are clearly not dominant. Even the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, or World Hindu Council), a BJP affiliate consisting of religious leaders, is led by nonreligious leaders at the national and local levels. Religious leaders are present in the organization, but it is not clear whether and to what extent they influence decision making, if at all. The VHP, having clerics but not an organized body of clerics, was created in the 1960s and became prominent only in the 1980s. Even after it became prominent, however, clerics have not taken it over; it is led by lay people, with the clerics thrown in here and there. It would be inaccurate, therefore, to say that “the party apparatus is not in complete control of its ‘ideology.’ Instead, interpretation of basic religious beliefs and their applicability to the contemporary world is primarily the function of religious leaders.”²⁵

The third reason that the BJP is best classified as “ethno-nationalist” rather than denominational is that its parent organization, the RSS (although not the BJP itself), shares features of the fascist party types described by Gunther and Diamond. The RSS “detests minorities” that resist “assimilation” (*aikya*), and is not afraid to use violence against them—something that is not at all a necessary characteristic of denominational parties (Christian Democratic parties, for example). The RSS also shares fascist features such as the exaltation of “the nation or race above the individual, . . . intensive indoctrination of members, [and] strict internal discipline.”²⁶ The RSS, however, is not a political party, and the party it is closest to, the BJP, cannot be described in these terms. Since many members of the BJP are also simultaneously members of the RSS, all one can say is that the danger of an antiminority streak is always present in the functioning of the BJP, and is checked primarily by the logic of coalition-building and electoral pragmatism.

For these reasons, the BJP does not fit the denominational party mold—a mold that itself is inappropriate within the context of an unorganized and decentralized religion like Hinduism. As noted above, it is more accurate to describe it as an “ethno-nationalist” party, if not actually yet, then perhaps potentially: To the extent that the BJP promotes a broad Hindu identity in a society where Hindus have always been split across language and caste lines, it resembles an ethnic party, ethnicity being defined in terms of religious-cultural markers. The BJP’s ideological aim is to create a unified, pan-Indian—or even diasporic—Hindu ethnicity. It sees Hindus not primarily as a *religious* group—many BJP workers and supporters may not even be religious, and the founders of the RSS were definitely not—but as a *people/potential nation* with a

broadly common culture that must be molded, or unified, into a consciously Hindu nation by the politics of polarization. This view of the nation is in contrast to the consciously and explicitly diverse, accommodative, and inclusive Indian nation that was created by the independence movement, the Congress party, and the constitution, where one could be Muslim or Christian, for example, without being less Indian. The latter view celebrated “unity-in-diversity,” and never equated “Indian” with “Hindu.”

The two views can be compared to the contrast often drawn between an *ethnic* nation, with fascism as its theoretically conceivable extreme, and a *civic* nation. A telling example of this is the fact that diaspora Hindus, including those holding foreign citizenships, are more acceptable to many Hindu nationalists than are Muslims and Christians living in India and holding Indian citizenship. Many of the BJP’s stances and actions fit the description of what Gunther and Diamond call the “electoral logic of the ethnic party,” that is, “to harden and mobilize its ethnic base with exclusive and often polarizing appeals to ethnic group opportunity and threat.”²⁷ Such deliberately polarizing appeals have often marked the history of the BJP, but not necessarily those of denominational parties.

The BJP is among the most ideologically inclined parties in India and, as should be clear by now, its ideology—known as *Hindutva* (“Hindu-ness” is the closest translation; Hindu nationalism is the closest description)—causes bitter controversy in India. The roots of Hindu nationalism go back to the 1920s, when differences with India’s national movement prompted some to form a new organization and initiate an ideological campaign. Since the rise of the Indian national movement in the 1880s, three competing themes about India—geographical, cultural, and religious—have fought for political hegemony.²⁸ The geographical notion is simply that India has a “sacred geography,” enclosed between the Indus river, the Himalayas, and the seas, and emphasized for 2,500 years since the time of the epic Mahabharata. The cultural notion is that tolerance, pluralism, and syncretism, which means a merging of cultures, define Indian society. India has not only given birth to several religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—but throughout its history it has also regularly received, accommodated, and absorbed “outsiders”—Parsis (Zoroastrians), Jews, and “Syrian Christians” (followers of St. Thomas, arriving apparently as early as the first century; Christianity thus reached India before it reached Europe). In the process, syncretistic forms of culture have emerged and become part of India’s cultural tapestry.²⁹ Apart from syncretism, pluralism and tolerance have also existed, with different communities finding their niche in India and developing principles of coexistence. The religious notion is that India is originally the land of the Hindus, and it is the only land that the Hindus can call their own, a land that has the holy temples, sites, and rivers of the Hindus. Most of India is, and has been, Hindu by

religion—anywhere between 65 to 70 percent in early twentieth-century India and more than 80 percent today. A great deal of internal diversity, both linguistic and caste-based, does exist within Hindu society, but a faith in Hinduism brings the different groups together. India thus viewed is a Hindu nation.

These three themes have yielded two principal attitudes about India's national identity—the secular nationalist and the Hindu nationalist. The former combines geography and culture; the latter, geography and religion. The Congress party has been the prime exponent of secular nationalism in this century, and the BJP (and its predecessor BJS) of Hindu nationalism. The former values India's religious, linguistic, and cultural pluralism, as it is embodied in laws (such as different personal laws of different religious communities and the protection of minority educational institutions) and in political institutions (such as federalism). The latter holds that finding a blending of territory and cultural pluralism is inadequate. The Hindu nationalists argue that emotions and loyalty make a nation rather than politics, laws, and institutions. Laws, they say, can always be politically manipulated. India's pro-minority laws, they contend, have not led to the building of a cohesive nation. Instead, "fissiparous tendencies" have regularly erupted.³⁰ A "salad bowl," as they put it, does not produce cohesion; a "melting pot" does. Rather than running away from Hinduism—the source of India's culture—one should explicitly ground politics in Hinduism rather than in laws and institutions.

The term "Hindu" is further specified by Hindu nationalists in the words of V.D. Savarkar, the ideological father of Hindu nationalism, who gave the following definition in *Hindutva*, the classic text of Hindu nationalism: "A Hindu means a person who regards this land . . . from the Indus to the Seas as his fatherland (*pitribhumi*) as well as his Holyland (*punyabhumi*)."³¹ The definition is thus territorial (the land between the Indus and the seas), genealogical ("fatherland"), and religious ("Holyland"). Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists meet all three criteria, as all of these religions were born in India, and thus all can be included in this definition. Christians, Jews, Parsis, and Muslims meet only two, for India is not their holy land. Can non-Hindu groups be considered part of India? Yes, say the Hindu nationalists, by means of assimilation.³² Of the groups whose "Holyland" is not India, Parsis and Jews are already assimilated, Hindu nationalists argue, having become part of the nation's mainstream. This leaves the Christians and Muslims, who, wrote Savarkar, "cannot be recognized as Hindus. For though Hindustan [India] to them is the Fatherland as to any other Hindu, yet it is not to them a Holyland too. Their Holyland is far off in Arabia or Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smack of a foreign origin. Their love is divided."³³

The Hindu nationalists, therefore, have identified Christians and Muslims as their adversaries. Historically, their anger has been principally directed at Muslims—partly because of their sheer numbers, and partly because a Muslim homeland in the form of Pakistan partitioned India in 1947. Muslims comprised 25 percent of pre-1947 India, and even after the formation of Pakistan, they have been the largest minority, constituting more than 12 percent of the country's population today. The Hindu nationalist claim is not that Muslims ought to be excluded from the Indian nation (although that may be the position of the extremists). Rather, *aikya* (assimilation) is the generic Hindu nationalist argument. That is, to become part of the Indian nation, Muslims must: 1) accept the centrality of Hinduism to Indian civilization; 2) acknowledge key Hindu figures, such as Rama (the mythological king from the 6th century epic *Ramayana*), as civilizational heroes, and not disown them as mere religious figures of Hinduism; 3) remorsefully accept that Muslim rulers of India between 1000 A.D. and 1757 A.D. destroyed pillars of Hindu civilization, Hindu temples in particular; 4) not claim special privileges, such as maintenance of religious personal laws; and 5) not demand special state grants for their educational institutions. To the Hindu nationalists, only via *aikya* can they prove their loyalty to the nation. Maintaining distinctiveness only serves to emphasize that "their love," as Savarkar put it, "is divided."

Of late, the Hindu nationalists have turned their attention toward India's Christians, targeting missionaries in India and attacking churches. This turn appears to be primarily strategic: For reasons identified earlier, the anti-Muslim rhetoric of Hindu nationalism has not worked electorally, having led to alliances between Muslims and the lower Hindu castes. Since the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in December 1992, the BJP's vote share has not increased substantially, whereas the Hindu nationalists had expected that the destruction of the mosque—or at least the movement aimed at it—would polarize Hindus and Muslims, thereby giving the nationalists a solid majority of the Hindu vote and bringing them single-handedly to power. That did not happen. Eventually, the BJP had to make alliances with so many mainstream parties in order to come to power in 1998 that the coalition government could not give voice to the Hindu nationalist vision of India.

In contrast to the 110 million Indian Muslims, India has only about 20 million Christians, constituting 2.3 percent of the total population. They are electorally significant in only a few states, and can therefore be targeted without generating the same type of electoral backlash that anti-Muslim rhetoric triggered. This appears to be the rationale for an increase in anti-Christian arguments (and activity) in the Hindu nationalist camps. Whether this is true will become clear only when the next elections are held, and surveys can tell us if the larger Hindu society was offended by attacks on India's small and quietistic Christian minority.

One source of the BJP's strength is the RSS, the organizational centerpiece of the BJP. Born in 1925, the RSS is not an electoral body. It was founded as a cultural organization that would take the country in a Hindu direction. It recruits at a young age in India's urban neighborhoods. Meeting almost everyday in such neighborhoods, the cadres are trained in ideology, culture, and self-defense. Highly disciplined, the cadres tend typically to develop a lifelong commitment to the ideology. Most of BJP's leaders, though not all, come from an RSS background. The RSS cadres have often campaigned actively for the BJP during elections, and have provided committed manpower.

Another source of the BJP's strength is its base in the small business community. It has never lacked funds, even when it was not faring well. As its popularity has risen, its financial backing has come from leading industrialists as well as from small and medium-size businesses. An additional source of its funding has been the rich Indian diaspora in the United States and Britain. (Why India's diaspora has been so drawn to the Hindu nationalists has not been studied and remains unclear, but the support itself is beyond question.)

The BJP organization has many levels, starting from the village and district levels up to the state and national levels. Internal elections take place regularly, though elections are rarely contested. The emphasis is always on consensus, which the party has been able to maintain with considerable success. Intraorganizational battles did not surface for a long time, and have done so only after the party's growth in recent years. Intraparty differences were traditionally managed out of the glare of publicity, in contrast to the Congress and the Janata parties, in both of which factional fights have regularly erupted quite publicly, leading to splits and defections. As the BJP has grown, however, the latter afflictions have begun to mark its functioning as well. The extremists and the moderates in the Hindu nationalist camp have begun to fight openly.³⁴ As already indicated, most of BJP's state- and national-level leadership comes from an RSS background. But with the BJP's expansion, the gap between the extremist and moderate factions has been increasing. Earlier, all BJP or BJS leaders had an RSS background; today, many without an RSS background have been allowed to join the party and given fairly high positions. To convince the large middle class that it is an increasingly mainstream party, the BJP has recruited film stars, generals, bureaucrats, sports celebrities, and television personalities in large numbers. These high-profile recruits do not have an RSS background.

Will the BJP continue to grow and still maintain its historical cohesiveness? What will happen to its relationship with the RSS as its attempts to reach out to increasingly larger numbers of Indians recruit many more people with non-RSS backgrounds? The BJP is finding it extremely difficult to flatten India's many diversities into a Hindu-Muslim mold, and considerable intraparty dissidence can be easily

predicted. The extremists would try not to give up ideological purity; the moderates know that they can ill afford ideological rectitude, electorally and politically, given the nature of Indian politics.

*The Janata family of parties.*³⁵ On grounds of personality rather than ideology, what was once the Janata party has by now split into so many parties that it is more accurate to describe the entire set as the Janata family—a family that is highly contentious but shares roughly the same ideology. In terms of vote share for the period between 1977 and 1989, the Janata family of parties was collectively the next largest to the Congress party. It lost that position to the BJP, however, in the 1991, 1996, 1998, and 1999 elections. The Janata party was formed by the merger of four leading non-Congress opposition parties at the time of the 1977 general elections, and it has undergone several splits since then. By now, in terms specified by Gunther and Diamond in this volume, all splinter organizations can be called ethnic parties, based essentially on caste, and mobilized through pre-existing clientelistic relations.

The ideological glue of the Janata family is the dual concept of lower caste unity and social justice. The Janata ideology speaks of the hierarchical and unjust nature of Hindu social order, an order in which upper castes have traditionally enjoyed many ritualistic privileges and superior social rank, and the lower castes have suffered many discriminations. An egalitarian restructuring of the Hindu social order is the chief goal of Janata politicians. Caste, they maintain, should not determine whether an individual is treated as an inferior or superior human being. Moreover, according to the Janata ideology, to make up for centuries of caste oppression, affirmative action favoring the lower castes in government jobs and education should be the primary vehicle of achieving social justice. The Janata ideology thus concentrates on India's religious majority, the Hindus. When it speaks of non-Hindu groups, it does so by arguing that both religious minorities and lower castes suffer from discrimination by the higher castes. A lower-caste-minorities alliance, therefore, can be constructed in politics.

The caste-based ideology of politics, by and large, has risen to national prominence only recently. It was successfully used to mobilize the masses in the first half of this century in southern India. In the 1980s and 1990s, it has spread to the north and the west. By focusing on—and reviling—the social hierarchy of Hinduism, the Janata ideology attacks Hindu nationalism. It does not believe in Hindu unity; it would place social justice at the heart of politics, and it seeks to pit the lower castes against the upper castes, whereas the Hindu nationalists would seek their cohesion. Since the lower castes add up to a large plurality, the potential power of lower-caste parties is significant—provided lower caste unity can be achieved.

The roots of the Janata ideology go back to the Congress Socialist

Party of the 1930s, which was a faction within the larger Congress-led national movement. It was village-oriented, favored land reform, and wanted to steer the middle-of-the-road Congress party toward its own ideological ends. After independence, some of the socialists split off from the Congress party to form socialist parties. They disliked the landlord- and upper-caste-dominated functioning of the Congress party at the district and state levels, as well as its promotion of big industry over agriculture. This ideology came to be known as “anti-Congressism” in the 1950s and 1960s. Ram Manohar Lohia was the leading ideologue of these parties.³⁶ He advocated the coming together of all non-Congress parties in a broad anti-Congress alliance, in order to avoid splitting of the non-Congress majority vote, which repeatedly turned the plurality vote of the Congress party into a seat majority. These developments led to the formation of non-Congress coalition governments in several major Indian states in the period between 1967 and 1971, when the Congress lost eight major states to such alliances in the state assembly elections. In the general elections held after the lifting of the Emergency—a 19-month period in 1975–77 in which democratic freedoms and civil liberties were suspended—four non-Congress parties came together to form the Janata party and confronted the Congress with a grand alliance of almost the entire opposition. The elections were a virtual referendum on the Emergency and were tailor-made for such an alliance. The Janata party won a thumping victory with 41.3 percent of the vote and 295 seats (out of 543) in parliament.

That victory notwithstanding, the Janata party was a fractious party composed of incompatible elements, ranging from the Hindu nationalist right to the socialist left. It failed to develop an organization, let alone to conduct party elections. In July of 1979, it split into two factions. In the 1980 elections, the two factions of the Janata party won 19.0 percent of the vote (31 seats) and 9.4 percent (41 seats), respectively, compared to the Congress’s 42.7 percent and 353 seats. After this defeat, the Janata party disintegrated as the Congress party made a comeback under Mrs. Gandhi, and later under Rajiv Gandhi in 1985. In 1989, after an eight-year gap, the Janata party was reborn as Janata Dal, led by former finance minister (and later prime minister in 1989–90) V.P. Singh, and was given a lower-caste-based orientation once again. In the 1989 elections, Janata Dal won 17.7 percent of the vote and 142 of the 543 seats. Soon, however, personality clashes began to rock the party. In 1991, reduced by a split, the rump of the party that retained the name Janata Dal received 11.8 percent of the vote and 59 seats. In the 1996 elections, after another split, the rump that again retained the name Janata Dal won 8.1 percent of the vote and 46 seats. Prior to the 1998 elections, the party had two splits and was more or less decimated. The rump that yet again retained the name Janata Dal got only six seats and 3.25 percent of the vote.

In the 1998 and 1999 elections, an apparent disintegration of the

Janata family of parties took place, with the virtual collapse of the United Front and with several Janata family splinters aligning with the BJP-led coalition of parties. This process had begun in 1996, when the Samata party, a Janata splinter group in Bihar, aligned with the BJP. This party represented a layer of the backward castes just below the uppermost of the backward castes (the *Yadavs*), the process representing fragmentation and infighting within the lower castes. In 1998 and 1999, only the Samajwadi party in Uttar Pradesh, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in Bihar, and a Janata faction in Karnataka remained in the United Front of non-BJP, non-Congress parties. The Samata party in Bihar, the Biju Janata Dal (a Janata splinter in Orissa), the Lok Shakti (another Janata splinter in Karnataka), and the Haryana Lok Dal all allied with the BJP either before or after the elections. The lineup was similar in 1999, except that the remnants of the Janata Dal in Bihar and Karnataka split again, with the major factions allying themselves with the BJP.

Despite the recent fragmentation, though, it is still possible to speak of a loose Janata family of largely lower-caste, rural, and agrarian-oriented parties that are distinct from both the Congress and the BJP for two reasons: First, two of them (Samajwadi and RJD) are significant forces in India’s two largest states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Second, even the Janata family parties in the BJP-led coalition have maintained their distinct identity, rejected the *Hindutva* ideology of the BJP, and (with various regional parties) forced the BJP to shelve the more contentious Hindu nationalist policies in its agenda, acting as pressure groups for middle- and lower-caste interests that have clearly come to stay as a politically self-conscious and assertive (if highly fragmented) constituency, one that parties cannot ignore.

The support base of the Janata family of parties has consisted of small peasant proprietors of the lower castes, whose interests were not adequately represented in the caste coalitions that underpinned the Congress party, and whose demands for social justice, subsequently, were not recognized by the Hindu nationalists. This peasant proprietor base went in different directions in different states in the successive splits suffered by the party: to the Samajwadi party in Uttar Pradesh; to Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar; and to the splinter Biju Janata Dal and BJP in Orissa; as the BJP successfully coopted intermediate-caste-peasant proprietors, playing on their fears of job quotas for some castes and the mobilization of Scheduled Caste landless labor.

The main weakness of the Janata family of parties is and has always been organizational. They have been the most weakly organized of the major political parties in India, certainly compared to the cadre-based left parties and the BJP, but even compared to the mass-based Congress party during its worst periods of organizational decrepitude. Why has the Janata family of parties not been able to put together a cohesive organizational front? Their necessary and aspired-to unity has problems

of both vertical and horizontal nature. The lower-caste platform has its own internal hierarchy, as it includes the lower castes as well as the SCs (the former untouchables). The lower castes were ritualistically higher on the social scale than the ex-untouchables, though both were traditionally below the upper castes. As a result, an internal differentiation within the presumed lower-caste unity has emerged. In some states like Uttar Pradesh, the SCs have openly rebelled against the lower castes, calling them the new oppressors.

There are also problems of horizontal aggregation. The lower-caste upsurge has been fairly effective in putting political parties in power at the state level, but it has had a great deal of difficulty in aggregating coalitions at the national level. Caste, as a concept, exists all over Hindu India, but, as an experience, caste is local or regional. There are “upper” and “lower” castes in all parts of the country, but the lower castes in one state may have little to do with the lower castes elsewhere. Their names, languages, and histories are different. They are all “lower castes,” but they speak different languages, have different levels of education, different deprivations, and different oppressor castes. Similarly, *Brahmins* of the south may not be recognized as such by the *Brahmins* of the north and vice versa; each in their respective settings has traditionally enjoyed high status and ritual privileges, but each tradition may be different. As such, the lower-caste ideology of social justice has a nationwide resonance, but it has not been able to achieve a nationwide aggregation.

Can the lower-caste parties develop greater cohesion? In the best of circumstances, these horizontal and vertical problems would be hard to solve. Personality clashes and reliance on charismatic leaders make the disunity of lower-caste parties even worse, which is exactly why there are so many lower-caste-based parties in the Janata family. And, in conjunction with their being less institutionalized, the Janata family of parties is even less allied to formal civil-society organizations. Their fundraising strategies are very much like that of the Congress party at both the state and central levels, dependant on private contributions and kickbacks on public procurement exacted by the use of regulatory powers.

It may be premature to talk of the death of the Janata family of parties. Although individual parties and splinter groups within this family have gone through rise, decline, and extinction, and some are currently aligned with the BJP, some may still have reasonable prospects in several states. Parties belonging to this family can be said to represent a gradually awakening, country-wide, broad (if inchoate) social constituency, one that finds it extremely difficult to unite in the form of a cohesive organized party, due to state-level variations in agrarian relations and caste structures as well as to particularistic leadership. These stirrings from below are unlikely to fade away.

The Communist parties. The communist left has historically played a

small but important role on the sidelines of Indian politics. The Communist Party of India (CPI), founded in 1920 by a small group of Marxist intellectuals influenced by the Russian Revolution, grew steadily in the years leading up to India's independence. It acquired localized bases among industrial workers and peasants in a few areas, and remained closely allied ideologically to the Soviet Union.

Immediately after independence—and after crushing a communist-led peasant insurrection in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh—the CPI turned to parliamentary politics and contested elections. It emerged as the single largest opposition party in the lower house in the 1952, 1957, and 1962 elections, with 16, 27, and 29 seats (about 3–6 percent of the seats). Its vote share was 3.3 percent, 8.9 percent, and 9.9 percent, respectively. Its principal regional bases were in the states of Kerala, Tripura, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Bihar. The first three of these states continue to be the principal strongholds of the communist left parties; the first two have seen the left parties alternating in power with Congress-led governments; the communist-dominated Left Front has ruled West Bengal continuously since 1977.

In 1964, in response to both domestic and international factors, the CPI split into two parties—the Communist Party of India–Marxist, or CPI(M), and the original CPI. The international factors were the Sino-Soviet split, the post-1956 Soviet line of peaceful coexistence with the West (in contrast to the then-militant Chinese line), Soviet improvement of relations with the Congress government in India, and the India-China border war of 1962. The domestic factors, which were probably more important, were the tensions within the party over its stance toward the ruling Congress party. As a result of the split, the pro-Soviet and relatively more pro-Congress CPI emerged over time as a smaller faction nationally than the initially more radical and more pro-Chinese CPI(M). The latter underwent further splits in 1967, as insurrectionary communist factions formed the CPI (Marxist-Leninist), which in turn broke up further into several factions, most of them electorally insignificant. The CPI tended to back the Congress party, viewing its left-leaning factions and its public-sector-led import-substitution policies as a bulwark against imperialism, representing the national bourgeoisie against U.S.-led transnational capital. The CPI(M) tended to be more strongly anti-Congress, to a large extent because in the states where it was strong and could also form governments, the Congress party was its immediate electoral adversary. Internationally, the CPI(M) assumed a posture of equidistance between the Soviet Union and China. In the late 1970s, the CPI and CPI(M) began to cooperate in left coalitions, along with some minor left parties, initially in West Bengal, subsequently in Kerala and then nationally. Today, the CPI and CPI(M) are organizationally distinct, but they increasingly cooperate for elections and government formation.

The communist left's electoral record since the split has been as

follows. In 1967, the immediate post-split CPI still remained the larger party in votes and seats, but it yielded that position to the CPI(M) in every election thereafter. The combined seats of the CPI(M) and CPI ranged from a low of 28 (in 1984) to a high of 49 (in 1991), or about 5–10 percent of the total seats. Their combined vote percentages have not dropped below 6.9 percent (in 1998 and 1999) and have not risen above 9.8 percent (in 1971). Both seats and votes have been overwhelmingly concentrated in the stronghold states of West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura. The social base of the communist left has been fairly stable: It is strong mainly in the rural areas of some states, among the middle and small peasantry and agricultural labor.

For all practical purposes, India's communist parties are left-of-center parties, following a broad, multiclass, social-democratic reformist strategy. This is especially evident in the past decade, when they unabashedly struck alliances with the Janata-led governments in 1989–90 and again between 1996–98.³⁷ Today, they are more important than ever before in national politics, precisely because hung parliaments and coalition politics magnify their clout in government formation and policy. This is so despite a stagnant (though stable) social base and vote share, and despite the marginalization of class issues in election campaigns, in which the main polarization has been on the issue of secularism between a rising BJP on the one hand and the centrist Congress and Janata family parties on the other.

Is Moderate Pluralism Sustainable?

Will India's moderate pluralism remain stable, or will the country's party system gravitate either toward a two-party system or two-alliance system on the one hand, or toward extreme pluralism on the other? More specifically, will the FPTP electoral system and federalism (and hence multiple bipolarities at the state level), combined with the multiple cross-cutting cleavages of India's social diversity, check the tendency toward a two-alliance and two-party system, nationally? And will the FPTP system's vote aggregation imperative check the tendency toward extreme pluralism inherent in India's remarkable heterogeneity? The answers to these questions will depend on which cleavages remain politically salient, and on whether social cleavages will remain cross-cutting or begin to coincide, resulting in less diversity and more polarity. If any one cleavage—for example, the ideological cleavage on attitudes toward secularism—becomes overwhelmingly salient compared to the others, it may lead to a secular versus *Hindutva* two-alliance polarization. Extreme political fragmentation, were it to emerge at all, is unlikely to be long-lasting, given the vote aggregation imperative of the FPTP system, even under federalism.

In our view, several cleavages will remain politically salient, varying

regionally. Social cleavages will also by and large remain cross-cutting and not coincide. Hence, neither a two-party/two-alliance system nor extreme pluralism is likely to mark the Indian party system in the foreseeable future. Moderate pluralism is the most likely long-term scenario. All three major formations—the Congress, the BJP, and the Janata-left party cluster—will remain internally diverse on economic policy, on caste, and on regional bases. Due to the need to make alliances in electoral competition in a federal first-past-the-post system, it is unlikely that any of the three formations, even the BJP, will develop coherent policy positions on all major issues and a tightly knit, disciplined organization. Moderate pluralism and shifting electoral alliances and coalition governments, combined with moderate internal factionalism within parties, seems the most probable scenario in the foreseeable future.

NOTES

For comments on earlier drafts, the authors wish to thank Larry Diamond, Richard Gunther, and Yogendra Yadav.

1. For a discussion of why India's democracy has lasted so long, see Ashutosh Varshney, "India Defies the Odds: Why Democracy Survives," *Journal of Democracy* 9 (July 1998): 36–50.

2. Lloyd I. and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

3. All population figures in this section are based on the 1991 Census, and all electoral data are derived from reports of the Election Commission of India. See Ashish Bose, *India's Basic Demographic Statistics: 177 Key Tables with Graphics* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corp. 1996), and *Election Commission of India, Statistical Report on General Elections, 1999 to the Thirteenth Lok Sabha*, Volume I, National and State Abstracts (New Delhi: Election Commission of India); see also previous versions of the same report, various years (1952–98).

4. Technically, the first-past-the-post system is the single-member district, single nontransferable vote plurality-rule system, but we use FPTP as a shorthand.

5. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, Barbara and Robert North, trans. (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1963).

6. Bihar has become essentially bipolar, as the Congress party is currently in coalition with the ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal. This is only tactical, though, and the coalition could fall apart at any time. With the decimation of the Janata Dal in 1999, Karnataka too has become bipolarized between the Congress and the BJP-Lok Shakti alliance. A further complication has been the creation of three new states in November 2000—Uttaranchal, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh—carved out of the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, taking the number of states to 28. However, the party systems of these new states are bipolar: Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh are Congress-BJP, and Jharkhand, although fluid, is NDA alliance versus RJD-Congress alliance.

7. Douglas W. Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

8. William Riker, "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law," *American Political Science Review* 76 (December 1982): 753–65.

9. See Pradeep K. Chhibber and John R. Petrocik, "Social Cleavages, Elections and the Indian Party System," in Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy, eds., *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics, Volume 1: Changing Bases of Congress Support* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990). They have pointed out that the Congress party at the state level was not an encompassing umbrella party, but increasingly reflected local social cleavages and was based on particular social constituencies.

10. For a detailed analysis of the BJP's southward and eastward spread, and its "downward" expansion to the lower castes during the 1990s, see Oliver Heath, "The Anatomy of BJP's Rise to Power: Social, Regional, and Political Expansion," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai), 21–28 August 1999, 2511–17.

11. The term moderate pluralism has also been used by Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Our use of the term is different, however: Sartori has in mind a right-left ideological spectrum in the European sense, and moderate pluralism would reflect a left- or right-of-center focus. The European right-left distinction breaks down in India, given that Indian politics is driven less by class-based politics and more by caste, religious, and linguistic cleavages. For further details, see Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox: Essays in Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989).

12. The evidence from the actions and stances of the party and its allied organizations on a wide range of incidents and issues suggests that this outward moderation is something forced by the compulsions of the electoral and party systems, and not due to any change of heart or mind. However, for the purpose of our argument, this moderation, even if only tactical, is evidence enough of the nature of electoral and party-systemic compulsions.

13. *BJP Election Manifesto* (1996), 3–4.

14. For a detailed analysis of caste pressures within the BJP in northern India, see Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Castes in the Hindi Belt," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59 (February 2000): 86–108.

15. For more details, see Yogendra Yadav, "Political Change in North India," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai), 18 December 1993, 2767–74.

16. For elaboration, see Ashutosh Varshney, "Battling the Past, Forging a Future? Ayodhya and Beyond," in Philip Oldenburg, ed., *India Briefing 1993* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993).

17. This account of the Congress party draws on Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970); Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Stanley Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India: Dynamics of One-Party Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968); Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy, eds., *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics, Volume 1*; James Manor, "Parties and the Party System," in Atul Kohli, ed., *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); and Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav, "The United Colors of Congress: Social Profile of Congress Voters, 1996 and 1998," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai), 21–28 August 1999, 2518–28.

18. Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*, 179.

19. Based on extensive interviews conducted by E. Sridharan; see his "Toward State Funding of Elections in India: A Comparative Perspective on Policy Options," *Journal of Policy Reform* 3 (October 1999), 229–54.

20. Further, the amendment of the law governing election expenditure limits in

1975—which effectively made party and supporter expenditure on behalf of a candidate not count toward the candidate's election spending ceiling—removed all effective checks on election expenditure.

21. Paul Brass, "The Politicisation of the Peasantry in a North Indian State" in Sudipta Kaviraj, ed., *Politics in India: Oxford in India Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

22. Yogendra Yadav and Alistair McMillan, "Results: How India Voted," *India Today*, 16 March 1998, especially pp. 49–50.

23. India now claims to have a 200 million–strong middle class. A fairly large segment of the new middle class is believed to support Hindu nationalism.

24. See Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, "Types and Functions of Parties," pp. 3–39 of this volume.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. The discussion of BJP's ideology in these paragraphs relies heavily upon Ashutosh Varshney, "Contested Meanings: Hindu Nationalism, India's National Identity and the Politics of Anxiety," *Daedalus* 122 (Summer 1993): 227–62.

29. Urdu—a language combining Persian and Hindi, written in Arabic script—is a typical syncretistic language, developed under the Muslim rule.

30. Nanaji Deshmukh, *Rethinking Secularism* (Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan, 1989); H.V. Sheshadri, K.S. Sudarshan, K. Surya Narain Rao, and Balraj Madhok, *Why Hindu Rashtra* (Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan, 1990).

31. V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, 6th ed. (Bombay: Veer Savarkar Prakashan, 1989), title page; elaborated further between pp. 110–13.

32. M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1939).

33. V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, 113.

34. Following the controversial attacks on Christians and churches in December 1998 and January 1999, a cabinet minister of the BJP-led government, who has worked with the party throughout his life, resigned and openly accused the right-wing of Hindu nationalism of subverting the functioning of the BJP-led government. Such open confrontation at the highest levels of the party has been quite rare.

35. This account of the Janata family of parties draws on state-by-state accounts of Congress dominance and decline in Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy, eds., *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics*; Francine R. Frankel, "Middle Castes and Classes," in Atul Kohli, ed., *India's Democracy*; and Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, eds., *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order*, vols. 1 and 2 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

36. See Ram Manohar Lohia, *The Caste System* (Hyderabad: Lohia Samta Vidyalyaya Nyas, 1964).

37. The CPI participated in the United Front government of 1996–98, while the CPI(M) supported it from outside.

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