

# Democracy and authoritarianism in South Asia

*A comparative and historical perspective*

---

Ayesha Jalal

*Columbia University*



PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1995

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without  
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1995  
Reprinted 1997, 1998, 2002

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Jalal, Ayesha.

Democracy and authoritarianism in South Asia: a comparative and historical perspective / Ayesha Jalal.

p. cm. – (Cambridge South Asian studies.)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0 521 47271 7 (HC). – ISBN 0 521 47862 6 (PB)

I. South Asia – Politics and government. I. Title. II. Series.

DS341.J34 1995

320.954-dc20 94-17045 CIP

ISBN 0 521 47271 7 hardback  
ISBN 0 521 47862 6 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2004

## Introduction

---

Among the more fascinating themes in contemporary South Asia has been the 'success' of democracy in India and its 'failure' in neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh. Yet studies of democratic politics in India and military dominated authoritarian states in Pakistan and Bangladesh have rarely addressed, far less explained, why a common British colonial legacy led to apparently contrasting patterns of political development in post-independence South Asia. The lacuna in the literature is surprising given the oft-heard scholarly laments about the artificial demarcation of the subcontinent's political frontiers at the time of the British withdrawal. Many historians are coming to question the inclusionary and exclusionary claims of both Indian and Muslim nationalisms and, more guardedly, the appropriateness of the concept of the 'nation-state' in subcontinental conditions. The spatial and temporal artifact that has been the modern nation-state in post-1947 South Asia nevertheless remains inextricably stitched on to the scholarly canvas.

Analyses premised on historical disjunctions, even when acknowledged as arbitrary, tend to emphasize differences rather more than similarities. The loss of a subcontinental vision has not only compartmentalized South Asian historiography but deflected from any sort of comparative understanding of the common dilemmas of the region's present and the interlocking trajectories of its future. While most historians see the dividing line of 1947 as the outer periphery of their scholarly terrain, political scientists take it as an obvious point of entry from where to begin analysing the state-society nexus in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. But the writing of a history of post-colonial South Asian states and polities cannot await the opening of official secrets stored away in ministerial and archival buildings. The orthodoxies of the political science discipline on the other hand have demanded a high degree of conceptualization in attempts to make the inimitable complexities and specificities of the region easily accessible. Yet a conceptualization of contemporary South Asia cannot be so transfigured by ideas of nationalism, the nation-state and territorial sovereignty as to obscure a five-

millennia-old history in which processes of social and cultural fusions vied with and frequently overlaid those of political fissions.

This study straddles the realm of the empirical and the conceptual in an attempt to bridge the gap between the domains of the historian and the political scientist. An interpretative synthesis, it seeks to historicize and conceptualize the defining moment of partition as it has impinged upon and moulded the course of political, economic and social developments in the states which replaced the British raj in the subcontinent. Instead of being a point of departure for ferreting out the 'national' histories of India, Pakistan and, after 1971, Bangladesh, partition and the colonial legacy of which it was a product are key ingredients in the enterprise of comparing and contrasting states and societies in the region. A comparative analysis of the processes of state construction, consolidation as well as the imperative of and resistance to their reconstitution in post-colonial India, Pakistan and Bangladesh is a long overdue exercise. It promises to provide a welter of insights into as well as restore a better balance of perspective on the distinctive and common features of the socio-economic and political problems currently facing South Asian states and societies.

The closing decades of the twentieth century have seen central political authority in each state grappling uncertainly with regional and linguistic dissidence, religious and sectarian strife, class and caste conflicts and a bewildering permutation and combination of all of these. Many of these expressions of discontent are traceable to the pre-independence period, underscoring the lack of convergence between social identities and the frontiers of the post-1947 modern state. Though not unique to South Asia, the assertion of distinctive identities by variously defined social groupings has come to pose the biggest challenge to the dominant idioms deployed to sustain and legitimize post-colonial state structures in the subcontinent. In certain regions where clashes between dissenting social currents and state authority are especially acute, a key defining feature of the modern state has been seriously undermined – its monopoly over the instruments of coercion. With identities spilling across porous frontiers, the acquisition of sophisticated weapons technologies by disgruntled segments of civil society are resulting in stronger linkages between domestic dilemmas and international tensions than ever before.

These developments make the need for a comparative framework capable of analytically breaching exclusive interpretations of modern states and politics in the subcontinent more urgent than ever. The recurrence of the twin dialectics of centralism and regionalism as well as nationalism and religious communalism in the pre- and post-independence eras can help restore a subcontinental perspective. Insofar as the modern 'nation-state' has played a decisive role in shaping these dialectics in the post-colonial era,

its structural and ideational postures must necessarily inform the contours of any comparative framework. In other words, the comparative approach cannot dispense with the construct of the modern nation-state at the analytical level if there is to be a systematic critique of its defining idioms or the structural mechanisms of its relations with diverse social groupings differentiated along regional, linguistic, caste, class and religious lines.

The principal concern of this study, the interplay between democratic politics and authoritarian states, lends itself well to comparative analysis. Given the loose and varied meanings attached to 'democracy' and 'authoritarianism', leaving them undefined might be analytically imprudent and invite a wail of misconstrued readings of the argument. An analytical distinction between a formal and substantive democracy, as well as overt and covert authoritarianism is intended to avoid conflating the empirical and normative aspects of two very broad terms deployed for purposes of historical interpretation. A formal democracy is a genuine democracy insofar as it guarantees, among other things, the right to vote and the freedom of expression. Yet it may not evince all the features of its normative ideal, thus the notion of a substantive democracy. A compound of its formal and substantive meanings, democracy here refers to more than the exercise of citizens' voting rights in elections or even the right to free speech. Though an important feature of democratic processes, elections are only the political manifestation of democratization in the wider social sphere. Democratization's normative or substantive appeal derives from the empowerment of the people, not as abstract legal citizens but as concrete and active agents capable of pursuing their interests with a measure of autonomy from entrenched structures of dominance and privilege. Insofar as dominance underpins any social formation, democratization entails the capacity to resist and renegotiate relations of power and privilege. Authoritarianism is defined as organized power embedded in the institutional structure of the state. It is seen as distinguishable, though not insulated, from the myriad structures of dominance lining the larger body politic. So while an element of covert authoritarianism inheres in any state structure, the degree of its overt manifestation is contingent upon the existence or the absence of formal, much less substantive, democracy.

Far from representing a neat and sharp dichotomy, democracy and authoritarianism are reflective of ongoing struggles between dominance and resistance. Without blurring the distinction between them it is important to acknowledge that they may frequently overlap irrespective of the formal designation of polities and states as democratic or authoritarian. It seems more apt to view democracy and authoritarianism as both antithetical and interdependent historical processes, co-existing in tension while at the same time each informing and transforming the other. The pairing of two con-

cepts, commonly regarded as polar opposites, aims at a more probing historical analysis of the structures of dominance and resistance in sub-continental South Asia. This in turn should allow for a more nuanced appreciation of citizenship rights, not merely political but also economic and social, paving the way for meaningful comparisons between three otherwise distinctive states and societies. The comparative framework for the study rests on an exploration of the intertwined theme of democratic politics and authoritarian states in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh through a periodization of the interactions between political processes and state structures, the former moulded by social and economic dynamics that influence as well as are influenced by the policies, institutional interests and ideological postures of the latter.

Only diehard protagonists of difference as the highest common denominator of the destinies of subcontinental states and polities would deny that democratic representation in India and military dictatorship in Pakistan and Bangladesh have of late beset them with analogous, if not similar, sets of problems and challenges. The end of Congress hegemony in India and eleven years of military dictatorship in Pakistan by the late 1980s saw mainly regionally based political forces challenging and aspiring for, if not actually successfully seizing central state power and, implicitly and explicitly, claiming legitimacy in terms of some variant or other of regionalism or religious majoritarianism. In Bangladesh, an unpopular military regime was forced to pass the mantle to a popularly elected government touting the unifying principles of Islam for the first time in the country's electoral politics to mobilize support amidst growing social conflict and economic crisis. While underlining the need for a major restructuring of relations between state and society, in particular the redefinition of the concept of the centre and the related issues of sovereignty and citizenship, these paradoxically similar results of nearly four decades of democratic and authoritarian rule defy conventional explanations. The overarching question posed by recent developments in India and Pakistan, and in many ways also in Bangladesh, is why – despite the divergent forms taken by their state structures – political and economic developments, and ideological responses to them, are showing ostensible signs of convergence. Any plausible answer would have to investigate the extent to which the divergences were real in the first place and whether the convergences are disguising some qualitative differences. Political, economic and ideological developments in post-independence India and Pakistan, including present-day Bangladesh, are particularly amenable to a comparative analysis. The colonial legacy – institutional, strategic, economic as well as ideological – informed the dialectic between state construction and political processes in critical ways. An assessment of this legacy and its role in articulating relations between state and society in

India and Pakistan, therefore, forms an important pillar of the comparative edifice.

On the face of it, the transition from colonialism was almost as difficult for India as it was for the newly created state of Pakistan. With partition India lost some of its key agricultural tracts and the sources of raw materials for its industries, especially jute and cotton, not to mention a captive market for manufactured products. The division of the assets deprived India of civil and military personnel, as well as of financial resources, complicating the task of resettlement of the millions fleeing East and West Pakistan, to say nothing of the integration of the 562 princely states. Yet India inherited the colonial state's central government apparatus and an industrial infrastructure which, for all its weaknesses, was better developed than in the areas constituting Pakistan. It is true that unlike its counterpart the All-India Muslim League, which had practically no organizational presence in the Muslim-majority provinces, the Indian National Congress had made an impact on the local structures of politics in the Hindu-majority provinces. However, it is an open question whether, in the process of transforming itself from a loosely knit national movement into a political party, the Congress in fact retained its pre-independence advantages over the Muslim League in Pakistan.

A work of this sort has to contend with serious issues of comparability. India's geographical size and an ideal of its unity, albeit largely mythical and symbolic, are often cited as key differences with Pakistan, a fabrication of political necessity split into two parts separated by a thousand miles. Without denying the significance of scale and symbol, it is important not to let the determinisms of political geography and the imaginings of sacred mythology cloud historical analysis. In the absence of an inherited colonial administrative and political structure capable of coordinating its heterogeneous territories, India's size could just as well have been a disadvantage of gigantic proportions. As for the symbols which gave the most explicit expression to the nationalist idiom of Indian unity, these had been so appropriated and altered by autonomous local and regional political economies and cultures as to defy the centralized state's hegemonic project to infuse them with a singular and monolithic meaning.

The intention is not to replace the distinctions of geographic scale and mythic symbol with modern institutional structures, administrative and political, which were colonialism's weightiest imports into India. But the uniquely colonial construct of the centralized state with its institutional underpinnings – an administrative bureaucracy and a standing army in particular – and attendant ideological trappings – ordered unity, indivisible sovereignty and the like – provides common ground for meaningful, if not exhaustive, comparisons and contrasts between political entities of unequal

spatial and temporal proportions. On this view the post-independence adaptations of the colonial concept of the centre, both in its institutional and ideological manifestations, is the strongest cement in a comparative analysis of how processes of state construction in India and Pakistan aided the functioning of parliamentary democracy in one and its abortion in the other.

The apparently statist orientation of the analysis is a product of unease with studies of political processes in post-independence South Asia rather than an implicit critique of society centred approaches. Instead of privileging one over the other the study uses the historical method to unravel the points of interaction between state and society. While the prolonged suspension of political processes in Pakistan has resulted in an obsessive concern with the two main non-elected institutions of the state, the civil bureaucracy and the military, the formalization of democracy in India has fixated attention on the fortunes of a single political party. Yet the supremacy of the military and bureaucracy in Pakistan is inexplicable without reference to the complicitous role of certain dominant social groups in eschewing the politics of resistance to gain privileged access to state authority and patronage. By the same token, the practice of democracy in India cannot be attributed to the changing societal moorings of a political party with no mention of its implications for the overall state structure.

Political scientists writing exclusively on India have been so enamoured by the chequered political history of the premier political party, the Indian National Congress, that they have until very recently neglected to assess its symbiotic relationship with the civil bureaucracy, the police and the military. So although much is known about parties and politics, and more still about the constantly shifting sands of factional alignments in different regions, there is at best an inadequate understanding and critique of the nature of the post-colonial state in India. A focus on the Congress, rising or falling, has seen a succession of political scientists of India writing in a manner reminiscent of the old historians of empire. The themes of awakening and decay, institutionalization and deinstitutionalization, consensual and conflictual politics, dominance and decline, not only obscure the state but give only partial glimpses of the polity, whether commanding or demanding. Unresearched and uncritical eulogies of the Nehruvian era have led some analysts to suggest an ahistorical disjuncture in India's political processes during the late 1960s. Righteous indignation at Mrs Gandhi's personalized and plebiscitary politics, and the ensuing erosion of the Congress's organizational foundations, has obfuscated the ways in which her populist politics might at least in the immediacy have deepened and broadened the party's social bases of support. If preoccupations with a party have coloured perceptions of the larger polity, the extent to which

relations between elected and non-elected institutions influence democratic and authoritarian tendencies within the state has fallen out of view.

The significance of institutional imbalances in establishing the quantum of democracy and authoritarianism has been further obscured by the civil-military dichotomy employed by scholars working within the liberal-democratic paradigm. This approach lumps the administrative bureaucracy on the same side as elected civil institutions in examining civil-military relations. A partnership of elected politicians and non-elected bureaucrats may imbue a democratic dispensation with elements of authoritarianism rooted in the structures of the state. Moreover, a partnership of civilians does not preclude the potential for a conflict of interest between elected representatives or political institutions and the unelected bureaucratic arms of the state in a formally democratic polity. And finally, the civil-military equation ignores the possibility of a nexus between the civil and military institutions of the state in the enforcement of authoritarian rule. Democracy as expressed in the formalization of regular elections can and often does co-exist with the inherently authoritarian tendencies of the state. Overt authoritarianism is shaped more by institutional imbalances between the elected and non-elected institutions of the state than by changes in civil-military relations alone. The ambiguities, paradoxes and imbrications that hide behind the labels of democracy and authoritarianism can be better exposed to scholarly analysis by concentrating on the unfolding dialectic between state structures and political processes.

This analysis of necessity steers a none-too-easy course between the general and the specific which might ruffle practitioners of grand theory and fastidious detail alike. So certain self-denying ordinances appear to be in order. References to the state are not meant to postulate a notion of institutional coherence which any close empirical study would easily fracture. Neither the administrative bureaucracy nor the military are institutional monoliths immune from internal jockeying for position between their different arms. Nor is the state viewed as omnipotent or completely distinct from society. The domain of the state is seen to be one of accommodation and contest by innumerable and contending sites of power embedded in society at the regional and sub-regional levels. Though not an empirical study of regional or sub-regional political economies and cultures, their dialectical relations with the layered institutional structures of the state are assessed and conceptualized. In attempting to capture the shifting balance between state and society at particular moments in time the argument is pitched at a level of informed generality that aims at facilitating the project of comparative historical interpretation on a subcontinental scale without causing injury to either the realm of fact or precision. Not a research monograph, it is a goad and an invitation to those in the field of

South Asian studies to consider the possibilities and richness of analyses in the comparative vein.

Chapter 1 investigates the impact of partition and the colonial legacy on India and Pakistan and sets the stage for a close analysis of political developments in the two countries during subsequent decades. The following two chapters are linked thematically but divided chronologically. Both address the issue of the emerging balance between elected and non-elected institutions within the state structure in the context of the interplay between domestic, regional and international factors. Chapter 2 looks at the period leading up to the 1967 general elections in India and the ten years of parliamentary democracy and the decade of military rule under General Mohammad Ayub Khan in Pakistan. In chapter 3 the theme is extended to the populist interlude presided over by Indira Gandhi, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the seventies and their authoritarian aftermath, overt or covert, in the 1980s and the 1990s. The focus then shifts to a more explicit consideration in chapter 4 of the political economies in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to give an added edge to a comparative study on a subcontinental scale. A better understanding of the dimension of political economy and the apparent failure of planned development to achieve the goal of national integration allows for a better perspective on centre–province and centre–state relations in Pakistan and India. Chapter 5 addresses the issue of centralized state power and regional dissidence. It provides a critique of the notion of ‘ethnicity’ and analyses the subcontinent’s federal dilemmas in the context of historically changing state–society relations. Chapter 6 weaves together the aspects of state structure and political culture by examining the formulation and projection of monolithic ideologies. Social dynamics at the local and regional levels are explored in terms of the dialectic between state structures and political processes as well as relatively autonomous cultural and ideological idioms. The interaction of state ideologies, secular or Islamic, with regional and sub-regional cultures strives for a more measured assessment of relations between states and societies.

The conclusion pulls together the different threads of the argument by way of a finale, explaining the apparent and the real differences and similarities between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In highlighting some of the insights gained from trespassing across arbitrarily defined temporal, spatial and disciplinary frontiers it sketches the course of a more comprehensive comparative research agenda for scholars and students of subcontinental South Asia to jointly and severally embark upon.

# I The colonial legacy in India and Pakistan

---

Few political decisions in the twentieth century have altered the course of history in more dramatic fashion than the partition of India in 1947. To be sure, the end of formal colonialism and the redrawing of national boundaries was a tumultuous event, sending tremors throughout much of Asia and beyond. Yet perhaps nowhere was the shock felt more intensely or more violently than in the Indian subcontinent. Economic and social linkages which over the millennia had survived periods of imperial consolidation, crises and collapse to weld the peoples of the subcontinent into a loosely layered framework of interdependence were rudely severed. Political differences among Indians over the modalities of power sharing once independence had been won sheared apart the closely woven threads of a colonial administrative structure that had institutionally integrated, if never quite unified, the subcontinent. That the culmination of some two hundred years of colonial institution-building should have sapped the subcontinent's capacity for accommodation and adaptation is a telling comment on the ways in which imperialism impressed itself on Indian society, economy and polity.

A rich and complex mosaic of cultural diversities which had evolved creative political mechanisms of compromise and collaboration long before the colonial advent, India through the centuries had managed to retain its geographical unity despite the pressures imposed by military invasion, social division and political conflict. There was little agreement on the basis of this unity or on its precise boundaries. Yet the idea of India as a distinctive geographical entity largely escaped the rigours of searching scepticism. Tracing its origins to the epic period in ancient Indian history, the concept of Bharat or Mahabharat had come to encapsulate a sub-continental expanse of mythical, sacred and political geography. Later the Arab and Persian exogenous definitions of Al-Hind or Hindustan, as the land beyond the river Sindhu or Indus, became readily internalized and identifiable in the geographical lexicon of Indo-Islamic culture and civilization. By and large the fluidity of the boundaries of geographical India were matched in the pre-colonial era by the flexibilities of political India.

Even in periods of imperial consolidation empire-builders generally aspired to a loose form of hegemony over diverse and autonomous constituent units.

Before the British stepped into the breach, a succession of empire-builders had sought to bring the contours of political India into conformity with those of its vast geographical expanse. Only for fleeting moments in the pre-colonial era did India's geographical unity correspond with its political unity. An overarching geographical identity contrasted sharply with a political unity that had constantly to be negotiated and renegotiated between diverse peoples inhabiting the domains of sovereign or quasi-sovereign regional rulers. What made the colonial period unlike any other in history was the British attempt to turn the bare facts of geographical India, variously and imaginatively construed, into defining principles for a centralized political unity based on the notion of a singular and indivisible sovereignty. This conflation of categories had large implications, not only at the level of the colonial legal system and institutional structures but also of Indian ideology and politics. It is in the dialectical interaction of these two levels that the seeds of partition and, by extension, of the colonial legacy itself can be identified and assessed.

To the extent that the British effort to stretch the ambit of imperial control through rule-bound institutions based on Western concepts of contractual law and impersonalized sovereignty rather than on the personal patronage of rulers was without historical precedence in the subcontinent, so too were the consequences. A political unity conceived and constructed in cold-blooded fashion and frozen in the impersonal rationality of bureaucratic institutions could neither reflect, nor capture, the internal dynamics of a society accustomed to direct, personalized rule. Although the British succeeded in giving a semblance of institutional coherence to much of geographical India, the integrative process never qualified as political unification. The gap between the integrative institutions of the colonial state and the myriad distinctions and divisions within Indian society proved unbridgeable. With the spread of Western education a small elite could work the institutions of the colonial state to their own advantage. But access to these institutions, though competitive, was limited to the select few. For the vast majority of Indians, local bureaucrats such as the district collector – a quintessential creation of the British administrative system – disbursed a personalized form of patronage and judicial arbitration within the overall context of a rule-bound, indirect and impersonalized institutional structure. Except for a brief period in the early nineteenth century, the British avoided assertive interventions in the cultural domain, conceding a measure of autonomy to India's social diversities while exerting control over its politics and economy. Anomalies arising from the co-existence of rationalistic colonial laws and the customs of Indian society afforded some limited scope

for a subject people denied individual rights of citizenship to avoid the legal domain and instead seek redress within an attenuating arena of communitarian self-expression. The steady advance over time of a public sphere defined in colonial terms eroded, though never eliminated, the social space which could nurture the reciprocal rights and responsibilities that had characterized pre-colonial community. So while maintaining a distinction between the public and private spheres for its own purposes, the colonial state remained unconcerned about separating the legal aspects of individual subjecthood from its social manifestations in communitarian identity.

Discrepancies between colonial theory and practice were to have grave ramifications for the nationalist struggle whose promise of individual citizenship rights after the winning of independence had to contend with an assortment of communitarian forms of social organization and expression. Although the very character of Indian society forced a dilution of the purely rule-based logic of colonial institutions, constitutional control over them remained a primary objective of nationalist ambitions. The contradiction between a personalized Indian society and, in theory if not always in practice, an impersonalized colonial state apparatus became more acute after the introduction of the elective principle. The prospect of an increasing measure of self-government intensified the scramble for power and resources along religious, caste and regional lines. By the closing decades of the raj the conflicting aspirations of Indians, erroneously viewed in terms of the great religious divide between Hindus and Muslims, appeared to have become irreconcilable. With rival strands in Indian nationalism claiming sovereignty, whether whole or in part, keeping intact the unitary and centralized administrative structure demanded a modicum of compromise and political accommodation over and beyond the dominant idioms of colonial rule.

By collapsing the meaning of geographical and political unity, by insisting on defining unity solely in terms of the centralized institutionalized structures of the British raj, and by scorning the principles of accommodation and compromise that had earlier enabled the subcontinent to sustain itself as a unified if politically disparate geographical entity, Indian leaders demonstrated the extent to which their thinking had been coloured by the ideas and institutions of Western colonialism. Drawing upon India's pre-colonial past and imaginatively devising mechanisms of power sharing capable of accommodating the aspirations of diverse peoples and regions may have seemed impracticable. Yet a notion of unity which was to be preserved through a continuation of the same institutional rigidities and legal niceties that had been the bane of nationalists during the colonial era was hardly a fitting start to the subcontinent's independent future.

Partition then did not destroy a political unity forged by Indians through

processes of negotiation, compromise and accommodation; it merely replaced a constitutionally unified centralized institutional framework with two mutually exclusive and independent sovereignties – India and Pakistan. Part epitaph and part antithesis of British rule, partition left an indelible mark on all the legacies of colonialism in India – institutional, strategic, economic as well as ideological. The continuities and discontinuities between the colonial and post-colonial periods in both India and Pakistan are, therefore, best grasped through the refracting prism of the partition process that accompanied the British transfer of power in the subcontinent. Yet insofar as partition itself was a product – albeit unintended – of British rule, the broader historical context is a necessary point of reference in unravelling colonialism's differential legacies for states and societies in subcontinental South Asia.

### The historical context of partition

Bringing political India into conformity with geographical India proceeded directly from British perceptions of imperial requirements, both strategic and economic. By contrast with the loosely woven web of suzerainty claimed by pre-colonial empires, the British established an essentially unitary state structure in colonial India. This required a skilful manipulation of two of the key dialectics that have spanned the history of the subcontinent's internal struggle to align its geographical and political frontiers: between centralism and regionalism on the one hand, and between all-India nationalism and communalism on the other. A formidable administrative structure with no formal separation between the bureaucracy and the political executive penetrated the lowest reaches of Indian society. In addition, the British entered into a series of treaty arrangements with a range of princely rulers whose territories they had found convenient not to annex and who were allowed varying degrees of autonomy in their internal affairs. This division of the subcontinent into directly and indirectly ruled territories – British India and princely India respectively – may not have been very tidy but it suited imperial purposes of administrative economy and coordination. While the princely rulers remained loyal compendiums of the British empire until 1947, a gradual process of administrative control brought their domains under closer scrutiny of the centralized colonial state apparatus.

In British India the colonial edifice, despite regional variations, relied on the trappings of bureaucratic authoritarianism and collaborative networks of local rural intermediaries to balance and cancel out pressures emanating from below. A series of constitutional reforms in the early twentieth century, aimed at broadening the colonial state's social bases of support, conceded the principle of elective representation, but only by diverting

Indian political attentions towards safe local and provincial pastures and keeping the unitary centre firmly in British hands. Even the most nominal form of representation at the local and provincial levels was a potential threat to the colonial state. So the Morley–Minto reforms of 1909 took the momentous step of creating communal categories, for instance separate electorates for Muslims, in the arena of limited electoral politics at all levels of representation. The structural contradiction between an emphasis on local and provincial arenas of politics on the one hand and communally compartmentalized electorates on the other was to have large implications for Indian politics. Localizing the spoils of office and state patronage was designed to encourage vertical rather than horizontal aggregation of political demands. With the institutions of representative government striking root in less than propitious soil, the disjunction between India's geographical and political unity was to become even more difficult to square. For now, the institutionalized fragmentation of Indian politics allowed the colonial state to manipulate and administer the affairs of a society differentiated by region, class, caste and community.

Indian nationalists, especially once Mohandas Gandhi nailed his colours to the Indian National Congress, went some way towards circumventing the strategy of the colonial state to alternatively regionalize and communalize Indian politics. Launching all-India agitational campaigns with the help of an imaginatively, if selectively, conceived nationalist pantheon of unifying idioms contested the colonial strategy of emphasizing difference in diversity. The more paradoxical results of British constitutional manoeuvres lay in the heightening of contradictions within Muslim politics. Indian Muslims were not merely a construction of twentieth-century British colonial social engineering. Yet neither did they represent a unified and solid community of interest to justify their compartmentalization into a separate all-India communal category for purposes of political representation. Far from facilitating the construction of an all-India Muslim identity – the logical concomitant of Muslims being a distinct political category with separate representation – the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms of 1919 and the government of India act of 1935 reinforced regional particularisms in the Muslim-majority provinces and intra-Muslim factionalism within the protected walls of specifically Muslim constituencies. While the Congress under Gandhi was partly successful in raising its organizational umbrella over the old factional structures of politics in the Hindu-majority provinces, the local and provincial politics of Muslims continued to operate outside the framework of the All-India Muslim League established in 1906 to promote and safeguard the interests of the 'Muslim' community. Indeed, the politics of those who happened to be Muslim were bounded more by locality and province, and not infrequently led to cooperation with members of other

religious communities, than by the specifically communal concerns of the tiny elite directing the Muslim League.

Despite a narrow base of support and a perilously weak organizational structure, particularly in the Muslim-majority provinces, the All-India Muslim League used the fact of Muslims being a separate political category to good advantage in the closing decades of the British raj. Challenging the Congress's claim to represent the whole of India and, therefore, its right to seize power at the unitary centre created by the British, the All-India Muslim League led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah found it convenient to reinstate the distinction between geographical and political unity which had been dropped from the lexicons of colonialists and nationalists alike. Acknowledging the fact of India's geographical unity, Jinnah left it an open question how that unity was to be reflected in a political structure representing the aspirations of not only India's Muslims but also the 562 princely states covering two-fifths of the subcontinent. Asserting that there were two nations in India, Hindu and Muslim, Jinnah demanded the creation of two essentially sovereign states, Pakistan – representing the Muslim-majority provinces – and Hindustan – representing the Hindu-majority provinces. There was force in Jinnah's contention that India was a geographic and, at best, an administrative rather than a political unity. Indian political unity, Jinnah maintained, could not be decreed and enforced by the unitary and centralized administrative structures of the colonial state. It had to be forged through a process of negotiations between the main political contenders to power after the British quit India. Implicit in this line of argument was a notion of Indian sovereignty as divisible and negotiable. Such an idea of sovereignty was at fundamental variance with Congress's notion of an indivisible and non-negotiable sovereignty for independent India. Sensing its ability to lay claim to the whole cake, Congress was understandably in no mood to debate the quality of its ingredients.

Jinnah's argument for keeping Indian geography and politics on separate but parallel tracks was part of a carefully planned strategy to win a large share of power for Muslims at the all-India level on the basis of their combined numerical majorities in the north-west and north-east of the subcontinent. This would give the Muslim League the leverage it needed to negotiate constitutional safeguards for Muslim minorities in the rest of India in exchange for those it would confer on the large non-Muslim populations residing within the territories of the Muslim state. Unfortunately for Jinnah and the Muslim League, the contradictory constraints imposed by the colonial political system on Muslim politics, namely the emphasis on provincial and local arenas of politics on the one hand and communally compartmentalized electorates on the other, worked to thwart the broader objectives for which the demand for Pakistan had been raised. If

the demand was to have the support of Indian Muslims, in majority as well as minority provinces, it had to appear to offer something to all Muslims. It could do so only if it was framed in communal terms. Yet the politics of Muslims at the regional level did not pour neatly into communal moulds. The affinities of regional geography were not always consistent with the emotions and aspirations elicited by the ideal of a united all-India Muslim politics. As was true for all of India, there lay a wedge between the unities of geography and the unities of Muslim politics. Consequently, while the Pakistan demand injected strong communal overtones into Indian politics, the Muslim League could not pull the different and frequently conflicting regional strands in Muslim politics into a unified and coherent whole. So even though the oscillation between communalism and regionalism influenced the final showdown between Indian nationalism and British colonialism as a whole, the clash between the communal and regional identities of Muslims had a more decisive bearing on the Muslim League's movement for a Pakistan.

Designed to safeguard the interests of all Indian Muslims, the League's communal demand for a Pakistan carved out of the Muslim-majority areas in the north-west and north-east of the subcontinent failed to contain the regionalisms of the Muslim provinces. These provinces lent support to the Muslim League in the hope of negotiating a constitutional arrangement based on strong provinces and a weak centre. This is why the Pakistan resolution of March 1940 had spoken of 'Independent Muslim states' in which the constituent units would be 'autonomous and sovereign'. Jinnah had taken care to hedge this concession to Muslim-majority province sentiments. An unlikely advocate of provincialism, Jinnah was looking for ways to restrain the regionalisms of the Muslim-majority provinces so as to bring their combined weight to bear at the all-India level. The cabinet mission plan of May 1946 came close to giving Jinnah what he needed by proposing the grouping of Muslim and Hindu provinces at the second tier while restricting the federal centre to only three subjects – defence, foreign affairs and communications. Significantly, on 16 June 1946 the All-India Muslim League rejected the mission's offer of a sovereign Pakistan carved out of the Muslim-majority provinces in the north-west and the Muslim-majority districts of partitioned Punjab and Bengal and accepted the alternative plan for a three-tier federal constitutional arrangement covering the whole of India.

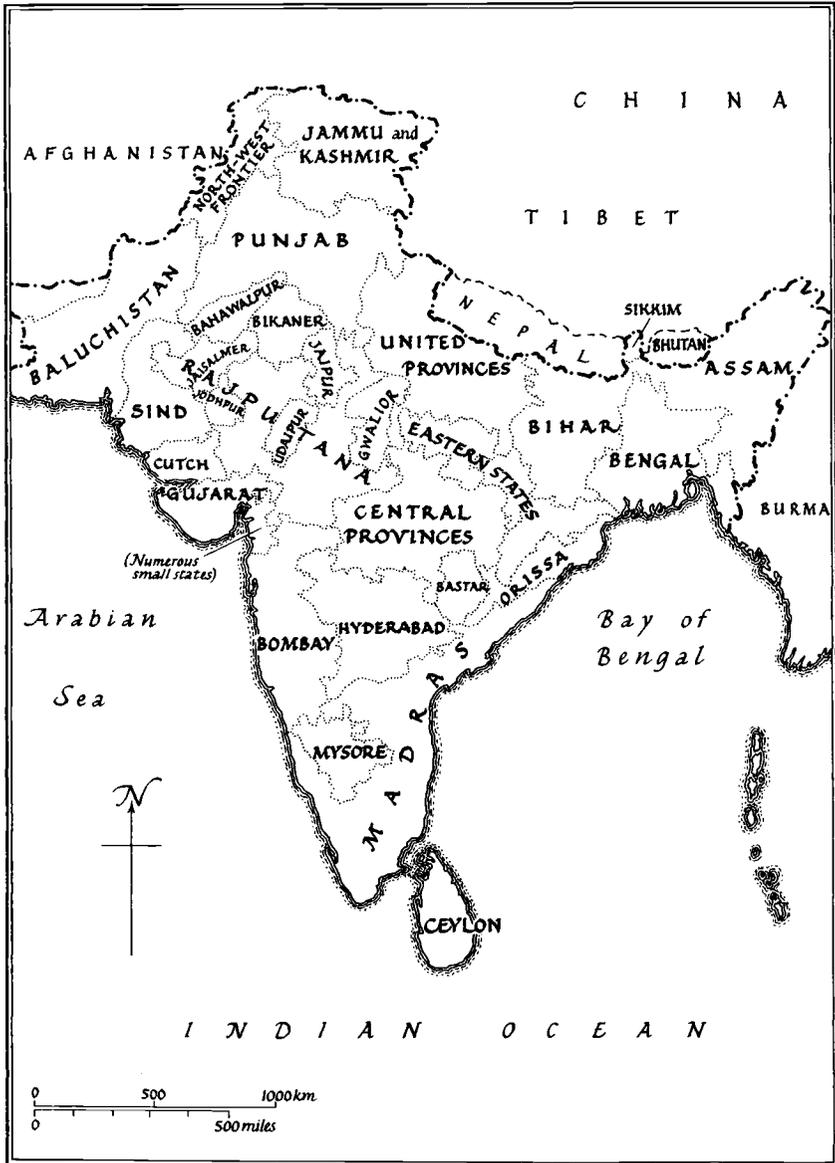
The implicit, if not explicit, assumption of a shared sovereignty between the Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority groups was unacceptable to a Congress advocating a composite nationalism based on an indivisible sovereign central authority. Inheriting the strong central apparatus of the colonial state was Congress's best insurance of quelling movements for

autonomy in the Hindu-majority provinces and bringing the princely states firmly into the Indian union. So Congress found it politically expedient to abandon its commitment to India's geographical integrity and allow the division of the subcontinent along ostensibly communal lines rather than weaken the impersonalized institutional structures of the colonial state to accommodate the powerful regionally based aspirations of the Muslim provinces. Such a vision of India's political unity, unbendingly and uncompromisingly captured in the frozen embrace of colonial institutions, was chilling to say the least. Yet here was the rub. Having successfully laid claim to the centralized apparatus of the colonial state, Congress insisted on using the term 'India' to define its polity even while carrying out the vivisection of geographical India. Jinnah and the Muslim League made strong, but ineffectual, protests that there could be no political India bereft of territories inhabited by Muslim majorities. Investing the geographical term 'Hindustan' with new political meaning in opposition to the demand for a Pakistan, Jinnah argued that a federal or confederal union of India could only be based on an equal partnership between Hindustan and Pakistan.

With partition just around the corner, Jinnah's arguments fell on deaf ears. In control of three-quarters of the subcontinent, the Congress leadership required no special pleading to win British approbation in appropriating the international personality of British India. This minimized the psychological impact of partition, allowing the Congress leadership to keep alive the fiction of India's political unity surviving the subcontinental division even after the loss of its geographical integrity had been recognized internationally. But the multiple and complex bonds which through the centuries had locked together the different parts of India had not all been snapped by the sudden and arbitrary drawing of the lines of political division alone. It would require considerable administrative and political effort before the freshly demarcated frontiers could be made to reflect two wholly independent sovereignties in the subcontinent. Before that could happen a way had to be found to dismantle some key features of the colonial administrative structure, in particular those which had served to integrate the rest of India with the north-western and north-eastern extremities of the subcontinent.

### The administrative legacy

In the closing months of the British raj in India, the twin dialectics of centralism and regionalism, and nationalism and communalism converged in complex ways, tearing apart the unity but retaining the substance of the very centralized administrative structure which had extended the colonial state's hold over Indian society. A casualty of partition and yet the most



1 The Indian Empire: administrative divisions, 1947

imposing legacy of colonialism, the division of the British Indian administrative structure is a key factor in assessing the differential inheritances of India and Pakistan. While India inherited the colonial state's unitary central apparatus without seriously rupturing its links with the lower rungs of the administration, Pakistan had to construct an entirely new central government before it could begin coordinating the affairs of the provincial, district and local levels of society.

The departure of British and Muslim officials of the Indian civil service undoubtedly complicated India's task of resettling millions of refugees fleeing both the eastern and the western wings of Pakistan, and completing the integration of the princely states which had enjoyed a quasi-autonomous status under the paramount colonial power. Of a total of some 955 ICS officers before partition, excluding Muslims but including British officers, 392 remained in India in the immediate aftermath of partition. Yet despite some personnel problems, India's transition from colonialism was smoothed considerably by the continuities provided by a pre-existing central state apparatus, to say nothing of the advantages of inheriting the domestic and international personality of British India. By contrast, the absence of a basic machinery linking the various tiers of the administration, a grave shortage of competent and experienced personnel and the unenviable status of having seceded from an internationally recognized sovereign and independent state compounded Pakistan's problems in asserting central authority over territories separated by over a thousand miles.

Notwithstanding the differential administrative legacies, both India and Pakistan drew heavily on the colonial state's methods of bureaucratic control and centralization. The government of India act of 1935, strengthening the very bureaucratic 'steel frame' of the British raj that had been the *bête noire* of Indian nationalists, was adapted to serve as the constitutional framework in both countries. In principle, a commitment to the ideal of democracy based on the Westminster model of parliamentary government ensured a formal separation between the bureaucracy and a representative political executive. But in actual practice the bureaucratic authoritarianism inherent in the colonial state structure remained largely intact. It proved difficult at the very onset to establish the principle of legislative supremacy over the executive. Despite the general scholarly view which traces its origin to a later period of institutional atrophy, the attractions of personalized patronage soon became prevalent in the operations of supposedly rule-bound institutions, elected as well as non-elected. In the words of an observer of the Indian administrative bureaucracy in the immediate aftermath of independence, 'the rule of law was ever bent to subserve either executive action in the administration or the will of dominant elements of

society'.<sup>1</sup> A greater propensity for executive action by politicians strengthened the hands of the administrative bureaucracy, the erstwhile non-elected representatives, many of whom openly derided the feasibility of democracy in subcontinental conditions.

Yet the legitimizing force of democracy in the wake of independence was too strong and pervasive to be discarded for the sake of administrative convenience. Instead of undertaking a massive reorganization of the administrative apparatus of the colonial state to guarantee the supremacy of elected institutions, the Indian and Pakistani political leadership alike formed alliances of convenience with members of the civil bureaucracy, the Indian civil service in particular. This was publicly justified on the grounds of pragmatism and the need to maintain some sort of administrative continuity to cope with the massive dislocations and law and order problems that followed in the wake of partition, especially in the northern, north-western and eastern parts of the subcontinent. The co-existence of formal democracy with bureaucratic authoritarianism has been one of the more enduring legacies of colonial rule in the subcontinent.

In keeping with the principles of democracy, the emphasis in the post-independence period was on strengthening the bond between the elected representative and the voter, in contradistinction to that between the local bureaucrat and the common people during the colonial period. But these measured nods in the direction of representative democracy, louder in Congress-dominated India than in Pakistan, scarcely disguised the dependence of both sets of leadership on the colonial bureaucracy. In the absence of a genuine commitment to an ideology of socio-economic development, granted Congress's socialist rhetoric and the Muslim League's placid appeals to Islamic social justice, relations between voters and their representatives were largely limited to elections. Although local bureaucrats were theoretically in a subordinate position to the elected representatives, they remained by virtue of their proximity and accessibility for all practical purposes the main representatives of the common people. Few politicians could expect to muster support in a constituency without at least the tacit support of the local administration. Unfamiliarity with the workings of both the political and administrative institutions of the state was another reason why most politicians had to try and establish a working, and often a dependent, relationship with the local bureaucrat.

So at the local levels of society in both dominions where the majority of the voters were bunched there was little qualitative change in the balance between the elected and non-elected institutions. Consequently, the exten-

<sup>1</sup> B. B. Mista, *Government and Bureaucracy in India: 1947-1976*, Delhi, 1986, p. 90.

sion in India of universal adult franchise did not energize the polity with the spirit of citizens' rights as distinct from the formal periodic exercise of voters' rights. The subservience of democratic politics to authoritarian states coupled with the attraction of caste and communal modes of mobilizing voters prevented the rise of an ethic of representatives' accountability to citizens that would be the hallmark of any substantive democracy. In parts of India where the Congress was relatively better organized, local party bosses could expect to successfully manipulate the administrative machinery to their own advantage in securing the support of a clientele of voters. Yet this merely confirmed the extent to which political success at the locality depended on the cooperation of the administrative bureaucracy. Where the Congress machinery was practically non-existent and riven with factionalism, bureaucrats had much greater leeway in administering the affairs of the locality. This kept alive the old face of bureaucratic despotism tempered by a personalized style in the operations of local administration even as the impersonalized, rule-bound service traditions were lauded and streamlined in both countries.

The persistence of bureaucratic authoritarianism in such marked fashion in the localities serves as a cautionary note against celebrating the boons of the new democratic dispensation which accompanied the transition from colonialism in India and Pakistan. As already alluded to above, even at the higher levels of the political system, the central in particular, the frequency and ease of executive action at legislative expense – often dubbed the 'viceregal' tradition – tended to supplant many of the basic precepts of democracy. While these qualifications are necessary to maintain perspective, it was undoubtedly at the central and provincial levels that the supremacy of the elected institutions – both executive and legislative – over the non-elected could be asserted with a greater or lesser measure of success. And it is here that the main differences between the Indian and Pakistani experiences have to be detected and analysed.

As part of the process of maintaining the greatest possible degree of administrative continuity, the political leaderships in both countries opted to retain the existing all-India services. These were recruited in open competitive examinations held at the all-India level and constituted into separate cadres for each of the provinces. Establishing the origin of recruits was an important feature of the colonial policy of posting members of the all-India services to the provincial and local levels. Generally speaking, members of the all-India services were appointed in provinces other than their own, a policy that was expected to inculcate an all-India outlook and help maintain a better measure of administrative objectivity. The policy was criticized – for instance by Bombay, West Bengal and the United Provinces in India – on the grounds that it was becoming increasingly necessary for

officers to be familiar with the language and the customs of the people. But its integrative overtones were attractive for central governments seeking to establish their writs at the different layers of the administration, especially in areas where political institutions were either non-existent or poorly developed. Though the impact of the policy varied from region to region, the overall effect was to deepen the process of administrative integration and fortify centralized state authority. There were more than the occasional hitches since the provinces enjoyed powers granted to them under the government of India act of 1935 and were not prepared to assist in a reversal of their autonomy. To offset provincial resentments at being dictated to by the centre in matters to do with their own administration various concessions were made, but none so great as to alter the essential thrust of the drive towards centralization. Under the terms of an agreement signed on 21 October 1946 between the centre and seven (later nine) provincial governments in India, the latter would approve the appointments of all central recruits. A similar arrangement was made between the Pakistani centre and the provinces. In both dominions quotas were fixed for recruitment to the ICS – renamed the Indian administrative service – and the Indian police service from each provincial civil and police service. For instance, under the emergency recruitment plan in operation in India between August 1947 and 1949, of the 454 new members of the IAS half were recruited from the provincial services.

Later the newly integrated Indian states, with the sole exception of Jammu and Kashmir, also accepted the same IAS and IPS schemes. This enabled the Indian centre to post members of the IAS and the IPS to the princely states, usually with extraordinary powers over the public representatives to expedite the process of administrative integration. Once again it was the institutional continuities at the centre which enabled the Indian states ministry to accomplish the feat of imposing New Delhi's sovereign authority over a bewildering collage of administrative units in erstwhile princely India. Pakistan's north-western provinces, where officials often tended to exercise larger discretionary powers than their counterparts in many British Indian provinces, provided an even more attractive canvas than princely India. With a centrally appointed official combining revenue, executive and magisterial and judicial functions in the districts, there was considerable scope for bureaucratic control and administrative centralization in West Pakistan.

So although both states went through a greater measure of administrative centralization than undivided India, the absence of a central state apparatus gave added impetus to that process in Pakistan. Given the weaknesses of the Muslim League's organizational machinery in the Muslim-majority provinces and the relative strengths of the Congress organization in the

Indian provinces, the Pakistani political leadership had to concede much greater autonomy to the administrative bureaucracy in order to consolidate state authority than its opposite number in India. Differences in their institutional inheritances, administrative as well as political, therefore, played a significant part in determining the degree of centralization in Pakistan and India during the initial years of independence. But the precise ways in which this shaped the dialectic between state construction and the political process depended in large part on the economic and strategic legacies of colonialism and, above all, of partition in the two countries.

### The economics of partition and separate defence

Quite apart from the need to impose central authority, the expansion and centralization of the administrative machinery in Pakistan was needed to augment meagre state resources and finance the requirements of the defence establishment. Pakistan started its independent career with 17.5 per cent of the financial assets and 30 per cent of the defence forces of undivided India. With a mere Rs.200 million as its opening cash balances, Pakistan after 1 December 1947 when the division of the military personnel was completed had to cough up an estimated Rs.35 to Rs.50 million a month for the upkeep of its defence forces alone. Assuming responsibility for the defence of the strategically vulnerable north-western and north-eastern marcher regions of the subcontinent was well beyond the capacities of the newly created state. Already in the initial year of independence Pakistan's defence expenditure was higher than that of the undivided government of India.

In subsequent years the annual budgets of the Pakistani central government were essentially defence budgets with practically nothing available for developmental purposes. Such a crushing defence burden called for a drastic change in the financial relationship between the newly established Pakistani centre and the provinces. Very soon after partition the Pakistani provinces were hustled into relinquishing their right to a whole range of taxes by the central government in the interest of establishing the financial stability of the new state. And while India too had to reckon with a considerably weighty defence bill, it could afford to do so without placing the pre-independence financial relationship between the centre and the provinces in jeopardy. In 1950-1 the Pakistani central government for the first time sanctioned a paltry sum of Rs.1 crore for provincial development purposes. By contrast, the central government of India had been allocating between Rs.25 to Rs.30 crores annually as grants-in-aid to the provinces for reconstruction and development programmes. The per capita revenue of the Indian provinces was 40 per cent more than that of the Pakistani provinces. East Bengal had a per capita revenue below that of the poorest Indian

provinces such as Assam, Orissa and Bihar. While the Pakistani centre had to syphon off a large proportion of provincial resources to remain solvent, the Indian centre was able to fund 35 per cent of provincial development programmes. Under the circumstances the Pakistani provinces could not even emulate the modest achievements of their Indian counterparts in the financing of basic social services like education, public health and transport and reduce the differentials in the quality of life between the two countries.

So institutionally, strategically, economically and, consequently, politically, Pakistan was left facing a grimmer reality than India. This is not to suggest that things were light and easy for India; it is the balance of difficulties which underlines Pakistan's hapless predicament. With 23 per cent of the land mass of undivided India and 18 per cent of the population, Pakistan had less than 10 per cent of the industrial base in the two states and just a little over 7 per cent of the employment facilities. Mainly a raw material and foodstuff producing area, Pakistan could not expect to meet the expenditure for its strategic defence without expanding the state's administrative machinery and taking the politically precarious path of digging deeply and widely into provincial resources. Alternatively, Pakistan had to solicit foreign aid and, in this way, increase its dependence on the centres of the international capitalist system. The outbreak of military hostilities with India over the north Indian princely state of Kashmir within months of independence narrowed Pakistan's already restricted options.

Although predominantly agricultural, India was relatively better placed than Pakistan since the bulk of the industries in undivided India were situated in its territories. While possessing a considerably more diversified economy with the potential to tackle the problems of both unemployment and underemployment, the loss of some of the best irrigated land in the subcontinent to Pakistan increased India's food shortage by 0.5 to 0.7 million tons per annum. Despite centrally directed 'grow more food' campaigns and a concerted procurement drive, New Delhi had to go in for large-scale food imports which in 1948-9 accounted for as much as 60 per cent of India's balance of payments deficit on current account. The deficit had to be financed by periodic releases from India's sterling balance account with the Bank of England and the purchase of \$100 million from the International Monetary Fund in 1949. Before partition India had been a net earner of dollars with a healthy balance of payments position. By mid-1949, as a result of continuous annual trade deficits, transfers to Pakistan of its share of the sterling balances and remittances to Britain for the capitalized value of military stores and pensions, India had managed to reduce its inherited sterling balances by half, from Rs.1750 crores to Rs.825 crores. Increases in taxation, generally at the expense of the urban middle classes, failed to ease the financial crisis by improving the level of productivity.

Evidence of business confidence in the stability of the government in India did not translate into greater investment activity or help reduce levels of unemployment. Most of the revenue from the new taxes was used to pay for top heavy government expenditure which rose from some Rs.200 crores for united India to about Rs.600 crores for partitioned India. Government extravagance and rising food prices contributed to a post-war inflationary spiral made worse by the severe after-effects of partition.

Yet India's financial woes were more manageable than those enveloping Pakistan where efforts to stave off an imminent bankruptcy had been afoot since November 1947. While sharing most of the worst features of India's post-independence financial difficulties, Pakistan's exclusive reliance on the export of agricultural commodities magnified the problems fourfold. Only in relation to India did Pakistan initially enjoy some trading advantages. Its surplus foodstuffs as well as jute, cotton, hides, tanning materials, dyestuffs were exported to factories located in India. Indian industry and trade were dependent on these items, especially Pakistani raw jute and raw cotton which constituted 70 per cent and 40 per cent respectively of the total production in the subcontinent. But in return Pakistan was dependent on a number of Indian manufactured commodities and energy resources: cotton piece goods, iron and steel products, soap, coal, cement, petroleum, sugar and alkalis, as well as chemicals. Admittedly, these could be purchased from anywhere in the world. Yet under a standstill agreement currency, exchange, customs imports and export control and other matters of mutual concern were administered on an all-India basis until 31 March 1948. These arrangements, necessitated by the interdependence of the Indian and the Pakistani economies, soon crumbled under the strain of congenial rivalry between the two states.

The interdependence of the two economies in the initial years of partition is in part reflected by the foreign trade figures. In 1948-9, Indo-Pakistan trade accounted for just under 20 per cent of India's total foreign trade or 18 per cent of its imports and 16 per cent of its exports. By comparison, inter-dominion trade accounted for as much as 41.2 per cent of Pakistan's total foreign trade or 37 per cent of the imports and 61 per cent of the exports. Clearly, Pakistan was far more dependent in aggregate terms on trade with India. Yet the trade figures underplay the extent to which Indian jute mills in Calcutta and cotton mills in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Cawnpore depended on imports of Pakistani raw materials. The inelasticity of demand for raw jute and raw cotton gave Pakistan far more bargaining power with the government of India than the statistical evidence suggests. This was exemplified by the nonchalance with which Pakistan refused to devalue its rupee following the devaluation decisions taken by Britain and India in September 1949. Yet Pakistan's search for alternative sources and

markets for its imports and exports was a long and arduous one and, not infrequently, entailed policy decisions that were economically and politically more damaging than the existing arrangements with India. And while the Indian economy showed remarkable resilience by increasing the production of raw jute and raw cotton, the disruption of free internal trade between the different regions in the subcontinent did extract considerable costs in human, financial and infrastructural terms from both dominions.

### The ideological dimension

If the institutional legacy provided critical elements of continuity between the colonial and the post-colonial periods, reversing the economic interdependence of the subcontinent together with the altered strategic imperatives of the two states underline the main points of discontinuity. The ideological legacies of colonialism are in many ways a reflection of and a reaction to these continuities and discontinuities. Ostensibly, the secularism of the Congress and the communalism of the Muslim League are the main ideological legacies of the colonial era in India and Pakistan. But it is only by scaling the gap between rhetoric and reality that the ideological impact of colonialism in the subcontinent can be meaningfully assessed. Both creeds were formulated as a response to colonialism in a bid to win the allegiance of large segments of Indian society. As the most likely inheritor of the British colonial mantle, Congress's secularism derived from pragmatic quite as much as ethical and moral considerations. Congress's claim to be the only representative organization in a society divided along community and caste lines demanded the conscious projection of a secular ideology.

The translation of a secular ideology into secular politics, however, proved to be fraught with contradictions. In one of the typical paradoxes of Indian society the very factors necessitating the politics of secular nationalism laid the basis for particularistic religious communalism. Despite the official creed of secularism, a succession of Congress leaders both before and after Gandhi had grasped the expediency of resorting to popular Hindu religious symbols. An assertion of cultural confidence against alien rule as well as a strategy for political mobilization, the use of the Hindu idiom did much to narrow the gap separating India's localized public arenas from the larger purposes of the nationalist leadership. Yet what was intended to paper over the innumerable cracks within the majority community had the unwitting effect of appearing to set Hindus apart from non-Hindus, Muslims in particular.

The manipulation of religious symbolism in a secular nationalist garb had deeper intellectual moorings. Since the late nineteenth century leading voices in the anti-colonial struggle repeatedly equated their conception of

the Indian people as a collectivity or a 'nation' with *Bharatvarsha*, the land of the mythological Vedic ruler Bharat. A definition of the Indian nation fashioned on ideas of territoriality found in ancient Hindu texts and popular mythology was not seen to compromise Congress's secularism. Presaging Gandhi's political philosophy in the twentieth century, Bipin Chandra Pal – by no means the most strident proponent of a religiously or racially based nationalism – had nevertheless argued forcefully along with many others that Hinduism was not simply a religion but an all-encompassing social system subsuming the diverse peoples and cultures inhabiting the geographical space that was India. On this view, it was 'unpardonable ignorance' to suggest that India was no more than a mere geographical entity consisting of 'a chaotic congregation . . . of tribes and races, families and castes, but not 'in any sense a nation'.<sup>2</sup> Despite its multifarious diversities, social and political, India was united by an overarching cultural ideal based on shared spiritual meanings and the disciplines of *dharma*. The main contribution of the Muslims was to lend a greater measure of political and administrative unity to a country already possessing a strong sense of its common spiritual and emotional roots. This was the India which the British came to and conquered, not 'an unorganised, unconscious, and undeveloped chaos' devoid of any sense of its collective identity.<sup>3</sup>

Insofar as nations are the constructions of educated imaginings, there is nothing extraordinary about this convenient substitution of history with mythology. Much the same tendency is discernable in the writings of Indian nationalist luminaries as far apart ideologically as a B. G. Tilak, an Aurobindo Ghosh and even a Subhas Chandra Bose. Arguing the prior existence of an Indian nation was intrinsic to the nationalist struggle against colonialism. It was a claim made by ideologically disparate nationalists to contest the attempt by the colonial masters to emphasize India's manifold social divisions even while establishing administrative centralization. But the claim came to dominate nationalist discourse only after the 1920s when Gandhi successfully began translating ideology into the politics of mass action. Yet ironically enough it was in the domain of politics that the notion of a singular Indian nation, albeit one containing many divergent strands, was most effectively contested. Intended to buttress the nationalist cause, the claim of Indian nationhood closely associated with such explicitly Hindu concepts as *varnashramadharma* and *Ram Rajya* gave impetus to the very diverse forces it intended to harness against the colonial state.

Pejoratively dubbed communal, these forces were not quite the artifacts of colonialism which the nationalists mistakenly believed. Unable to

<sup>2</sup> Bipin Chandra Pal, *The Soul of India: A Constructive Study of Indian Thoughts and Ideals* (fourth edition), Calcutta, 1958, p. 93 [first published in 1911].

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

identify with many of the symbols deployed by the Congress, especially after the Gandhian takeover, many Muslims given their minority status were susceptible to anyone offering an alternative cultural construct for their politics. As the clash of cultural symbols, Hindu and Muslim, played itself out on the various levels of the Indian political stage, the lines dividing the vision of an inclusionary Indian nationalism from that of an exclusionary communalism became more clearly defined. The alienation of a growing number of Muslims and the British perception of them as a separate communal category was capitalized upon by the All-India Muslim League, not as a first step towards the attainment of an Islamic state but as a political ploy to win the support of a constituency divided by class, region and language in order to counter the Congress's unchallenged ascent to power in an independent India. In other words, the League's recourse to an exclusionary, religious communalism was in response to Congress's inclusionary, secular nationalism which borrowed heavily from Hindu ethical ideals and mythology. This is not to deny the possibility that some Muslim League leaders were genuinely attached to Islamic cultural symbols. Yet one does not have to plough the depths of cynicism to view the League's communal stance as a matter of political necessity on the part of a party purportedly representing an ideologically and organizationally divided minority.

Instead of representing two sharply divergent or mutually exclusive world views, secularism and communalism in the subcontinental context in fact reveal themselves as alternative strategies of political mobilization. As such they appear less as polar opposites than competing and interacting political forces. Just as the Congress's secularism was frequently overwrought with evocations of Hindu symbolism, the League's communalism was shot through with concerns that were other than purely religious. The paradox of Mohammad Ali Jinnah with his secular leanings advocating the League's communal demand for a Pakistan, and Gandhi with his strong Hindu beliefs propounding the doctrine of communal unity, rapidly appropriated as one of the central pillars of Congress's secular post-colonial ideology, is a comment on the ambiguities surrounding the uses made of religion in South Asian politics.

Contradictions between the rhetoric and reality of Congress's secularism and the League's religious communalism were not confined to the top leadership alone. A powerful group of Hindu ideologues took the cover of Congress's secularism to advance their cause while an array of Islamic ideologues stayed outside the Muslim League's corral to protest its lack of Islamic commitment. What is more, Congress's acceptance of partition along communal lines for the sake of a strong centralized state power was a complete reversal of its policy of acquiring power over a secular and united

India. That a movement claiming higher moral ground over its rivals and long guided by Gandhi, for whom the very notion of centralized state authority was the organized annihilation of individual spirituality and freedom, should in the end have sacrificed all at the instance of Congress's machine politicians – Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in particular – for control over the colonial masters' satanic institutions of oppression is one of the more profound ironies of recent subcontinental history. And as for the Muslim League which at least had been consistently confused ideologically, the goal of Pakistan was attained by dividing the very Muslim community whose interests it supposedly wanted to represent and safeguard.

If partition deflected, even distorted, the ideological positions of the Congress and the Muslim League, the institutional, strategic and economic legacies of colonialism contorted many of the objectives for which independence had been won. The commitment to democracy was compromised by the attractions of governance through the bureaucratic instruments of the state. A communal holocaust following partition and the onset of military hostilities between India and Pakistan made a mockery of Gandhian notions of non-violence. The assumption of the centralized power of the raj by the Congress professing an ideology of reformist class conciliation but in fact representing the interests of specific privileged groups postponed the goals of socio-economic reform aimed at eliminating poverty, discrimination and exploitation. In Pakistan, the unifying bonds of Islam could not prevent the imperatives of constructing a central apparatus and raising a viable shield of defence against India from exacerbating the sense of alienation and socio-economic deprivation in the various regions.

So the dominant idioms of nationalism, secularism and communalism of the late colonial era left rather contradictory and confusing legacies. It was the Western colonial ideology of an indivisible sovereignty as underwritten by a centralized state structure that held the more unambiguous attraction for the managers of the subcontinent's post-colonial states. This was an ideology of sovereignty that, ironically enough, survived the agonizing political division of the subcontinent and was sought to be replicated at the central apexes of two independent sovereign states. The ideological inheritance has had a powerful bearing on the centre–region dialectic and the authoritarian strains within state structures in post-colonial South Asia. Analysed in interaction with the contrasting institutional legacies of the colonial state it provides a critical ingredient to a comparative study of the relationship between state structures and political processes in post-independence India and Pakistan.

## 2 State formation and political processes in India and Pakistan, 1947 to c.1971

---

A compelling yet under-investigated question in contemporary South Asian history is why the partitioned inheritance of the British raj resulted in a different balance between state structures and political processes in post-independence India and Pakistan. A matter of wide and often imaginative speculation, it has invited explanations owing more to the predilections of specific schools of thought than to an actual examination of the historical factors that have contributed to making India a democratic polity and Pakistan a military dominated state.

Those steeped in the liberal democratic tradition have stressed the unique organizational phenomenon of the Indian National Congress. This is seen to have provided India's founding fathers, generally regarded as men of considerable political acumen and vision, with the institutional support necessary to lay the foundations of a stable, liberal democratic state. Marxist theorists for their part have sought explanations in the 'overdeveloped' institutional legacies of the colonial state and the corresponding weaknesses of dominant classes in civil society. Shades of determinism have clouded both interpretations. Long experience of working together in the anti-imperialist struggle had been more conducive to understandings among the top leaders of the Indian National Congress than was the case with the Muslim League, a communal party with no real organizational existence in Muslim India before the final decade of the British raj. Yet placed in identical circumstances after independence it is debatable whether the Indian leadership would have done much better at institutionalizing representative democracy than their supposedly less able counterparts in Pakistan. Stressing personal leadership qualities without reference to contextual difference makes for more interesting narrative exposition than insightful analytical history. By the same token, an exaggerated sense of the Congress's strength in linking and mediating politics at the central, provincial and local levels and the Muslim League's relative organizational weaknesses conveys the impression that the success of political processes in India and their collapse in Pakistan was unavoidable.

The Marxist focus on weak class structures and the 'overdeveloped'

nature of the post-colonial states is even less able to explain the contrasting evolution of political processes in India and Pakistan. Marxist writings on post-independence South Asian politics have maintained a tantalizing silence on why, if colonial institutional legacies were broadly similar and the underlying class structures only marginally different, one country successfully established a political democracy while the other ended up under military dictatorship. Political cultural interpretations have fared no better in arguing that differences between India and Pakistan stem from the peculiar traits of authoritarianism and tolerance intrinsic to Muslim and Hindu cultures – facts plainly contradicted by the egalitarian and hierarchical tendencies within both social orders. Contrasting the Congress leadership's ideological leaning towards Western liberal democracy with the Muslim League's moorings in conservative reaction is a simplistic claim that does scant justice to the complexity of the historical evidence. If theoretical determinism has triumphed over history, culture abstracted from its structural underpinnings has tended to grossly oversimplify reality.

More celebrated variants of the cultural approach to politics, notably that of Ashis Nandy, avoid some of the pitfalls. His emphasis on the tradition-modernity dichotomy may be open to methodological questioning. Yet it offers interesting insights, implicit as well as explicit, into the changing relationship between society and politics in colonial and post-colonial India. According to Nandy, politics in 'traditional' India were often corrupting, instrumental and amoral, but in the absence of an 'authoritative centre' the impact was localized and compartmentalized by the *dharmic* codes guiding social life. Unlike in Western societies, politics in India never made the transition from the private to the public domain. For all the rhetoric about 'public interest' and 'public policy', politics in modern India has remained highly personalized. It was Gandhi who in giving primacy to politics as a vehicle against the centralized colonial state unintentionally laid the basis for corruption, cynicism and dishonesty in post-independence Indian politics. The ensuing disenchantment with the sheer banality of a politics driven by the self-interested pursuit of power and the ineffectiveness of state action fostered increasing support for the amoral authoritarianism that had always been deeply embedded in Indian culture. The search for security in authority gave rise to a new civic consciousness which eventually found expression in Indira Gandhi's emergency in 1975.<sup>1</sup>

What this otherwise intriguing explanation of the cultural basis of authoritarianism in India does not reveal is why the formally democratic facade took as long as it did to crumble or for that matter why when it did crumble it stopped short of complete collapse. By looking only at the

<sup>1</sup> Ashis Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture*, New Delhi, 1980.

cultural underpinnings of politics, Nandy misses the opportunity of assessing the qualitative historical changes that accompanied the expansion of the colonial public sphere and the strains of authoritarianism, more covert than overt, rooted in the post-colonial Indian state structure. Analysing the dialectic between an implicit amoral authoritarianism in Indian political culture and a no less implicit structural authoritarianism within the state would appear to be the more promising approach. Moreover, given Nandy's exclusive focus on India, the comparative explanatory value of his political cultural analysis for military dominance in predominantly Muslim Pakistan remains open to conjecture.

Recourse to the drawing board of history and a comparative analysis of state formation and political processes in the two countries seems the best way of addressing the issue of democracy in India and military dictatorship in Pakistan. The legacies of colonialism – institutional, strategic, economic and ideological – provide the broad analytical framework in which to tease out the reasons for the apparently divergent political developments in India and Pakistan. In evaluating the dialectic of state formation and political processes three inter-related points need underlining at the very outset. First, the concept of the centre, or more precisely the differential inheritances of India and Pakistan in this regard, is critical in understanding the contexts in which state formation proceeded in the two countries. Second, the fact of a pre-existing and a non-existing central state apparatus has to serve as the main point of reference in assessing the roles of the Congress and the Muslim League in shaping political processes in India and Pakistan during the initial years of independence. And finally, it will be necessary to consider how the strategic and economic consequences of partition combined to influence state construction and political processes in both countries.

### Contrasting inheritances and outcomes, 1947–1951

Partitioning India and seizing control of the colonial state's unitary central apparatus in New Delhi was the Congress high command's response to the twin imperatives of keeping its own followers in line and integrating the princely states into the Indian union. From the Congress's angle of vision, the League's demand for a Pakistan based on the Muslim-majority provinces represented a mere fraction of a larger problem: the potential for a balkanization of post-colonial India. It was convenient that in 1947 the communal question had shoved the potentially more explosive issue of provincial autonomy into the background. Cutting the Gordian knot and conceding the principle of Pakistan had a sobering effect on provincial autonomists in the Hindu-majority provinces and generated the psychologi-

cal pressure needed to temper princely ambitions. Congress's ability to turn partition into an advantage in state formation is highlighted by the successful integration of the princely states and the rapidity with which the process of constitution-making was completed.

A transfer of power entailing the lapse of British paramountcy over the princes raised the alarming prospect of some of the states jointly or severally asserting their right to opt out of the Indian union. It was only by foregoing full independence and accepting dominion status within the British commonwealth that the Congress was able to use the good offices of Britain's last viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, to dispel any illusions of independence nurtured by the princely states which accounted for nearly 45 per cent of Indian territory. As governor-general of independent India, Mountbatten, carrying the colours of imperialism on one brow and of royalty on the other, did a splendid job for the Congress in cajoling and coaxing Britain's erstwhile princely clients to accede to the union. But the ultimate credit for the integration of the princely states goes to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Congress's foremost machine politician, and V. P. Menon, the agile secretary of the states' ministry. Together Patel and Menon masterminded a plan based on the classic bait and switch technique. The original instruments of accession offered the bait – the princely states had only to delegate defence, foreign affairs and communications to the centre. Once the princes had acceded on this basis to the union it was time for the switch: the instruments of accession were gradually amended to give the union centre increasing sway over the states.

Adjusting the constitutional relationship between the centre and the princely rulers was relatively simple compared with the problems of coordinating the affairs of state administrations at vastly different levels of development. Under the watchful eye of the states' ministry, whose powers were greatly extended for the purpose, an elaborate process of administrative integration was carried out within a short period of time. Some 216 princely states were merged into existing contiguous provincial administrations; 310 were consolidated into six states' unions and a half-dozen or so were converted into chief commissioners' provinces and ruled directly by the centre. At the end of the integrative process, the 554 quasi-autonomous princely states that acceded to India had been replaced by fourteen administrative units. With help from members of the IAS and the IPS these were subsequently tailored to fit the larger all-India-administrative structure, thus providing organizational coherence to the sprawling edifice of the post-independence Indian state. The fiscal integration of the states took appreciably longer to accomplish as did the process of merging the different armed forces of the princely states into the Indian military establishment. Problems arising from discrepancies in the centre's relations with the states

and the provinces during the transition were met by giving the president powers to directly monitor the affairs of the states for a ten-year period. This was reminiscent of the constitutional position prior to the 1935 act when provincial governments were partly responsible to their legislatures and partly subjected to the directives of the central government. The justification for phasing the process of democratization in the states was that neither their administrative services nor the political parties operating within them were in a position to assume full unaided responsibility for their administrations.

Anomalies in its practice, however, were carefully balanced with the maintenance of democratic form. Except for the delay involved in bringing the state administrations on a par with the provinces, the process of constitution-making was breathtakingly swift. The need for a new election to the constituent assembly was summarily dispensed with on pragmatic grounds. The central assembly elected in 1945–6 on an indirect basis served as the constitution-making body. Partition increased the share of Congress's seats in the assembly from a formidable 69 per cent to an overpowering 82 per cent. Yet it was not simply the Congress's commanding majority which determined the pace and the direction of constitution-making. Congress's inheritance of the centralized state apparatus of the raj facilitated its task of shaping independent India's constitution. Pandering to the values of consensus and accommodation as well as speech-making by a large number of members notwithstanding, the substance of the constitution was decided upon by a coterie of about a dozen individuals led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel. Informal promises and gentle arm twisting by the central high command ensured that provincial bosses accepted a strong union centre capable of stamping out the disorders accompanying partition and undertaking a range of social and economic reforms. As Patel emphatically stated: 'the first requirement of any progressive country is internal and external security . . . It is impossible to make progress unless you first restore order in the country.'<sup>2</sup> Giving short shrift to Gandhian ideas of self-governing village republics, other than a purely cosmetic gesture to *panchayati raj*, the constitution-makers opted for a strong central government of the parliamentary form. There were to be two houses, the lower house or the Lok Sabha with representatives directly elected on the basis of population and the upper house or the Rajya Sabha with members elected indirectly by state assemblies. Majority support in the Lok Sabha would form the basis of the executive branch of government, consisting of a prime minister and a cabinet whose advice would be binding on the president.

<sup>2</sup> Speech to Congress planning conference, 26 May 1950, cited in Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, London, 1966, p. 45.

Where did these arrangements among the rulers leave all those who were to be ruled? The will of the people was sought to be given expression in the constitution's enunciation of fundamental rights and the directive principles of state policy. Seven fundamental rights were listed: the right to equality, the right to freedom, the right against exploitation, the right to freedom of religion, the right to education, the right to property and the right to constitutional remedies. Yet the constitution authorized the state to qualify or curtail several of these rights. For instance, the state could confiscate property after providing compensation. Far more serious was the dilution of the right to due process of law. In its quest for security the constitution permitted the state to hold its citizens in preventive detention without trial for at least three months. The Congress's justification that these powers were necessitated by the extraordinary times facing India was countered by the argument that constitutions were for the most part meant to be in force during ordinary times. Congress of course had its way, which led at least one critic to charge that the Indian constitution was an unacceptable patchwork of 'myths and denials'.

If qualifications to fundamental rights left the way open for the establishment of a 'police state', the directive principles were expressions of the state's bona fides in eventually turning India into a welfare state. The state according to these principles committed itself to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living, promote international peace and just dealings among nations, provide a uniform civil code and a *panchayat* system of local government, promote cottage industries, agriculture and animal husbandry and prohibit the use of liquor and harmful drugs. However, the constitution carefully avoided making any mention of socialism. In any case, none of the high-flying objectives of the directive principles of the state were justiciable in a court of law. The grand declaration of lofty principles sufficed to reaffirm the democratic promises of the nationalist struggle. Yet there was no certainty that the bulk of the citizenry could unproblematically lay claim to their democratic right to economic and social justice.

Although the constitution created three lists of legislative subjects – federal, state and concurrent – the centre was equipped with all the requisite powers to govern India as a unitary state. The all-India services – the IAS and the IPS – were to serve as the kingpin of unitarianism in a system that was supposedly federal in form. To appease provincial autonomists a moderate concession was made: the proportion of posts in the IAS cadre to be filled by promotion from the provincial services was raised from 20 per cent to 25 per cent. But most of the financial powers, and certainly the more lucrative categories of taxation, were given to the union centre. The president upon the advice of the prime minister and the cabinet had the power to proclaim a state of emergency if the union was threatened by external

aggression, internal disturbance or financial crisis. During the period of emergency union powers extended to giving states direction concerning executive government and to legislate on items not on the union list. Direct rule by the centre could be imposed on being advised by a centrally appointed governor that a state could not be governed in accordance with the constitution. It was this constitution, federal in its protestations but unitary in its shape and structure, which was adopted by the constituent assembly on 26 November 1949. Two months later, on 26 January 1950, India was proclaimed a sovereign republic, albeit within the British commonwealth. Membership in the commonwealth was deemed to be consistent with the republic adopting a strictly non-aligned policy under Nehru's direction.

Shunning association with the major power blocs and stolidly supporting anti-colonial movements the world over was to remain the governing principle of India's foreign and defence policies. While it would be plainly naive to take the policy of non-alignment at face value, there can be no question that Nehru played a key role in guiding India away from the power blocs whose strategic imperatives bore so heavily on the emerging state structures in the developing world during the cold war era. Non-alignment in Nehruvian parlance did not preclude associating with the Anglo-American bloc in circumstances favourable for Indian national interests. The British at any rate were quite sanguine that 'Nehru's great aversion from any entanglements' notwithstanding, the dangers of isolationism and the impossibility of joining the Communist camp made sure that India had 'no real alternative to . . . inclining more and more towards the West'.<sup>3</sup> Non-alignment certainly did not prevent India from becoming one of the major recipients of US aid, well ahead in aggregate if not per capita terms of the decidedly more pliant client America found in Pakistan. Indeed, long before the border war with China in 1962 forced open the doors to Washington's largesse in the form of military assistance, India was one of the main beneficiaries of American economic aid and advice. The total US programmed economic assistance to India until financial year 1961 amounted to 3,270 million dollars by comparison with 1,474 million dollars to Pakistan.

If reliance on external assistance is taken as the sole criterion, India was no less aligned than Pakistan. What gave India comparative advantage in negotiating better terms with the centres of the international capitalist system was not simply a result of Nehru formulating a more circumspect foreign policy than his opposite number in Pakistan. That in itself would have been difficult if not for India's geographical size, its undeniable

<sup>3</sup> Archibald Nye to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 17 May 1951, FO 371/92870, PRO.

military importance as a regional power and the political stature which came with the historical continuities evoked by its international nomenclature. So without being dismissive of Nehru's role in placing India on a non-aligned path in a world where alignment seemed the most opportune way of forging ahead in the international arena, it is important to account for the fortuitous conditions which made his foreign and defence policies conceivable in the first instance. Nehru's contribution in minimizing the impact of the international environment of the cold war on India's domestic politics and economy is less open to question. Yet to attribute this wholly to his superior intellectual and moral qualities, as some have argued ad nauseam, is to discount the significance of his privileged position as head of an essentially unchallenged government and party.

It was for all these reasons, more contextual than personal, that the interplay of domestic, regional and international factors moulded the dialectic between state formation and political processes in India and Pakistan in substantially different ways. Such a perspective makes it more feasible to assess the precise manner in which the balance between democratic and authoritarian tendencies was struck in the two countries.

When it came to choosing a domestic political system the Indian constitution clearly laid the foundations for representative government elected on the basis of universal adult franchise. But apart from removing the limits on the franchise, almost two-thirds of the 1950 document reproduced clauses in the 1935 act and replicated its overall structure. With the all-India administrative and police services providing continuities with the colonial era, the rules of democracy laid down in the constitution were not the only pillars on which the edifice of the new state was built. The dialectic between state formation and political processes in India was at each step shaped by a symbiosis between the agenda of the premier nationalist party and the administrative legacies of colonialism. In neighbouring Pakistan the absence of a central state apparatus placed the dialectic between state formation and political processes on an altogether different footing. In the initial months of independence Jinnah's powers as governor-general were the only basis for the exercise of central authority over the Pakistani provinces. In due course the imperative of constructing an entirely new central authority over territories which for so long had been governed from New Delhi, together with the weaknesses of the Muslim League's organizational machinery, saw the administrative bureaucracy gaining an edge over the political arms of the state. The provinces continued to be the main arenas of political activity in Pakistan. Those engaged in constructing and then managing the new central government apparatus were politicians with little or no social bases of support in the provinces and were, consequently, unable to stand their ground against civil servants trained in the best

traditions of colonial bureaucratic authoritarianism. Already handicapped by a meagre share of the spoils of partition, the new Pakistani centre faced the challenge of severe socio-economic dislocations and a threat to its newly demarcated frontiers from India. The outbreak of armed hostilities over Kashmir gave added impetus to the consolidation of central authority in Pakistan, but at the same time sharpened the contradictions between state formation and political processes and, by extension, between the newly constructed centre and the provinces. In the early days of independence fears of the reincorporation of areas within Pakistan into the Indian union served to blur the differences between external and internal threats to security and central authority. The dilemma was compounded by the sorely insufficient resource endowment Pakistan possessed to finance its external defence and internal security needs. So the early outbreak of belligerence with India entailed the diversion of scarce resources extracted from the provinces into a defence effort before political processes could become clearly defined.

In the international context of the cold war and a subtle but significant British–American rivalry, officers at the top echelons of the non-elective institutions – the military and the bureaucracy – began to skilfully manipulate their international connections with London and Washington. The manner of the insertion of Pakistan into the post-world war II international system played a critical role in combination with regional and domestic factors to create a lasting institutional imbalance within the Pakistani state structure. Members of the Pakistan constituent assembly fumbled uncertainly with the constitution-making process complicated by the demographic fact of a Bengali majority under-represented in the non-elective institutions and a fierce debate on whether Pakistan should adopt an Islamic or a secular form of government. Dominant trends in public opinion in the political arenas were swayed by the populist nationalisms of Iran, Palestine and Egypt. While Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, had a feel for the popular pulse, the structural constraints informing state formation in Pakistan were too severe to prevent a shift in the institutional balance of power in favour of the bureaucracy and the military. The mandarins and the praetorian guards were prepared to be hard-headed about the business of proceeding with state formation in a difficult regional and international environment without let or hindrance from the complex social dynamics underlying political processes in the two wings of Pakistan. By early 1951 American policy makers had made up their minds that the Persian–Iraq sector could not be defended without help from Pakistan. They were by now also ready to bypass the British and make direct approaches to the Pakistani establishment. The early managers of the Pakistani state were prepared to deal with the Americans even though their

motives in forging a special relationship with the United States had more to do with a desire to acquire a better military balance in relation to India than from fears of communist inroads into the Islamic heartlands of the Middle East. By the fall of 1951, the military and the civil bureaucracy had registered their dominance within the emerging structure of the Pakistani state.

The different colonial inheritances of a central state apparatus, the relatively milder impact of the strategic and economic consequences of partition on India than on Pakistan and the nature of their international links were the most important factors leading to alternative outcomes in the two countries. In October 1951 Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, fell victim to an assassin's bullet. At that very moment India's first prime minister, who by then had established himself as the main architect of the country's foreign and defence policy, was preparing to lead the Congress party to the first of its many victories in a general election. The reasons for Nehru's success and the very long shadow it has cast on interpretations of India's tryst with democracy call for a closer analysis of not only the man and the context but also the nature of Indian politics.

#### **Party politics and structural authoritarianism in India, 1947–1967**

Some twenty days before he was assassinated, Gandhi called for the dissolution of the Congress party which he believed was in 'decay and decline' and a hot-bed of 'corruption and power politics'. But the Mahatma was a stretch removed from reality – now that independence had been won politics was more about power than ever before. The more so since Congress emerged from the anti-imperialist struggle committed to two potentially contradictory objectives: (1) the social transformation of India and (2) the projection of a single unified nation. Needing to minimize social conflict to achieve the second objective, the Congress was awkwardly poised to preside over the magnitude of changes needed for the effective attainment of the first. Despite the inherent tension between the two, both objectives required the establishment of a political system dominated by the Congress – one whose legitimacy would be assured by a conscious accommodation of dissent from an array of social groups occupying strategic positions mainly within but also outside the movement. The dual roles of authoritative spokesman of the entire nation and an instrument of social change could be performed in the post-independence period only by transforming the movement – containing disparate elements – into an effective ruling party.

Ignoring the Mahatma's last will and testament, the Congress leaders began establishing the structures of political dominance, while taking care

not to wholly undermine the existing patterns of dissent. Possessing the self-confidence of a nationalist organization whose unchallenged dominance had been confirmed further by its inheritance of the colonial state's unitary centre, Congress was careful not to damage its legitimacy by muzzling such isolated pockets of dissent as existed. This did not mean that Congress critics, both within and outside the party, could operate with impunity. Communists and proponents of autonomy for linguistic states were put down with a heavy hand in the initial years of independence even as the Congress strove to exercise dominance within a multi-party system. In 1948, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel began the reorganization of the party with a view to making it an even more effective instrument of dominance. He persuaded the working committee to amend the Congress constitution forbidding the existence within the organization of parties which had a 'separate membership, constitution and programme'. Although Patel succeeded in his objective of turfing out the Congress Socialist party, he was less successful in turning Congress into a well-knit party. Nehru, unlike Patel, was less apprehensive of ideological differences within the Congress and seemed to have a better understanding of the Congress's dual role as a governing party as well as a continuing political movement. Yet Nehru's perception of the Congress was far from perfect. He was ready to see it play an autonomous role vis-à-vis the government at the state level but was unwilling to tolerate a separation of government and party at the national level. When Patel with the support of the Congress right wing managed to get Purushottamdas Tandon, an arch conservative from UP, elected as Congress president, Nehru threatened to resign as prime minister. A well-rehearsed Nehruvian posture, it did have the intended effect. In 1951 he eventually forced Tandon's resignation and took over as president of the Congress. Throughout his long tenure as prime minister Nehru kept a tight grip on the party at the centre while exploiting divisions between Congress ministries and the party organization at the state level to his own political advantage.

The dominance of a single party in an essentially multi-party system of parliamentary democracy worked reasonably well. Here the momentum of the nationalist movement, the Congress's organizational structure and the similarity in the social background of the top leadership and their shared experiences in the anti-imperialist struggle proved invaluable. Yet political stability is rarely achieved without a price. On the face of it, the creeping sense of disillusionment with what Nandy has dubbed India's 'banal politics' appeared in better harness during the initial years. But just beneath the surface calm of single-party dominance, the politics of patronage were widening the scope for corruption and the self-interested pursuit of power by privileged social groups both within and outside the state apparatus. The dichotomy between inherited rule-bound colonial institutions and a per-

sonalized Indian society became more accentuated under democratic dispensation. Shortly after independence, Congress ministers and state governors began jockeying for monetary and other privileges well beyond their due and, invariably, without reference to the appropriate legislative authority. The whimsical flouting of rules and laws was infectious, especially in the states where Congress politicians preferred to act in their executive capacities. This left members of the higher bureaucracy in the awkward role of trying to enforce old rules in a dramatically different game. The process of adaptation proved relatively effortless for state and local level bureaucrats, accustomed to a more personalized style of governance in which rules could be bent without being broken.

Complicity between bureaucrats and public representatives reduced tensions between the administrative and political arms of the state, unlike Pakistan where members of the superior and the provincial services did not have to reckon with central and provincial governments capable of asserting their will through organized and autonomous party machines. The qualitatively different balance of power between bureaucrats and politicians in the two states helps explain the relative success of formal democracy in the one and its apparent failure in the other. While the holding of elections at regular intervals in India underlined the primacy of politics and increased the politician's stature relative to that of the civil servant, the virtual denial of the people's voting right in Pakistan and the generally low status accorded to a political career saw a corresponding rise in bureaucratic prestige and power. Yet what was auspicious for the future of formal democracy in India was ominous for its substance. The attractions of Congress's patronage system, together with the policy of open membership, brought droves of lesser mortals into the organizational fold. Weakened in calibre and fired more and more by the politics of opportunism, the Congress was slowly but subtly becoming even more of an organizational mainspring for corruption and self-interest than Gandhi may have feared. For every one who wrested a piece of the pie there were many more whose disappointments lent added fury to the politics of competition and social conflict festering under the Nehruvian veil of stability.

In the absence of any national alternative, however, Congress had little difficulty romping home to victory in the first three general elections, further confirming its dominance at the national as well as the state levels. Refining the art of electoral manipulation, the Congress distributed tickets in the rural constituencies on the basis of caste, community and religious considerations. Lack of adherence to the party's socio-economic programmes or service in the nationalist movement was no barrier to the selection of candidates capable of mustering electoral support. The triumph of expediency bore handsome results. During 1952 and 1957 Congress won

between 74 and 75 per cent of the central parliamentary seats and between 61 and 68 per cent of the seats in the state assemblies. But it did so with only 45 to 47.5 per cent of the electoral vote, hinting both at the success of opposition parties and their failure to fully capitalize on the advantage by cobbling together a united front against the Congress. An electoral system based on territorial constituencies meant that Congress candidates could get elected even if they polled a mere 30 per cent of the total popular vote cast. Except for a few fringe groups, opposition parties in the early years of independence saw their task as a corrective rather than a competitive or confrontational one and spent the better part of their energies trying to influence factions within the Congress. In other words, opposition parties which were highly fragmented to begin with played a major part in lending legitimacy to the Congress dominated political system, preferring to work within it or, alternatively, trying to gain control over it.

There were of course challenges from parties like the Jan Sangh, which was opposed to the Congress's secular creed. But the Jan Sangh became tarred by its association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a paramilitary organization, one of whose members – Nathuram Godse – assassinated Gandhi in January 1948. The Jan Sangh's support base in any case was mainly limited to north Indian urban Hindu small trading groups. Yet here state Congress leaders were 'more resourceful and less liberal' and had few compunctions about appropriating the Jan Sangh's communal demands. For instance, the Jan Sangh's campaign in the immediate aftermath of partition against Urdu being granted the status of a second official language in UP was preempted by the state Congress government's adoption of a Hindi-only policy.<sup>4</sup> The Praja Socialist Party, an offshoot from the Congress Socialist party, considered Nehru's socialism to be a sham. Although it did well in the 1957 elections, polling the second highest number of popular votes, the PSP was unable to make a significant dent on the Congress's hold over north India. Congress under Nehru relied on the personalized and caste-based networks of local bosses to deliver the support of the lower social orders in the rural areas. Despite a spread of support in UP, the PSP was unable to attract a majority of the voters with its radical socialist rhetoric. The Communist Party of India was constrained by its pre-independence support for the British war effort and the demand for Pakistan. Its main bases of support were in Kerala where it won the 1957 state elections and in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. In 1964 the CPI, reeling from the dismissal of its government in Kerala by the centre in 1959, split into pro-Moscow and pro-Beijing factions. Among the more

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: the Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 111–28 and 156–7.

important regional opposition parties was the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). It emerged from the anti-Brahmin Dravida Kazhagam established by E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, known as Periyar or Mahatma among his Tamil-speaking followers. In 1949, a faction led by C. N. Annadurai parted company with the Dravida Kazhagam to form the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (literally, the Dravidian Progressive Federation) to push for the creation of a separate Tamil state in Madras. Congress, however, managed to hold its ground against the DMK until the mid-1960s.

But the survival of India's parliamentary system in the long run is inexplicable without reference to the symbiotic relationship between the Congress high command and the non-elected institutions of the state – the civil bureaucracy, the police, and the army. Without the IAS, the IPS and when necessary, as during the insurgencies in the north-east, the Indian army, the Congress party alone could not have assured the political centre's authority throughout the length and breadth of the country. The subtler and less visible role of the Indian army in securing central authority flowed in part from the existence of para-military forces such as the border security force and a centrally armed instrument like the central reserve police. These could be called upon to smoothe New Delhi's little local troubles without creating an undue reliance on the army command. With a choice of coercive instruments other than the army at their disposal, the political arms of the state were also able to maintain an edge over the administrative machinery at the all-India level. However, members of the IAS and the IPS in their capacity as agents of the centre could often overrule the political leadership at the state and local levels of society. Yet according to the terms of the understanding, instances where they actually curbed the activities of state and local politicians were restricted to matters vital to the imperatives of the state and the party high command. Politicians and bureaucrats, especially at the district level, more often than not worked hand in glove at all levels of the political system with complicitous ease. The growth of public sector enterprises and licensing controls over the private sector created new spheres of state patronage, giving the central political leadership ample scope for rewarding loyal and cooperative non-elected officials. Contemporary observers could discern that the all-India centre while leaning heavily on the non-elected institutions of the state 'disguise[d] a tendency to authoritarian rule' through a 'conscious and studied observance ... of parliamentary forms' as a 'convenient substitute for democratic practices'.<sup>5</sup> Even in these early years there were loud whispers in support of some sort of a socially non-interventionary and politically benevolent authoritarian rule for India.

<sup>5</sup> Christie's report no. 23 for September 1949, DO 133/108, PRO.

Yet the degree of support for authoritarian rule among influential segments of society, while important at the level of elite discourse, in itself is not sufficient in decoding the contrasting political developments in India and Pakistan. This in turn serves notice against giving credence to specificities of a political culture without relating them to the structures of state and political economy. The singular focus on parties and politics by some scholars and on political culture by others has deflected from the fact that the practice of formal democracy in India, expressed in the holding of elections at regular intervals, has always co-existed with a covert authoritarianism inherent in the state structure. One reason why this has been less conducive to detection and dissection is that the structural authoritarianism of a state made tolerable by a formally democratic political system tends to be more enduring and diffuse than one based on direct military rule.

This is not to discount the very real differences between covert and overt authoritarianism. India's success in forestalling military rule is no small feat. But once again the credit cannot be given to its politicians without noting the propitious circumstances which made the neutralization of the military institution possible. These included the fact of a pre-existing unitary central apparatus, a formidable defence establishment sustained by a modest but adequate resource base and a geographical expanse so vast as to make the coordination of a military takeover highly improbable, if not altogether impossible. There can be no doubt that unlike the Muslim League in Pakistan the Congress leadership took concerted steps to downgrade the army's social and political profile and establish civilian control over the military as a whole. In 1955 the office of commander-in-chief of the defence forces was abolished. Instead there was a chief of army staff who was on an equal footing with the other two service chiefs. As if to add insult to injury, the Indian state's warrant of precedence put the chief of army staff in twenty-fifth place, trailing behind state court chief justices, members of the planning commission and even state cabinet ministers. Initially the chief of army staff had a four-year term. After 1966 the tenure of all the three service chiefs was reduced to three years with no possibility of extension. The service chiefs were subordinate to a civilian minister of defence and their budgets placed under the scrutiny of non-elected officials in the defence ministry. Modelled on the British practice of parliamentary government, civilian control over the defence services in India did not mean elective supremacy. The close monitoring of defence budgets by civil servants is not the same as military accountability to a representative parliament.

From the point of view of the Indian military there may not have been much to choose between civil or elective supremacy. And indeed, there was more than one military voice bemoaning the shabby treatment meted out to

the Indian defence services during the years 1947 to 1955, incidentally the very years that sowed the seeds of military dominance in Pakistan. The induction of Krishna Menon as minister of defence in May 1957 proved to be a mixed bag of treats for Indian military personnel. Defence production was stepped up but so too were Menon's jibes at the service chiefs as well as the Indian army which in his view was simply a 'parade-ground army'.<sup>6</sup> Menon's ambitious plans to modernize the army led to frequent clashes with members of the defence establishment and also with the private sector which wanted a larger cut of the ensuing boons. Until the Indo-China war in 1962 forced a major review of New Delhi's military policy, Menon, who could be as irascible as he could be ingenious, rivetted public attention on matters to do with defence as never before. Apart from politicizing the ministry of defence, Menon contravened the military's tradition of seniority as the basis for promotion on the grounds that merit was a requisite for efficiency. He had a point which was rammed home to parliament with strong backing from Nehru despite howls of protest against his summary treatment of military precedent.

Menon's tenure as minister of defence is usually regarded as one underscoring the supremacy of the elected over the non-elected institutions of the state. But it seems more apt to describe it as one which exposed the liberal democratic theory's myth of the neutrality of non-elected institutions. Civil bureaucrats and military officers alike reacted to Menon's decisions by furnishing evidence to members of parliament and actively canvassing their support. If the spectacle of men in uniform in the visitor's gallery of the Lok Sabha avidly following the debate on their respective cases was a rarity for India, so too would it have been for military dominated Pakistan. That said, it is undoubtedly true that Menon-type interventions in military matters would have been inconceivable in a country where the defence establishment enjoyed a vantage position in the political configuration by virtue of the state's grossly inflated strategic requirements. By the time the border skirmish with China forced New Delhi to press down on the pedal of military expansion, civilian control of the defence services as well as the state itself had been well established.

As for the partnership between the premier political party and the civilian bureaucracy, this in contrast to that in Pakistan was made possible in the context of a pre-existing and essentially unitary structure of the Indian state. Admittedly, the Congress party possessed something of a federal structure in the first two decades of independence. Nehru made accommodations with Congress party bosses at the state level who were permitted a certain degree of autonomy. Such a policy of the central leadership only

<sup>6</sup> Cited in C. P. Bhambhri, *Bureaucracy and Politics in India*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 178.

worked so long as the rural under-classes remained relatively quiescent and patron-client relations in the states remained substantially intact. With the expanding sphere of democratic politics, the limitations of this policy became evident; in the 1967 elections the Congress party was swept out of power in as many as eight states. It is necessary therefore to address the political dividends as well as costs of the strategy of class conciliation rather than class conflict pursued during the Nehru years.

Throughout the pre-independence period provincial and district Congress committees were in the hands of dominant landowning castes allied with urban middle-class intelligentsia, businessmen and merchants. During the 1930s, nearly half of the new Congress recruits were drawn from prosperous proprietor classes with holdings of between 21 and 100 acres. After independence, conservative coalitions built up by dominant landowning castes in alliance with urban businessmen gained effective control of district and state Congress committees. In mobilizing the rural underprivileged for electoral purposes, the Congress encouraged alliances along caste, community and regional rather than class lines. During the first two decades after independence the Congress party remained an instrument of largely upper caste and class interests. Access to state power enabled the Congress to foil all attempts that might have assisted the organization of the underprivileged cutting across the divisions of caste, community as well as region and, in this way, stretching the parameters of an economically based national politics to allow for some measure of self-assertion by the subordinate classes. For all the hue and cry about Nehru's 'socialist' leanings, his government's policies catered to the interests of the propertied groups. Socialism, in Nehru's parlance, was not inconsistent with a mixed economy. The aim was not to create an egalitarian society so much as encourage the rapid growth of productive forces in society. India's first three development plans were characterized by state supported public sector industrialization and the promotion of the private sector. Nehru's policy of class conciliation and accommodation lent a semblance of cohesion to the Congress party and helped consolidate state power. But by the same token, this policy undermined its representative capacity and, by extension, the Indian state's ability to carry out redistributive reforms.

For instance, legislation abolishing *zamindari* during 1953-5 took away the rent collecting rights of absentee landlords but, in most instances, allowed resident landlords to retain vast tracts of their land. The policy was a gift to the Congress's rich farmer supporters. There was no effective social programme of redistributive justice for the subordinate castes and classes. Yet even these nominal land reforms were unacceptable to the Congress's provincial bosses. Since the ceiling legislation in the early decades was on an individual basis, landlords opted for retrospective registration of land in the

name of family members or, failing that, bribing the administrative bureaucracy to block the effective implementation of the reforms.

By the end of the second decade of independence Congress's limited social bases of support and its dependence on an oligarchical coterie of party bosses began to backfire seriously. Between 1962 and 1966 and around the time of the general elections of 1967 there were mass defections from the Congress. In Bihar and UP, Charan Singh broke from the Congress to form the Bharatiya Kranti Dal which later became the Bharatiya Lok Dal. In West Bengal a United Front consisting of the Communist Party of India – Marxist (CPI-M) and thirteen other parties defeated the Congress. In Bihar socialists did well at the Congress's expense. The DMK routed Congress in Tamil Nadu. The results of the 1967 elections marked the end of the first phase of Congress dominance in India and the emergence of a number of regionally based opposition parties.

The most dramatic instances of opposition to the ruling Congress party have invariably come from regional forces. This tendency is partly explained by the fact that the Congress was the only party with nation-wide bases of support. But more importantly, it had much to do with the initial reluctance of Nehru and other leaders to implement Congress's commitment to a linguistic reorganization of the states. Violent agitations following a fast unto death by a prominent Gandhian leader forced the government in December 1952 to concede the principle of a Telugu-speaking state of Andhra. The recommendation of a states' reorganization commission to form fourteen linguistic states in 1955 did not extend to the provinces of Bombay and Punjab. Major language riots in Bombay in 1960 forced the centre to create the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat and the long-standing demand for a Punjabi subah or province was conceded only as late as 1966. The most serious regional threat in the late 1950s and early 1960s came from the southern states, Tamil Nadu in particular, which were virulently opposed to the imposition of Hindi as the national language. It was simply that the limits of Nehruvian policy of working with the Congress party's regional bosses were not fully registered until the setback suffered in the fourth general election of 1967.

Contrary to the common view that dynasticism within the Congress party and the Indian state structure was started by Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, the dynamics of centre–state relations had already begun swinging the pendulum away from parliament and the party leadership towards executive authority concentrated in the prime minister's hands long before Nehru's death in 1964. Centralization of authority in Nehru's hands was a result of the Congress organization at the state and the district levels being weak, loose and riven with inter- and intra-group factionalism. The changing balance of power within the elected institutions was reflected in their

relationship with the non-elective institutions of the state, the civil bureaucracy in particular. So there is reason to pause and consider before joining the scholarly chorus to celebrate Nehru's achievements in putting India on the road to democracy. Whether as government, party or state manager, Nehru was more of a juggler than an architect of democratic institutions. For instance, he used a formula known as the 'Kamaraj plan' of 1963 to replace most of the central ministers and state chief ministers and bring confirmed loyalists into positions of power. Nehru showed both imagination and ability to use his political stature to mask the actual processes of organizational disintegration within the Congress. The bureaucrats had no reason to be uncomfortable with the statist socialism propounded by Nehru. India's first and most celebrated prime minister deployed his socialist rhetoric with telling effect to placate the paragons of social justice while at the same time succouring the appetite of state officials as well as the bigbags of Indian capitalism who financed the Congress party's election campaigns.

The Congress party's descent into state party bossism and an oligarchical form of politics became complete during the brief prime ministership of Lal Bahadur Shastri between May 1964 and January 1966. Unable to withstand pressures from party bosses, euphemistically known as the 'syndicate', Shastri clutched at the arms of the higher civil service in India. This seemed to be the only way to prevent an increasingly unrepresentative gang of regional bosses from exploiting the Congress party and, in the process, seriously undermining the centre's capacity to promote the interests of its main beneficiaries both within and outside the state structure. After Shastri's sudden death, the syndicate believed that they had a malleable prime ministerial candidate in Indira Gandhi. They could not have been wider of the mark. In an attempt to neutralize the party bosses and restore the Congress's sagging electoral fortunes, Indira Gandhi turned not only to elements within the bureaucracy but decided to deliver to the party and the country a potent dose of populism.

The legacy of the Nehru era of Indian politics had both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, the practice of formal democracy had become an established routine as the four general elections of 1952, 1957, 1962 and 1967 exemplified. On the negative side, the symbiotic relationship of the ruling party with the civil bureaucracy gave a fresh lease of life to the strand of authoritarianism that had been inherent in the Indian state structure. Despite the formal separation of the legislature and the executive, rule by ordinance was by no means a thing of the past. According to one estimate, during the first two decades of independence in addition to 1,600 statutes, including twenty-one constitutional amendments, more than 100 regulations, 100 presidential acts and 150 ordinances were enacted. As if this riot of executive regulations was not enough, various government

departments are believed to have been issuing about 5,000 rules annually. Together with the vastly increased scope of bureaucratic discretion, these rules and regulations far from systematizing relations between state and society provided opportunities galore for patronage, corruption and extortion. Two decades after independence India possessed a unitary state resting equally on elected and non-elected institutions, neither of which were above twisting and turning the rules to accommodate a personalized style of politics and government, and a federal ruling party that was becoming increasingly hamstrung by factionalism and a narrowing regional and class basis of support.

Qualifying the successes of Indian democracy is not to slight the Nehruvian Congress's very significant achievement in institutionalizing the phenomena of general elections at five-year intervals. Elections at least give the ruled the priceless power to periodically hold rulers accountable, even if they cannot be seen as a sufficient basis to gauge the substance of democracy. Unless capable of extending their voting rights beyond the confines of institutionalized electoral arenas to an effective struggle against social and economic exploitation, legal citizens are more likely to be the handmaids of powerful political manipulators than autonomous agents deriving concrete rewards from democratic processes. Granted the small mercies voters extract from politicians during the time of electoral mobilization, these fall well short of the rights of equal citizenship that dignify democracy over all other forms of governance. To equate the right to vote with the full rights of citizenship is to lose sight of the ongoing struggle between dominance and resistance which informs and can potentially transform the nexus between democratic politics and authoritarian states in post-independence South Asia.

### **Party politics and military dominance in Pakistan, 1947-1971**

Pakistan's abject failure to institute even a formal democracy with regular elections at the national and provincial levels provides the obverse side of the British colonial legacy in the subcontinent. It took no less than twenty-four years to hold the first general election on the basis of universal adult franchise in 1970. Some of the reasons for Pakistan's singular inability to evolve a democratic political system have been sketched out earlier. Fleshing these out further should make the comparisons and contrasts of the dialectic between state formation and political processes in the two countries more vivid and accessible.

As already suggested, Congress's inheritance of the colonial state's unitary centre and its assumption of British India's international personal-