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# A political introduction to India

2007 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Indian independence. India's rise and what it means for the world is now a central preoccupation of analysts and policy-makers, who have realised that China is not the only 'Asian giant' now awakening. This Research Paper is intended to act as a resource that Members of Parliament and their staff can draw upon when engaging with India's ongoing transformation.

Part I provides key facts and figures about India. Part II offers a broad analytical overview of key issues affecting India's past, present and future trajectory. Part III looks at domestic developments and some of the major challenges facing India at home. Part IV discusses India's evolving foreign and security policy. Part V surveys political and military relations between India, the UK and the European Union. The Paper ends with a select bibliography of key sources. There is also an Appendix in which past UK parliamentary proceedings on India before independence are briefly reviewed.

This Research Paper is a platform for a series of Library Standard Notes that will address in more depth specific issues about India. The Paper is a companion paper to RP 07/40, *An economic introduction to India*.

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## Summary of main points

2007 marks the 60th anniversary of Indian independence. India's rise and what it means for the world is now a central preoccupation of analysts and policy-makers, who have realised that China is not the only 'Asian giant' currently awakening.

Part I provides key facts and figures about India, drawing together information regarding its history, society, political system, political leaders, treaty obligations and the diaspora.

Part II offers a broad analytical overview of key issues affecting India's past, present and future trajectory. It focuses in particular on the co-existence in India of formal democratic equality with deep-rooted social inequalities, exploring why the increased democratic participation of the poor has not (so far) led to substantial progress in reducing the most extreme forms of poverty. It also discusses how India is seeking to reposition itself within the wider world by establishing itself as a major power, and how energy security is rising up the list of foreign policy priorities as economic growth continues.

Part III looks at domestic developments and some of the major challenges facing India at home. It combines a description of the activities and achievements of the present government, which has been in power since 2004, with brief discussions of four issues that are important for understanding the contemporary political context in India: the changing dynamics of caste politics; the rise of Hindu nationalism and its role in promoting religious violence; the Maoist challenge along what is known as India's 'Red Corridor'; and the insurgencies in Kashmir and Northeast India, including Assam.

Part IV discusses India's evolving foreign and security policy, which entered a new era with India's economic reforms of the 1990s and the series of five underground nuclear tests in May 1998. It looks at India's role within the UN, including its current campaign for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and within regional inter-governmental organisations. It also surveys India's bilateral relationships, including with China, Pakistan and the US – with which India has signed a controversial civil nuclear co-operation deal. Finally, it describes and assesses India's military and nuclear capabilities.

Part V surveys political and military relations between India and the UK, the overarching framework for which is provided by the 2002 New Delhi Declaration. It also looks at defence co-operation between the two countries, which has remained strong since Indian independence. This part of the Paper also briefly reviews India's relations with the European Union, which could advance to a new level if proposals for a Comprehensive Economic Co-operation Agreement bear fruit. There is uncertainty about whether the agreement will include clauses on human rights and weapons of mass destruction, as has become customary in such agreements.

## Acronyms

AAGSP	All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad
AASU	All Assam Students Union
ABSU	All Bodo Students Union
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGP	Asom Gana Parishad
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
BAC	Bodoland Autonomous Council
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BLT	Bodo Liberation Tigers
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
BPAC	Bodo People's Action Committee
BVF	Bodo Volunteer Force
CERD	Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CMP	Common Minimum Programme
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
DCG	India-UK Defence Consultative Group
DFID	Department for International Development
DMK	Dravidra Munnetra Kazhagam
EU	European Union
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAF	Indian Air Force
IBSA	India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MCC	Maoist Communist Centre (MCC)
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NRI	Non-Resident Indians
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group
OBCs	Other Backward Classes
OCI	Overseas Citizens of India
PDS	Public Distribution System
PIO	Persons/People of Indian Origin
RJD	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## Glossary

*Adivasi* – Indigenous or tribal groups, also known as Scheduled Tribes

*Brahmin* – The highest caste group whose traditional occupations are as priests and scholars.

*Caste* – Caste is an inherited birth identity that positions people within the hierarchical caste system of mainstream Hinduism.

*Dalit* – Literally, 'The Oppressed'. This term is used to refer to 'Untouchables'. It is the term most widely used by groups campaigning against 'Untouchability'. The term is also sometimes used to refer to other historically deprived groups including Adivasis.

*Harijan* – Literally, 'Children of God'. The term was used by Mahatma Gandhi to refer to India's 'Untouchables'. However, many consider the term patronising and it is used less than 'Dalit'.

*Hindutva* - A Hindu nationalist ideology, which views India as a Hindu nation that should be run according to Hindu precepts.

*Lok Sabha* – The 'House of the People' is the lower house of the Indian Parliament.

*Naxalite* – The Naxalites are Maoist insurgents.

*Other Backward Classes (OBCs)* – Castes that have not been subject to the discrimination of Untouchability, but that are still considered socially and economically deprived, are classified as OBCs. The category also includes some non-Hindu groups.

*Gram Panchayat* – Elected village councils.

*Rajya Sabha* – The 'House of the States' is the upper house of the Indian Parliament

*Reservations* – A range of policies of positive discrimination that set aside a proportion of places in government employment, government-funded educational institutions and electoral constituencies for historically deprived groups.

*Scheduled Castes (SC)* – The constitutional term for Dalits. The term refers to their special status under the Constitution as a group entitled to special protection and positive discrimination through reservations.

*Scheduled Tribes (ST)* – The constitutional term for Adivasis. The term refers to their special status under the Constitution as a group entitled to special protection and positive discrimination through reservations.

*Untouchables* – India's 'Untouchables' are traditionally confined to work that is considered ritually polluting, and have been subject to systematic discrimination. They are also referred to as Dalits, Harijans and Scheduled Castes.

*Upper Caste* – The upper castes, also known as forward or general castes, are the historically most privileged groups in the Indian caste system. They therefore do not qualify for the benefits of reservation policies.

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# I Key Facts and Figures

## A. Historical Chronology<sup>1</sup>

Early history	3000 - 1000 BC	Early urban cultures at Harappa, the prehistoric capital of the Punjab, and Mohenjo-daro on the banks of the River Indus.
	2000 - 1000 BC	Aryans arrive in Northwest India, introducing a class system which may have influenced the caste system.
	1000BC - 0	Hinduism established and Mahabharat and Ramayan epics composed.
	0 - 1000 AD	Growth of Hinduism and decline of Buddhism. "Golden Age" of Indian civilisation.
	1200 - 1400	Establishment of Islamic Turko-Afghan control in Northern India (the Delhi Sultanate)
	1288	Marco Polo visits India.
	1400 - 1550	The Delhi Sultanate gives way to regional Islamic kingdoms like Gujarat and Bengal.
	1498	Vasco de Gama first visits Goa.
	1526 - 1800	Delhi falls to Babar and the Moghul era follows.
Colonial Period	1600	East India Company is formed, operating principally in Bengal.
	1700	The Company secures control of Madras (now known as Chennai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Bombay (Mumbai).
	1756	Battle of Plassey won by Robert Clive.
	1857	Indian Mutiny and subsequent transfer of control over India from the East India Company to the British Government.
	1885	Indian National Congress (INC) is formed.
	1899	Lord Curzon is appointed Viceroy.
	1906	Muslim League is formed.
	1917	Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, announces a policy of gradual introduction of home rule.
	1919	Wartime measures to allow detention without trial by jury extended by the Rowlatt Acts. 1,370 peaceful protesters massacred near the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab.
	1920	Gandhi initiates civil disobedience campaign against British rule.
	1927	Simon Commission appointed to recommend further political reform for India. It has no Indian membership and is boycotted by all sides in India.
	1930	Gandhi's civil disobedience movement gathers momentum.
	1935	The Government of India Act 1935 is passed. Henceforth, central government is controlled by the British while provincial government is partially democratic.
	1939	Without consultation with the Indian parties, Britain declares that India is at war with Germany. Congress demands the immediate transfer of power. After failing to get it, it resigns from all provincial governments.
	1940	The Muslim League adopts a resolution demanding 'autonomous and sovereign' states in areas where Muslims are in a majority.
	1942	Congress starts the 'Quit India' movement.
	1947	Independence on the basis of partition into two states: India and Pakistan. The British Monarch remains head of state and Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of Congress, becomes first Prime Minister of India. Hundreds of thousands die in inter-communal violence. 12 million refugees.

<sup>1</sup> This section draws heavily upon the survey of India's history in the *Europa Regional Survey of the World: South Asia 2006* (London, 2006), pp. 170-90

Post-Independence	1948	Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated by a Hindu extremist. War with Pakistan over Kashmir.
	1950	India becomes a Republic.
	1954	France hands over the last of its territories to the Indian Government.
	1961	Portugal's territories are overrun by Indian forces and annexed.
	1962	Border disputes with China escalate into a brief military conflict.
	1964	Nehru dies and is succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri
	1965	Second war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.
	1966	Shastri dies and is succeeded as Prime Minister by Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi.
	1971	12 day border war with Pakistan. East Pakistan becomes the independent state of Bangladesh.
	1972	India and Pakistan sign the Simla Agreement, under which both agree to respect the ceasefire line in Kashmir and resolve their differences by non-military means.
	1974	India explodes a nuclear device in an underground test.
	1975	Indira Gandhi imposes a state of emergency after being convicted of electoral malpractice.
	1977	State of emergency ends. Parliamentary elections result in victory for the Janata Party. Morarji Desai becomes Prime Minister.
	1980	Indira Gandhi returns to power following elections. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a break-away group from the Janata Party is formed.
	1983	Violence in the Punjab, which is brought under presidential rule. The Indian Army moves against radical Sikh leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale at the Golden Temple at Amritsar.
	1984	Indira Gandhi assassinated by Sikh members of her bodyguard. Her son Rajiv Gandhi becomes Prime Minister. Widespread inter-communal violence. Disaster at Union Carbide's Bhopal plant.
	1987	India-Sri Lanka Agreement leads to Indian peace-keepers being sent to Sri Lanka. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, Tamil Tigers) oppose the intervention.
	1989	The Janata Party and its allies in the National Front win elections and form a government.
	1990	Outbreak of caste-based violence in Northern India. BJP leader LK Advani is arrested when leading a march of Hindus to the holy town of Ayodhya to build a temple on the site of a mosque. The BJP withdraws its support for the National Front Government which subsequently falls. Chandra Shekhar becomes Prime Minister, with Congress support. Pro-independence Kashmiri separatists begin military activities against the Indian army.
	Events since 1991	May-91
Jun-91		Elections result in victory for Congress and strong gains for the BJP. PV Narasimha Rao becomes Prime Minister. Economic and monetary crisis. Rao brings in programme of deregulation and liberalisation to encourage private and foreign investment.
1992		Destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque leads to widespread religious violence.
1996		General election produces no clear winner. The Janata Dal-led United Front, with the support of Congress, forms a government under Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda.
1998-99		The BJP emerges as the largest party in elections in 1998. Vajpayee forms a government. The coalition soon fractures but further elections in 1999 bring it and its allies back to power.
1998		India carries out a series of nuclear tests.
1999		Clashes with Pakistan over Kashmir.
2000		Population passes 1 billion.
2001		Gunmen attack parliament in New Delhi. India suspects Pakistani complicity. US lifts sanctions imposed after 1998 nuclear tests.
2002		Inter-communal bloodshed breaks out after 59 Hindu pilgrims returning from Ayodhya are killed in a train fire in Gujarat. Renewed tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.
2003		Kashmir ceasefire agreed by India and Pakistan, ushering in a period of reduced tension.
2004		Surprise victory for Congress Party in general elections. Manmohan Singh becomes Prime Minister. India launches a bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Thousands are killed in the South and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the Tsunami.
2005		An earthquake, with its epicentre in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, kills more than 1,000 people in Indian-administered Kashmir.
2006	US and India sign a nuclear agreement, under which the US gives India access to civilian nuclear technology while India agrees to greater scrutiny of its nuclear programme. An amended version of the agreement is approved by the US Congress.	

## B. The People of India

According to the 2001 census, India has a population of 1.03 billion of whom 72 per cent live in rural areas and 28 per cent in urban areas. Poverty rates are substantially higher in rural than urban areas, but there is also substantial variation between different parts of the country, particularly between the more affluent South and West, and the poorer North and East.

The two main religions are Hinduism and Islam. Hindus constitute 80.5 per cent of the population while Muslims constitute 13.4 per cent. With 138.2 million Muslims, India has slightly fewer Muslims than Pakistan and the third largest Muslim population in the world. Other religions include: Christians, 2.3 per cent;<sup>2</sup> Sikhs, 1.9 per cent; Buddhists, 0.8 per cent; and Jains, 0.4 per cent. There are also 69,600 Parsis concentrated in the Western state of Maharashtra, with the majority of them living in the state capital, and the country's financial capital, Mumbai (formerly Bombay). Despite their small numbers, Jains and Parsis tend to be economically more prosperous than average, with Jains being concentrated as merchants, money lenders and pawn brokers. Religious minorities have mostly been well protected by India's secular state but have been subject to occasional incidents of religious violence that became more common during the 1990s. Less widely reported is the fact that Muslims are, on average, substantially poorer than Hindus. Although a relatively large proportion of Muslims live in urban areas, illiteracy rates are 15 per cent higher for Muslims than for Hindus, a lower proportion of Muslims than Hindus can be counted amongst the middle classes and a higher proportion are below the official poverty line.<sup>3</sup>

The Hindu population is divided between different caste groups practising different forms of Hinduism.<sup>4</sup> At the bottom of the hierarchy are the Dalits ('Untouchables' or Scheduled Castes) and the Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes), who constitute 16.2 and 8.2 per cent of the population respectively. Caste-based discrimination remains deeply ingrained in Indian society despite a succession of legislative and policy initiatives designed to eliminate it. Some Dalits and Adivasis have converted to other religions, particularly Christianity and Buddhism, in order to escape the strictures of Hinduism. However, they often continue to face discrimination after conversion while losing any benefits of positive discrimination policies. In some parts of India, laws have been introduced to restrict the scope for such conversions. Castes that are not 'Untouchable' but that are still considered to be socially and economically deprived are referred to as Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

Throughout India, women are more likely to do less well paid and more menial forms of employment, primarily in the agricultural sector. There are also few women in the Indian Parliament – in the current (14<sup>th</sup>) Lok Sabha only 47 out of 546 MPs are female – prompting calls for some seats to be reserved for women. One third of seats in Panchayats (Village Councils) are already reserved for women. Even the survival chances of females are substantially lower than those of males, as male offspring are desired and valued more than girls, partly due to the costs of arranging a daughter's

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<sup>2</sup> Christians are concentrated in Northeast India, and in the Southwestern states of Goa and Kerala.

<sup>3</sup> B. Harriss-White, *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy* (Cambridge, 2003), pp.142-5

<sup>4</sup> Caste-like groupings also exist in other religions in India, including amongst Christians, Muslims and Sikhs.

marriage, including the payment of dowry. According to the 2001 census there are 933 women for every 1,000 men in India, with Christians being the only religious group to have more women than men.<sup>5</sup> Amartya Sen reported that in 1986 India had “37 million missing women” based on the difference between the female-male ratio in sub-Saharan Africa of 1.02 and India’s female-male ratio of 0.93.<sup>6</sup> India is now reported to have 930,000 extra missing girls every year.<sup>7</sup> The discrepancy can be attributed to a combination of increased mortality due to the relative neglect of girls versus boys and to abortions following ante-natal screening. According to *The Guardian*, the use of sex-selective abortions is growing despite being illegal. For the two years up to 2004, India had just 882 girls for every 1,000 boys. The demographic consequences are “most pronounced in the most developed parts of India” with just 827 girls per 1,000 boys being born in Delhi.<sup>8</sup>

The average age in India is one of the lowest in the world. In 2000 one third of India’s population was under 15, while “in 2020, the average Indian will be only 29 years old, compared with 37 in China and the United States, 45 in Western Europe, and 48 in Japan”. Many analysts consider this one of India’s greatest potential attributes for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. India has “a population ‘bulge’ in the working age groups” meaning that it has “a large and growing labour force”.<sup>9</sup> However, a note of caution is provided by official statistics, which indicate a decline in the rate of employment growth, suggesting “that the advantage offered by a young labour force is not being exploited”.<sup>10</sup>

India is ranked 126<sup>th</sup> on the United Nations Human Development Index compared to 114<sup>th</sup> for income, reflecting its relatively poor performance in the provision of basic services and meeting people’s basic needs.<sup>11</sup> 35 per cent of India’s population currently live on less than one dollar a day and 80 per cent on less than two dollars a day. The literacy rate is 64.8 per cent, but this figure obscures a significant gender difference. The male literacy rate is 75.3 per cent while the female literacy rate is 53.7 per cent.<sup>12</sup> India had 1.8 million cases of malaria in 2003 and 3 million people living with tuberculosis. It also has 5.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS.<sup>13</sup> According to the World Bank, “several factors put India in danger of experiencing a rapid spread [of HIV] if effective prevention and control measures are not scaled up and expanded throughout the country”. These factors include: low condom usage, migration, intravenous drug use, the low status of women and the widespread stigma attached to people infected with HIV.<sup>14</sup> Seven states “already have generalised epidemics, as indicated by a 1 per cent or higher prevalence

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<sup>5</sup> See: [www.censusindia.net](http://www.censusindia.net)

<sup>6</sup> A.K. Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (London, 2005), pp. 225-6

<sup>7</sup> “India’s Missing Girls”, *The Guardian* 28 February 2007

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> C.P. Chandrasekhar, “Does demography advantage India?”, *Frontline* 14-27 January 2006

Available at: <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2301/stories/20060127004010500.htm>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>11</sup> See: [http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/countries/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_IND.html](http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_IND.html)

<sup>12</sup> See: [http://www.censusindia.net/t\\_00\\_006.html](http://www.censusindia.net/t_00_006.html)

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, “Preventing HIV/AIDS in India”, June 2005. Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org.in/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/INDIAEXTN/0..contentMDK:20161744~pagePK:1497618~piPK:217854~theSitePK:295584,00.html>

<sup>14</sup> World Bank, “Preventing HIV/AIDS in India”

rate among pregnant women in prenatal clinics.”<sup>15</sup> India’s capacity to tackle such health issues is constrained by low government expenditure on public health: “government spending accounts for only 21% of total health spending” meaning those who cannot afford to pay can only access very limited health facilities.<sup>16</sup>

## C. The Political System<sup>17</sup>

### 1. Constitution<sup>18</sup>

India’s Constitution was adopted by a Constituent Assembly in 1949 and came into force on 26 January 1950. The state is conceived as a sovereign socialist democratic republic whose duty it is to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for its citizens. The Constitution provides for a parliamentary system of government within a federal structure.

‘Untouchability’ is banned by the Constitution, which permits positive discrimination in favour of ‘Untouchables’ (Dalits). The Constitution has been amended over 90 times. This has included extending the list of official languages, which now stands at 22. Hindi is the official language under the Constitution, although it also provides for English as an associate language for many official purposes.<sup>19</sup> The Constitution allows for the creation of new states. This power has periodically been deployed since independence, most recently with the creation of the states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

The Constitution guarantees the population six broad categories of rights:

(i) right to equality, including equality before law, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and equality of opportunity in matters of employment;

(ii) right to freedom of speech and expression, assembly, association or union, movement, residence, and right to practice any profession or occupation (some of these rights are subject to security of the State, friendly relations with foreign countries, public order, decency or morality);

(iii) right to freedom from exploitation, prohibiting all forms of forced labour, child labour and traffic in human beings;

(iv) right to freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion;

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<sup>15</sup> World Bank, “Preventing HIV/AIDS in India”. The seven states are: Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland.

<sup>16</sup> “India on Fire”, *The Economist*, 3 February 2007

<sup>17</sup> This section draws heavily upon the chapter on India in the *Europa Regional Survey. South Asia 2006*. Valuable material was also provided by Ross Young, Social and General Statistics Section, House of Commons Library.

<sup>18</sup> For the full text of the Constitution, see: <http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/welcome.html>

<sup>19</sup> There are a further 844 dialects and regional languages.  
See: [http://india.gov.in/nowindia/india\\_at\\_a\\_glance.php](http://india.gov.in/nowindia/india_at_a_glance.php).

(v) right of any section of citizens to conserve their culture, language or script, and right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice; and

(vi) right to constitutional remedies for enforcement of Fundamental Rights.<sup>20</sup>

The Constitution gives the Union Government the power to impose a state of emergency in the event of a national crisis.

## **2. Government**

The Head of State is the President, elected by an electoral college drawn from both Houses of the national Parliament and the legislatures of the states for a term of five years. S/he formally enjoys a range of executive powers, to be exercised on the advice of the Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at its head, which is in turn responsible to Parliament. In practice, real power is wielded by the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers.

India has a federal system of government with a division of powers between the central and state governments. Competencies are divided between the Union (central) Government and the states by means of lists of subjects set out in the Constitution. The Union List, which has close to 100 entries, includes areas like external affairs, defence, nuclear power and communications. The State List, which has 65 entries, includes local government, police, education and health. There is a third list, the Concurrent List, which has over 40 entries, under which responsibilities are shared. This list includes criminal law, and family and labour law. Anything not specified in the State List or Concurrent List is deemed to be included in the Union List. Both the Union Government and the states have powers to tax and otherwise raise funds; a significant proportion of the funds available to the states are provided by the Union Government.

### **a. The Union Government**

The Union Government is headed by the Prime Minister. S/he heads the Council of Ministers, which is composed of Cabinet Ministers (currently 33) and other Ministers of State (currently 45). There are six Union territories within India which are ruled directly by the Union Government (Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Chandigarh; Dadra and Nagar Haveli; Daman and Diu; Lakshadweep; and Pondicherry).

### **b. State Government**

There are currently 28 states and the National Capital Territory – New Delhi – which is a *de facto* state. The system of government in the states is similar to that at the Union-level. Each state has a Legislative Assembly. Some states also have an upper House called the State Legislative Council. The titular head of each state is its Governor, who is appointed by the President of India, but real power lies with the Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers who are drawn from the State Legislative Assembly. Like the President at Union-level, the duties of the Governor are largely ceremonial. However, if

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<sup>20</sup> Text taken from: [http://india.gov.in/knowindia/fundamental\\_rights.php](http://india.gov.in/knowindia/fundamental_rights.php)

President's Rule is imposed upon a state by the Union Government, as it has powers to do under the Constitution, the state government is dissolved and the Governor takes over direct responsibility for running the state. These powers have been used more than 100 times since 1950, but using them has always been politically controversial and they are used more sparingly today. No states are currently subject to President's Rule.<sup>21</sup>

### **c. Local Government (Panchayati Raj)**

In rural areas, local government is built upon the Gram Panchayat (elected Village Council) and the Gram Sabha (Village Parliament comprising all the registered voters within the panchayat's jurisdiction). There are three types of municipal body in the urban or peri-urban areas: Nagar Panchayats for peri-urban areas, Municipal Councils for smaller urban areas and Municipal Corporations for large urban areas. The membership of Municipal Councils or Corporations is directly elected every five years. The operation and powers of local government has varied between different states in India. However, in 1992, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution gave constitutional recognition to Panchayati Raj as a tier of government with powers that are constitutionally guaranteed. Elections to panchayats are now mandatory and all panchayats have a five year term.<sup>22</sup> The Act also stipulated that panchayat seats should be reserved for Dalits and Adivasis in accordance with their proportion in the population and that one third of panchayat seats should be reserved for women.

## **3. Parliament**

The Parliament of the Union consists of two Houses, the Lok Sabha, or House of the People, and the Rajya Sabha, or House of the States. Official parliamentary business is usually transacted in either Hindi or English. The voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 in 1989. The electoral rolls on which elections to both Houses are based have been computerised following a decision in 1998.

### **a. Lok Sabha**

Under the Constitution the Lok Sabha can have a maximum of 552 members. At present, it has 545 seats. The Lok Sabha is elected for a term of five years, although it can be dissolved sooner if the Government cannot command the confidence of the Lok Sabha and no alternative government is available to take over. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha is elected by its members.

Elected seats are distributed between the states relative to the size of the population. However, wide discrepancies in the size of constituencies have emerged since the 1970s. Efforts are underway to remedy this problem through a new delimitation exercise. The Electoral Commission oversees the operation of rules on nominations, deposits and campaign spending, on which there are fixed limits. Elections usually take place over

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<sup>21</sup> J. Dasgupta, "India's federal design and multicultural national construction", in A. Kohli ed., *The Success of India's Democracy* (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 64-66. Two examples of states that have been placed under President's Rule in the past are Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

<sup>22</sup> S.K. Mitra, "Making local government work: local elites, panchayati raj and governance in India", in A. Kohli ed., *The Success of India's Democracy* (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 108-9

several days. Any registered voter over 25 is eligible to stand for election to the Lok Sabha. Since independence, the level of turnout in Indian general elections has remained remarkably static, not exceeding 63.6 per cent (1984) and not falling below 55.3 per cent (1971). There is a high voting rate amongst poorer voters. In the most recent elections in 2004, there were 5,345 candidates from 222 parties, including 2,384 independent candidates. The turn out was 58 per cent.

In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress Party and its allies won 222 seats and formed a minority government under the name of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). The UPA Government relies for its survival on the support of parties that are outside its ranks but are prepared to offer it critical support. The most important grouping to do so is the Left Front, which won 61 seats in the 2004 elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies, grouped together within the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), won 189 seats. The next elections to the Lok Sabha are due in 2009.

**b. Rajya Sabha**

The Rajya Sabha, or House of the States, has a maximum of 250 members (currently 245). Most of the members are elected indirectly by the members of the State Legislative Assemblies (known in each state as the Vidhan Sabha). The President nominates the remaining twelve. Each member is elected for a term of six years, with one-third of the Rajya Sabha's members retiring every two years to be replaced by newly elected members. The Vice-President of India is Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha *ex officio*. Citizens of 30 years and over are eligible to stand for election.

**4. Key Political Parties**

Political parties must be registered with the Electoral Commission, which determines whether their programmes and values are in keeping with the Constitution and uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India. Parties are expected to hold organisational elections and to have a written constitution. An anti-defection law prevents national and state parliamentarians elected as candidates from one party forming or joining a new party unless they comprise more than one-third of the original party in the legislature. Political parties are categorised as 'national' or 'state' parties – or simply declared to be 'registered-unrecognised' parties. Parties use a symbol so that they can be recognised by illiterate voters.

Below is a brief description of some of the key political parties in India today. The figures in square brackets indicate the number of seats that the party won in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

**a. Congress Party [145 seats]**

While directly linked to the Indian National Congress, which was formed in 1885, the current Congress Party was founded by Indira Gandhi as the Congress Party (I) in 1978 following a split in Congress ranks. Over time, having marginalised other claimants, it has re-appropriated the original name. Congress is India's largest party in terms of membership. It is currently the dominant party within the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government. President: Sonia Gandhi.



**b. *Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (Indian People's Party) [138 seats]***

Formed in 1980 as a breakaway group from the Janata Party, the BJP is a Hindu nationalist party and currently the main political opponent of Congress at the national-level. The BJP leads a loose opposition coalition known as the National Democratic Alliance. It is closely linked to the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (National Volunteers' Union, or RSS). The RSS, which has been banned twice in its history, was formed in 1925 as a mass movement for the promotion and propagation of Hindu culture and values. President: Rajnath Singh.

**c. *Communist Party of India-Marxist [43 seats]***

The CPI (M) broke away from the CPI in 1964. Since then, it has become the largest communist party in the country. Its strongholds have been the states of Kerala and West Bengal, where it has been in power for 30 years. It is currently a critical supporter of the UPA Government but it is not formally part of the ruling coalition. General Secretary: Prakash Karat.

**d. *Samajwadi Party [36 seats]***

The Samajwadi (Socialist) Party was formed in 1991 by another break-away faction from the Janata Party. Despite efforts to broaden its support, the party is primarily based in Uttar Pradesh. It bases its support largely on Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Muslims.<sup>23</sup> It was a supporter of the UPA Government between 2004 and February 2007, when it withdrew its support. President: Mulayam Singh Yadav.

**e. *Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) [24 seats]***

The RJD (National People's Party) is another party that emerged from splits in the Janata Party during the early 1990s. Its heartland is Bihar, which it governed between 1992 and 2005. The main social constituencies of the party have been members of the Yadav caste and Muslims, two large and relatively disadvantaged sections of Bihar's population. It is a member of the UPA Government. President: Lalu Prasad Yadav

**f. *Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) [19 seats]***

The BSP was founded in 1984 to promote the rights of Dalits ('Untouchables'). Its heartland, like the Samajwadi Party, is the state of Uttar Pradesh. The two parties are bitter rivals. President: Mayawati.

**g. *Dravidra Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) [16 seats]***

Founded in 1949, the DMK is a regional party based in the state of Tamil Nadu. It is currently part of the UPA Government. President: Muthuvel Karunanidhi.

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<sup>23</sup> Castes that are not 'Untouchable' but are still considered to be socially and economically deprived are referred to as Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

***h. Shiv Sena [12 seats]***

The Shiv Sena (Army of Shiva) is based in Maharashtra and its capital Mumbai. Today, the Shiv Sena is predominantly associated with a militant Hindu nationalism. However, for the first three decades after it was founded in 1966, its main objective was the promotion of the interests of Maharashtrians. At the national level it is currently aligned with the BJP. President: Bal Thackeray.

***i. Communist Party of India (CPI) [9 seats]***

Founded in 1925, the CPI advocates the establishment of a socialist society leading eventually to a communist society. It is currently a critical supporter of the UPA Government but it is not formally part of the ruling coalition. General Secretary: Ardhendu Bhushan Bardhan.

## **D. Selected Profiles of Political Leaders**

### **1. Current Leaders**

#### **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam (President of India)**

Dr Kalam, a scientist, was sworn in as India's third Muslim head of state in 2002. He was born in the Southern state of Tamil Nadu in 1931 and studied aeronautical engineering. He was project director for the launch of India's first satellite, launched in 1980, and went on to become the architect of India's nuclear programme.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Dr Manmohan Singh (Prime Minister)**

Dr Singh was born in 1932 in the Punjab. He obtained a First in Economics at Cambridge University in 1957 and completed a PhD from Oxford. He became Chief Economic adviser to the Ministry of Finance in 1972 and, after serving in a number of government posts including Governor of the Central Bank, became Finance Minister in the Narasimha Rao Government from 1991 to 1996. It was during this period that he instituted a programme of economic liberalisation to deal with a financial crisis and encourage private and foreign investment. After the Congress Party was voted out of office, Dr Singh was leader of the opposition in the upper house (Rajya Sabha) from 1998 to 2004. He became Prime Minister, at the head of the UPA Government, in May 2004.<sup>25</sup>

#### **P Chidambaram (Finance Minister)**

Chidambaram was born in Tamil Nadu in 1945. He studied at Madras University in Chennai and later gained an MBA from Harvard. 'PC', as he is popularly known, practised as a lawyer in Delhi and Madras from 1969. He was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1984. He has overseen the efforts of the UPA Government to balance its twin agendas of economic liberalisation and social protection.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Source: <http://presidentofindia.nic.in/scripts/presidentprofile.jsp>

<sup>25</sup> Source: <http://india.gov.in/govt/primeminister.php>

<sup>26</sup> Source: <http://www.pchidambaram.org/Profile.html>

**Sonia Gandhi (President of the Congress Party)**

Sonia Gandhi was born in Orbassano, Italy in 1946. She married Rajiv Gandhi, one of Indira Gandhi's sons, in 1968 and remained a largely private figure until the assassination of her husband in 1991, after which she became involved in politics. She was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1999 for a constituency in Uttar Pradesh and led her party to victory in the 2004 elections. Many supporters urged her to become Prime Minister but she declined. She is the mother of Rahul, aged 36, who is viewed by some in the Congress Party as destined to perpetuate the family's 'political dynasty', and Priyanka who is 35.<sup>27</sup>

**Atal Bihari Vajpayee (Chairman of the BJP in Parliament)**

Vajpayee was born in 1924. He was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1957 and is currently the Member for Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. He founded the BJP and was its President from 1980-86. He served as External Affairs Minister from 1977-79. He was Prime Minister of India in 1996 and for a second time between 1998 and 2004. As Prime Minister, Vajpayee authorised the series of successful nuclear tests conducted in 1998. While in office, he was generally considered to represent the moderate face of the BJP.<sup>28</sup>

**Lal Krishna Advani (Leader of the Opposition, Lok Sabha)**

Born in 1927 in Lahore (now Pakistan) Advani was elected to the Delhi Metropolitan Council in 1966 and was its chairman from 1966-1970. He was detained between 1975-77 under Indira Gandhi's state of emergency and again in 1990 for leading a Hindu nationalist march on the Ayodhya Mosque, which resulted in widespread violence. He has generally been considered more hard-line than Vajpayee, although it was his favourable remarks about Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League and Pakistan's founding father, that led to his resignation from the Presidency of the Party.<sup>29</sup>

**Rajnath Singh (President of the BJP)**

Rajnath Singh was born in Uttar Pradesh in 1951. He started his career as a college lecturer. He has been involved with the Hindu nationalist RSS since 1964 and was jailed during the 1977-79 State of Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. He subsequently became a major figure within the BJP both in Uttar Pradesh and at the national level. The BJP elected him the Party's President in December 2005 following the resignation of Lal Krishna Advani.<sup>30</sup>

**Laloo Prasad Yadav (Leader of Rashtriya Janata Dal)**

Laloo Prasad Yadav was born in 1948 in Bihar. He has been involved in politics since the late 1970s. Long-running charges of corruption from his time as Chief Minister of Bihar were dismissed by the courts in December 2006. He is now Union Minister for the Indian Railways in the UPA Government. He has been credited with turning the railways from a loss-making venture into one that makes a profit.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Source: <http://www.soniagandhi.org/php/showContent.php?linkid=1>

<sup>28</sup> Source: <http://www.bjp.org/leader/atalji.htm>

<sup>29</sup> Source: <http://www.bjp.org/leader/lka-profile.htm>

<sup>30</sup> Source: <http://www.zeenews.com/znnew/articles.asp?aid=264537&sid=ARC>

<sup>31</sup> Source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/6188855.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6188855.stm)

## 2. Past Leaders

### **Mahatma Gandhi**

Born in 1869, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi arrived in London in 1888. In 1891 he was called to the Bar. On returning to India, he practised law for a year before leaving for South Africa in 1893 where he was an Advocate at the Supreme Court of Natal. While in South Africa he became involved in the struggle for the rights of indentured Indian workers in South Africa and against the Pass Laws. He eventually returned to India and worked with the Congress Party (of which he became leader in 1921), as well as campaigning for the rights of 'Untouchables', whom he called Harijans but who are now more widely known as Dalits. He campaigned against British colonial rule through peaceful means, including mass civil disobedience, and consistently opposed calls for a resort to violence. He was arrested and imprisoned without trial on several occasions, including during World War II on the grounds that he was undermining the Indian contribution to the war effort. Gandhi believed strongly in a secular and united India. He was dismayed at the partition of India and the violence that accompanied it. After partition he continued to campaign for inter-communal peace. In January 1948 Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist.<sup>32</sup>

### **Jawaharlal Nehru**

Nehru was born in India in 1889 and was educated at Harrow and Cambridge. He joined the Inner Temple in London but returned to India in 1912, where he worked at the Allahabad High Court. He was arrested several times by the British authorities for his involvement in the independence struggle. In the 1930s he led the left wing of Congress. He was a fierce opponent of partition but ultimately accepted that it was unavoidable. In 1947 he became the first Prime Minister of independent India and remained Prime Minister until his death in 1964. In the 1950s he pursued a socialist economic policy. His foreign policy was based on non-alignment and third world solidarity.<sup>33</sup>

### **Indira Gandhi**

Indira Gandhi, the only child of Jawaharlal Nehru, was born in 1917. As a child she attended Congress meetings with her father, and later joined the party. She became Prime Minister in 1966 following the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had succeeded Nehru. She faced tough battles to establish her authority against opponents within the Congress Party, which ultimately split. In 1971 her faction of the Party won a convincing electoral victory. However, in 1975 she imposed an often brutal state of emergency across the country. Public resentment about this suspension of democracy led to Congress losing the 1977 elections, but within three years she had been returned to office with a substantial majority. Her increasingly authoritarian style was evident in the authority she gave to her inexperienced son Sanjay. However, Sanjay was killed in an aircraft accident in 1980.<sup>34</sup> Indira Gandhi took a tough line against Sikh separatists in the Punjab, bringing the state under President's Rule in 1983 and ordering an assault on the Golden Temple at Amritsar in order to defeat Sikh extremists based there. She was assassinated by Sikh members of her bodyguard in 1984.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Source: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/chronology2.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Source: <http://www.india-today.com/itoday/millennium/100people/nehru.html>

<sup>34</sup> Sanjay Gandhi's wife, Maneka, and son, Varun, both joined the BJP in 2004.

<sup>35</sup> *Europa Regional Survey. South Asia 2006*, pp. 175-84

**Rajiv Gandhi**

Born in 1944 to Indira and Feroze Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi had little apparent political ambition. He attended Cambridge University, where he met Italian-born Sonia Maino, and went on to become a pilot for Indian Airlines. Following the death of his brother Sanjay in 1980 and his mother in 1984, he was persuaded to enter political life. Congress won a landslide victory in the 1984 elections and he became Prime Minister at the age of 40. His initial reputation for honesty was marred by the Bofors corruption scandal involving payments of millions of US Dollars in alleged bribes to a Swedish arms company. Rajiv Gandhi is also known for having made limited efforts to liberalise the Indian economy. In 1987 Rajiv authorised the sending of a peace keeping force to Sri Lanka under an agreement reached with the Sri Lankan Government. In 1991 he was assassinated by a suicide bomber sympathetic to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, Tamil Tigers) while campaigning in Tamil Nadu.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Europa Regional Survey. South Asia 2006*, pp. 175-84

## E. Selected Treaty Ratifications<sup>37</sup>

<i>Treaty</i>	<i>Signed</i>	<i>Ratification, Acceptance, Approval, Accession</i>
<b>Geneva Conventions</b>		
Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field. <i>Geneva, 12 August 1949</i>	..	Ratified 09/11/1950
Convention (II) for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea. <i>Geneva, 12 August 1949.</i>	..	Ratified 09/11/1950
Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. <i>Geneva, 12 August 1949</i>	..	Ratified 09/11/1950
Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. <i>Geneva, 12 August 1949</i>	..	Ratified 09/11/1950
Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), <i>8 June 1977</i>	..	..
Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), <i>8 June 1977</i>	..	..
Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem (Protocol III), <i>2005</i>	..	..
<b>Human Rights</b>		
Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. <i>New York, 9 December 1948</i>	29/11/1949	Ratified 27/08/1959
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. <i>New York, 7 March 1966</i>	02/03/1957	Ratified 03/03/1958
Amendment to article 8 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. <i>New York, 15 January 1996</i>	..	..
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, <i>New York 16 December 1966</i>	..	Acceded 10/04/1979
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, <i>New York, 16 December 1966</i>	..	Acceded 10/04/1979
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, <i>New York, 16 December 1966</i>	..	..
Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. <i>New York, 15 December 1989</i>	..	..
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention). <i>New York, 18 December 1979</i>	13/07/1980	Acceded 09/07/1993
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. <i>New York, 6 October 1999</i>	..	..
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. <i>New York, 10 December 1984</i>	14/09/1997	..
Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. <i>New York, 18 December 2002</i>	..	..
<b>Major WTO Agreements</b>		
The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)	30/10/1947.	..
General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)	01/01/1995	..

<sup>37</sup> Main Source: <http://untreaty.un.org/ENGLISH/bible/englishinternetbible/bible.asp>. Where used, double dots (..) means that India has either not signed or has not ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to a Treaty.

<b>Treaty</b>	<b>Signed</b>	<b>Ratification, Acceptance, Approval, Accession</b>
<b>Disarmament</b>		
Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (BWC). <i>Opened for Signature at London, Moscow and Washington. 10 April 1972</i>	..	..
Convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques. <i>New York, 10 December 1976</i>	15/12/1977	Ratified 15/12/1978
Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects (with Protocols I, II and III) (CCWC). <i>Geneva, 10 October 1980</i>	15/05/1981	Ratified 01/03/1984
Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (CWC). <i>Geneva, 3 September 1992</i>	14/01/1993	Ratified 03/09/1996
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). <i>New York, 10 September 1996</i>	..	..
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Treaty). <i>Oslo, 18 September 1997</i>	..	..
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). <i>Opened for signature at London, Moscow and Washington on 1 July 1968</i>	..	..
<b>Refugees and Stateless Persons</b>		
Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. <i>Geneva, 28 July 1951</i>	..	..
Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. <i>New York, 31 January 1967</i>	..	..
Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. <i>New York, 28 September 1954</i>	..	..
<b>Environment</b>		
Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. <i>Geneva, 13 November 1979</i>	..	..
Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. <i>Vienna, 22 March 1985</i>	..	Accepted 18/03/1991
Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. <i>Montreal, 16 September 1987</i>	..	..
Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. <i>Basel, 22 March 1989</i>	15/03/1990	Ratified 24/06/1992
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. <i>New York, 9 May 1992</i>	10/06/1992	Ratified 01/03/1993
Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. <i>Kyoto, 11 December 1997</i>	..	Accession 22/08/2002
<b>Penal Matters</b>		
Slavery Convention, signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926 and amended by the Protocol. <i>New York, 7 December 1953 (c)</i>	12/03/1954	..
Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. <i>Geneva, 7 September 1956 (d)</i>	07/09/1956	Ratified 23/06/1950
International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages. <i>New York, 17 December 1979</i>	..	Acceded 07/09/1994
International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. <i>New York, 15 December 1997</i>	17/09/1997	Ratified 22/09/1999
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. <i>17 July 1998</i>	..	..
International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. <i>New York, 9 December 1999</i>	08/09/2000	Ratified 22/04/2003
International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. <i>New York, 13 April 2005</i>	24/07/2006	Ratified 01/12/2006
<b>Law of the Sea</b>		
United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. <i>Montego Bay, 10 December 1982</i>	10/12/1982	Ratified 29/06/2005

## F. The Diaspora<sup>38</sup>

Over several generations a large number of Indians have emigrated to different parts of the world, to set up communities with differing degrees of economic prosperity and influence. Today, the Indian diaspora is estimated to number 17-22 million people. The Indian Government uses a figure of 25 million.<sup>39</sup>

During the nineteenth century most emigrants went as indentured labourers to work on plantations in the Pacific, Africa, the Caribbean and Australia. They were subsequently joined by traders, craftsmen, ex-soldiers and businessmen who went as 'free' migrants.<sup>40</sup> During this period, India became one of the major suppliers of cheap migrant labour to the world's colonial powers. For example, between 1852 and 1937, 2 million Indians went to colonial Malaya and 2.5 million to colonial Burma; due to their geographical proximity, many later returned to India.<sup>41</sup> Many also went to South Africa, Mauritius, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. In these cases, the greater geographical distance encouraged permanent settlement.

The fortunes of the diaspora have varied enormously both within and between destination countries. In Malaysia, people of Indian origin working with the sugar economy have struggled as the industry has shrunk, but Indians are strongly represented in the upper echelons of the medical profession and construction industry.<sup>42</sup> There has been a similar process of economic differentiation amongst the estimated 700,000 people of Indian origin in Mauritius, also due to the decline of the sugar industry. However, Indians in Mauritius have achieved greater access to government jobs and positions of political power than in Malaysia.<sup>43</sup> In South Africa, people of Indian origin now number around 1 million – 2.5 per cent of the total population. Largely descended from the estimated 150,000 Indians who migrated there between 1860 and 1911 under the indentured labor scheme, the population is highly urbanised with a particularly large concentration in Durban.

In the post-independence period a more affluent 'new diaspora' has emerged as highly educated Indian professionals have sought opportunities abroad, particularly in the United States (US).<sup>44</sup> The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the country's "premier state-funded technical universities", estimate that 25-30 per cent of their alumni migrate

<sup>38</sup> For a Statistical Table setting out the estimated size of the overseas Indian community as at 2001, see Part 1A3 of House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 07/40, *An economic introduction to India*. Although not the focus of this section of the Paper, it should be noted that India also experiences significant inward and internal migration. According to the International Organisation for Migration, India was the sixth largest recipient of migrants in 2000. It also has 200 million internal temporary and seasonal migrants who move within India often in search of work. See: International Development Committee, *Migration and Development: How to Make Migration Work for Poverty Reduction*, HC79, Sixth Report of 2003-4, Vol. 1, pp. 3-6

<sup>39</sup> Indian Ministry of Overseas Affairs, *Pravasi Bharatiya*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, 2007, p. 9

<sup>40</sup> G. Singh, "Introduction", in B. Parekh, G. Singh and S. Vertovec eds, *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora* (London, 2003), p. 6

<sup>41</sup> Indian Ministry of Overseas Affairs, "The Indian Diaspora", Chapter 20, p. 252. Available at: <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 29, p. 421

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 5

<sup>44</sup> C. Bhat, "India and the Indian Diaspora: Inter-Linkages and Expectations", in A. Dubey ed., *Indian Diaspora: Global Identity* (Delhi, 2003), p. 18



overseas, mostly to Western countries.<sup>45</sup> Figures suggest that the total Indian population in the United States has now reached 1 million, a large proportion of whom are highly educated: 49.8 per cent of Asian Americans aged 25 and over have at least a Bachelor's degree compared with 27.2 per cent of the population as a whole.<sup>46</sup> Indian Americans are the wealthiest per-capita ethnic group in the United States today with 200,000 millionaires among their ranks.<sup>47</sup> They have achieved greatest success in the IT industry, based particularly around Silicon Valley in San Francisco. 300,000 Indian Americans are employed there and 15 per cent of high-tech firm start-ups are by Indian Americans.<sup>48</sup> However, the Indian population within the US is not uniformly privileged and 43.5 per cent are working in the semi-skilled or unskilled sectors of the economy.<sup>49</sup>

The colonial link fostered some migration from India to the UK prior to 1945.<sup>50</sup> Among them were affluent Indians who came to study, some of whom, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, subsequently turned to nationalist politics.<sup>51</sup> In 1945 the Indian community in the UK numbered around 7,000. According to UK census data, the Indian population in the UK numbered 942,000 in 1999; the Indian Government puts the current figure at around 1.2 million – 2.1 per cent of the total population of the UK. Over 40 per cent of the UK's Indian community lives in and around London, with significant populations also living in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Blackburn.<sup>52</sup> Although the Indian community in the UK has not achieved the economic strength that the Indian American population now commands, it has still been relatively successful economically. The Indian Government has stated: "[T]here is important potential for the Indian Diaspora [within the UK] to contribute to India's trade and bilateral relations with the UK."<sup>53</sup>

The 'incipient diaspora' in the Middle East has developed more recently. It is described as 'incipient' because Indians are allowed to stay in the region to work but cannot obtain citizenship rights. Indian migrant workers are concentrated in the more menial jobs. Of the 3 million Indians in the Middle East, approximately 70 per cent are unskilled or semi-skilled, 20 per cent are white collar workers and 10 per cent are professionals.<sup>54</sup> They are responsible for a large proportion of the remittances that are sent back to India by

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<sup>45</sup> J. Lessinger, "Indian Immigrants in the United States: The Emergence of a Transnational Perspective", B. Parekh, G. Singh and S. Vertovec eds, *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora* (London, 2003), pp. 165-6

<sup>46</sup> US Department of Commerce, "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2003", June 2004. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-550.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> A. Gupta, *The Indian Diaspora's Political Efforts in the United States*, Observer Research Foundation Occasional Paper, September 2004. Available at: [http://www.observerindia.com/cms/export/orfonline/modules/occasionalpaper/attachments/op040918\\_1163398084234.pdf](http://www.observerindia.com/cms/export/orfonline/modules/occasionalpaper/attachments/op040918_1163398084234.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Indian Ministry of Overseas Affairs, "The Indian Diaspora", Chapter 13, p. 170

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>50</sup> The Indian community in the UK is also briefly discussed in Part 1A3 of House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 07/40, *An economic introduction to India*

<sup>51</sup> The first MPs of Indian origin to sit in the British House of Commons were Dadabhai Naoroji (Liberal, 1892-5), Sir Mancherjee Bhownagare (Conservative, 1895-1906) and Shahpurji Saklatvala (Communists, 1922-9).

<sup>52</sup> Indian Ministry of Overseas Affairs, "The Indian Diaspora", Chapter 10, p. 122  
See also: <http://www.cre.gov.uk/diversity/ethnicity/indian.html>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 3, p. 22

migrant workers.<sup>55</sup> These remittances have been particularly important for the South Indian state of Kerala, from where a large number of people migrate to the Gulf for work. In 2003, India received \$18.2 billion, the equivalent of 3.5 per cent of its GDP, in formal remittances. The Department for International Development (DFID) estimates that informal remittances may be five times this level.<sup>56</sup>

The greater affluence of more recent Indian migrants to the West has enabled them to maintain closer links with India. As the Indian Government became aware of this, it sought to tap into the wealth and skills of Indians living there. The term Non-Resident Indian (NRI) was created by the Indian government in the late 1970s as a category for “somebody of Indian ancestry, now living outside India, who is nevertheless accorded a privileged status when investing in the Indian economy.”<sup>57</sup> At a time when foreign investors were subject to extensive restrictions, NRI investors “were offered a status intermediate between that of Indian citizen insiders and foreign investor outsiders.”<sup>58</sup>

According to Lessinger, the policy attracted less investment than the Indian Government had hoped for. On occasions, the appropriateness of the investment provided by NRIs has also been questioned. For instance, Lessinger writes that:

a series of elaborate, American-style, for-profit medical centres undertaken in South India by NRI investors drew political ire, since local governments provided free building land, new roads, electricity lines and water connections for private hospitals which will be wholly beyond the reach of most Indians. Meanwhile public health centres and hospitals in the area suffer dilapidation and shortages of basic supplies.<sup>59</sup>

Lessinger concludes that the criticisms made by some commentators about NRI involvement in the Indian economy are “part of a larger debate about the kinds of economic development India should undertake, who should control it and who should profit from it”.<sup>60</sup> The Westernised middle class diaspora has also become increasingly engaged with wider economic and political issues in India, and they now frequently organise meetings “to lay out not only economic but also political policy recommendations for India.”<sup>61</sup> These groups have also pushed for NRIs to be granted dual citizenship and voting rights.

The Indian Government’s policy towards NRIs “has been aimed at the wealthiest and best-connected immigrants in the US and Europe, who might most realistically be

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<sup>55</sup> P.C. Jain, “Culture and economy in an ‘incipient’ diaspora: Indians in the Persian Gulf region”, in B. Parekh, G. Singh and S. Vertovec eds, *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora* (London, 2003), p. 110

<sup>56</sup> International Development Committee, *DFID’s Bilateral Programme of Assistance to India*, HC 124, 3rd Report, Session 2004-5, Vol. 1, pp. 36-7

<sup>57</sup> J. Lessinger, “Indian Immigrants in the United States: The Emergence of a Transnational Perspective”, p. 176

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177

expected to take up these offers”.<sup>62</sup> The economic, financial and educational benefits of NRI status were extended to less affluent sections of the diaspora when the ‘Persons/People of Indian Origin’ (PIO) card was launched in 1999. The PIO Card can be purchased by persons/people of Indian origin living abroad (up to the fourth generation and with the exceptions of Bangladesh and Pakistan) and by the foreign spouse of an Indian citizen. It is valid for 15 years and exempts the holder from the need to obtain a visa to visit India during that period.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> J. Lessinger, “Indian Immigrants in the United States: The Emergence of a Transnational Perspective”, p. 176

<sup>63</sup> C. Bhat, “India and the Indian Diaspora: Inter-Linkages and Expectations”, p. 18. For more on the PIO card, see: [http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/PIO/Introduction\\_PIO.html](http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/PIO/Introduction_PIO.html)

## **II Overview: India – Past, Present and Future**

This part of the Paper offers a brief overview of some key issues for understanding India's future. In doing so, it necessarily draws upon India's past and present. First, it discusses the complex relationship between democracy, poverty reduction and inequality in India since independence. It then goes on to explore some of the implications of India's current efforts to establish itself as a major power in the world. Some of the issues covered are discussed in more detail later in the Paper.

### **A. Poverty and Politics**

A country of over a billion people with a federal system that devolves substantial authority to individual states is bound to defy easy generalisation. India's performance in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty varies substantially between different states. Success in the former does not always correlate with success in the latter. There is also substantial variation between urban and rural areas, between lower and upper castes, between religions, and between men and women. Thus an Indian citizen's experiences over the last 60 years and their future prospects are inextricably linked to where in the country they live and who they are. Hardly surprisingly, contemporary economic accounts of India can also be widely divergent. Some describe it as a 'shining' emerging market, others as a country of widespread and intense poverty. There is truth in both accounts. India's economy has been growing fast and there is a large, and growing, consuming middle class. However, in terms of poverty levels, India's performance is substantially worse than that of China. On some indicators its performance is also worse than sub-Saharan Africa's. This has led many to talk of 'two Indias' – the India of the urban middle class and the India of the rural poor.

At the same time, India is often highlighted as an example of a functioning democracy in a poor country. Democracy in India has been successful in two important senses: it has endured and it has been relatively free of accusations of electoral malpractice. With the exception of Indira Gandhi's 'Emergency', when democratic processes were suspended from 1975-7, national elections have happened regularly, generally been considered reasonably fair and, especially recently, have resulted in frequent changes of government. India has also maintained other democratic institutions, such as a broadly free press and an independent judiciary that has become increasingly inclined to challenge the Government. The democratic system is both more secure and more entrenched in India than in its neighbours.

However, the relationship between democracy, poverty reduction and inequality in India since independence has proved to be ambiguous. Indeed, over recent decades, the increased democratic participation of the poor has not led to substantial progress in reducing the most extreme forms of poverty. Meanwhile, inequality has been rising. These trends have important implications for how we view the future of India's democracy.

#### **1. The Changing Nature of India's Democracy**

The nature of India's democracy has changed substantially over the sixty years since independence – particularly from the 1970s onwards. Following independence, the

Congress Party was the natural party of government. It consisted of a broad coalition of rural landlords, urban industrialists, Dalits and Muslims. The urban middle classes and rural landowners were the dominant partners within this coalition. Rural landowners delivered the votes of the rural poor through a combination of coercive power and reliance on their powers of patronage.<sup>64</sup> The Congress Party operated through consensus. Policy decisions were negotiated within the party rather than the legislatures. Internal discipline was maintained because the alternative for a politician who rebelled against the party was ‘the wilderness’ of opposition.<sup>65</sup>

Yogendra Yadav has characterised 1947-67, when Congress was dominant, as the first of three periods in Indian politics. The second period from 1971-89 was characterised by increased electoral competition as elections turned into mass “waves” for or against Congress. The third period, from 1989 onwards, has witnessed a further decline in the Congress Party’s dominance over Indian politics, as it has ceased to be “the pole against which every political formation is defined”.<sup>66</sup> Within each state, electoral competition is still generally focused around two main parties, but Congress is no longer necessarily one of those parties.

This shift can be attributed to a series of concurrent social and political changes. The democratic system, including the use of the secret ballot, made it harder for landlords to maintain the rural poor as their vote bank. Increasingly monetised agricultural relationships, particularly following the ‘green revolution’ of the 1960s and 1970s, reduced the dependency of poor farmers on these landlords. The minority of Dalits (also known as ‘Untouchables’ or Scheduled Castes) who had benefited from caste-based reservations in government jobs found that they continued to face caste-based discrimination even as their economic position improved; as a result they became more politically active and formed their own political parties. In the South, regional parties emerged as serious rivals to Congress. There was thus greater competition for votes and Congress ceased to be the only conceivable party of government.

India’s democracy also experienced a “democratic upsurge” as voter turnout remained around sixty per cent but the composition of those voting shifted.<sup>67</sup> Lower castes, women and those in rural areas are now more likely to vote than upper castes, men and those in urban areas. According to one analyst, India is the only country where such a shift has taken place.<sup>68</sup> Underlying these shifts is an increasing emphasis on caste as a means of political mobilisation: Dalits and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) have become more internally united and increasingly vote for parties that explicitly represent their own caste group. However, the rise of low caste participation in politics has been accompanied by a conservative reaction by upper castes, which have either withdrawn from politics or turned towards Hindu nationalism in an attempt to reassert control.

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<sup>64</sup> J. Manor, “Anomie in Indian politics”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 1983

<sup>65</sup> W.H. Morris-Jones, *The Government and Politics of India* (London, 1987), p. 210

<sup>66</sup> Y. Yadav, “India’s third electoral system”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21 August – 3 September 1999

<sup>67</sup> Y. Yadav, “India’s third electoral system”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21 August – 3 September 1999

<sup>68</sup> J. Alam, “What is happening inside India’s democracy?”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11-17 September 1999

The increased competition from other parties led the Congress Party under Indira Gandhi to adopt populist policies, such as her call to end poverty ('garibi hatao'), and to allocate unsustainably high levels of spending for anti-poverty schemes. Indira Gandhi also centralised control of Congress in her own hands so that, after 1972, Congress Party posts were filled from above by appointment rather than by election. This resulted in Congress becoming more personalised and dependent on its leader, thus further weakening the party's connections to the grassroots. Such changes were not unique to Congress as other parties also came to depend more on their individual leaders than party structure or programmatic ideology for winning votes.<sup>69</sup> Newer parties representing the lower castes have often focused on populist measures and the distribution of patronage to people from their own caste groups, rather than on implementing a broader set of policies designed to tackle social inequalities.

This trend has meant that, since 1989, no government could come to power at the national level without forming a coalition with state-level parties.<sup>70</sup> This has raised concerns about increased political instability if smaller coalition partners are able to determine the future of a government. However, the BJP demonstrated its ability to manage coalition politics from 1999-2004 as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) formed a relatively stable government that served a full term. Congress, accustomed to being the natural party of government, was initially disinclined to form coalitions, but now appears to have learned how to manage coalition politics and the current United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition has also been able to form a relatively stable government.<sup>71</sup>

More serious concerns are raised by analysts who note a "steadily widening gap between institutional capacities and socioeconomic problems".<sup>72</sup> In particular, they argue that poor people's expectations of the political system have increased at the same time as the state's ability to deliver has decreased. Atul Kohli has argued that there is a growing crisis of "governability". In his view, the state's capacity at both national-level and state-level has declined due to coalitional instability and the emergence of leaders with demagogic rather than programmatic appeal. Furthermore, many analysts observe that the increasing political awareness and mobilisation of the poor has occurred at the same time as significant economic decisions have been removed from the political agenda due to the process of economic liberalisation that began in 1991.<sup>73</sup> Yadav argues that mainstream parties have become more like each other in crucial policy matters, thereby leaving the electorate with fewer policy options. He observes that "people often use elections to choose their representative and the government but rarely can they use elections to choose policies about issues that matter most to them".<sup>74</sup> Analysts therefore express concern about the potentially destabilising effect of combining the increasing politicisation and rising expectations of the poor with the reduced capacity of the state to meet their demands.

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<sup>69</sup> A. Vanaik, *The Painful Transition: Bourgeois Democracy in India* (London, 1990), p. 94

<sup>70</sup> S. Palshikar, "Majoritarian Middle Ground?", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18-24 December 2004

<sup>71</sup> This is despite being a minority government that relies on outside support from a coalition of left-of-centre parties.

<sup>72</sup> A. Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 384

<sup>73</sup> Yadav, "India's third electoral system"

In other areas the change is less great. Despite India's democratic record, many people's interactions with the state can be linked to physical violence.<sup>75</sup> This includes excesses by the security forces in countering insurgencies, sporadic incidents of religious violence against minority groups, forced displacement to make way for large-scale developmental or industrial projects such as the Narmada dam, and ongoing conflicts over the use of agricultural land to set up Special Economic Zones in order to attract investment. In much of India, acts of violence in which the state may be implicated are less dramatic and consequently receive little or no media attention. Particularly in rural areas, lower castes are still often subject to multiple forms of discrimination. If they fail to be compliant, they can face violent retribution from upper castes – often with the tacit or explicit support of local government officials including the police.

## 2. Persistent Poverty and its Political Implications

When India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, spoke at independence of India's "tryst with destiny" he highlighted the "task ahead" as including "the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity".<sup>76</sup> Yet, while India has a large and growing middle class, it also continues to experience widespread poverty and many analysts see the political system as failing to deliver for the most poor and marginalised sections of society. Some also argue that this failure to deliver has long-term political implications.

India's economy has been growing rapidly and most figures suggest the proportion of people below the poverty line has declined. However, economic growth has been concentrated in the service sector where a relatively small number of people are employed, while there has been little growth in agriculture where the majority of people work.<sup>77</sup> According to the 1991 census, over 74 per cent of India's population are rural and a further 14 per cent live in towns with a population of less than 200,000. These two groups together constitute what one academic writer, Barbara Harriss-White, refers to as "the India of the 88 per cent".<sup>78</sup> Most of them work in the informal sector, where they have high levels of job insecurity and lack the higher levels of social protection that are available for the small minority with salaried jobs in the formal sector.

Large parts of India thus remain cut off from the fast pace of change amongst the urban middle class. For example, "telephone penetration in big cities has risen from 40 per cent to 50 per cent [but is as low as] about 2 per cent in villages".<sup>79</sup> High levels of illiteracy, especially amongst women and the lower castes, mean most of the poor have few opportunities to benefit from economic growth.<sup>80</sup> As a result, according to Amartya Sen, India can continue to deliver high growth rates by relying on industries that use

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>75</sup> S. Corbridge, et al., *Seeing the State: Governance and Governmentality in Rural India* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 17-18

<sup>76</sup> A.K. Sen, "Tryst with Destiny", in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (London, 2005), p. 193

<sup>77</sup> Agriculture comprised over 50 per cent of national income in the 1950s but this has fallen to below 25 per cent today. The proportion of the work force employed in agriculture only fell from 70 per cent to around 60 per cent over the same period.

<sup>78</sup> B. Harriss-White, *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 1-3

<sup>79</sup> "Villages remain the challenge", *Financial Times*, 26 January 2007

<sup>80</sup> 75 per cent of adult men and around half of women are literate, which compares with over 90 per cent of Chinese men and over 80 per cent of Chinese women. See Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 195

India's "accomplishments in higher education and technical training", but "even a hundred Bangalores and Hyderabad's will not, on their own, solve India's tenacious poverty and deep-seated inequality", as "the very poor in India get a small – and basically indirect – share of the cake that information technology and related developments generate."<sup>81</sup>

Thus there is a disjuncture between increased levels of political participation on the part of the poor and the state's ongoing failure to tackle persistent and widespread poverty. The political implications of this were apparent in the 2004 general elections. The NDA Government fought the 2004 election campaign on the slogan 'India Shining', but increases in economic inequality appear to have played a major part in its defeat. Many analysts argue that the UPA Government elected in that year therefore had a mandate to tackle issues of poverty and inequality. The UPA Government explicitly recognised this, interpreting its mandate as being "for secular, progressive forces, for parties wedded to the welfare of farmers, agricultural labour, weavers, workers and weaker sections of society, for parties irrevocably committed to the daily well-being of the common man across the country."<sup>82</sup> However, its efforts to share the benefits of India's economic growth have continued to be obstructed by "the barriers of illiteracy, ill health, uncompleted land reforms and other sources of severe societal inequality."<sup>83</sup>

### **3. Anti-Poverty Measures: the Gap between Policy and Practice**

Concerns about tackling poverty have been prominent in political debate in India since independence, especially during elections. Yet, these measures have often been hindered by a combination of a lack of resources, opposition from vested interests, corruption and a lack of political will. Understanding the gap that exists between policy and practice provides an important insight into the workings of India's democracy. It also has important implications for how we understand India's future prospects.

After independence, Congress instituted limited land reforms in favour of the rural poor by removing the right of absentee landlords to collect rents and introducing land ceilings to limit the amount of land an individual could own. However, these reforms were rarely implemented. The dominance of rural landlords in the lower levels of Congress enabled them to block the implementation of such redistributive measures.<sup>84</sup> Landlords circumvented the ceiling on how much land they were allowed to own by retrospectively registering land in the name of family members or simply bribing bureaucrats to block the implementation of the reforms.<sup>85</sup> Land reforms have, however, been implemented more successfully in some parts of the country. The states of Kerala in the South and West Bengal in the East have both implemented more extensive land reforms, which have helped to improve the condition of some sections of the rural poor. In each of these

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<sup>81</sup> Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 197

<sup>82</sup> "National Common Minimum Programme of the Government of India", May 2004. Available at: <http://pmindia.nic.in/cmp.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 197

<sup>84</sup> Vanaik, *The Painful Transition*, p. 78

<sup>85</sup> A. Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 45-6



states, left-of-centre governments were able to implement land reform because of their relative detachment from the land owning elite and their strong grassroots base.<sup>86</sup>

The problem is not just with redistributive policies being blocked but also with resources being misappropriated. While the inherently illicit nature of corruption makes it impossible to know its exact level, it is widely assumed that a substantial portion of government funds, including those used for anti-poverty schemes, never reaches its intended target. While many analysts attributed corruption to high levels of official involvement in regulating the economy under the 'Licence Raj' from independence to the 1980s, there is evidence that corruption has not diminished as a result of the liberalisation and deregulation of the economy since the early 1990s. Harriss-White has described how the allocation of bus routes to the owners of private buses in one South Indian town has been influenced by the financial support bus owners provided to political parties and their electoral candidates.<sup>87</sup> More generally, the high cost of political campaigning in India requires politicians to depend on private donors for the cost of their election campaign, meaning they are liable to be indebted to these donors once elected. One analyst argues that "uncontrolled election expenditure has contributed substantially to corrupt practices".<sup>88</sup>

Analysts also point to high levels of tax evasion and low tax collection rates that reduce the state's capacity to generate resources. Harriss-White cites figures that, in the early 1980s, roughly half of potentially taxable income was untaxed, with only 7 million people paying income tax. In the 1990s, she found that, in the same Indian town referred to above, the taxes from the poorest businesses (bullock/horse cart stands and stalls in the municipal market) were almost as much as the taxes collected from all the town's inhabitants who had taxable property and income.<sup>89</sup>

Issues of state capacity and misappropriation of resources are also apparent in relation to India's public distribution system (PDS), which is intended to guarantee food security in the country. Under the PDS, food is purchased and sold on at subsidised prices to the holders of ration cards through a network of 450,000 ration shops.<sup>90</sup> In large parts of India the PDS makes a substantial contribution towards the food security of the poor. Yet, there are many reports of rations being sold to the wrong people, at higher prices or in insufficient quantities. As with land reform, there are substantial variations in the performance of different states, suggesting that the ideological stance and capacity of a ruling government affects its ability to tackle issues of poverty and inequality.

Sen's argues that "India's overall record in eliminating hunger and under-nutrition is quite terrible" and that there is "a dreadful prevalence of endemic hunger across much of India." He notes that about half of all Indian children are "chronically undernourished",

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<sup>86</sup> In Kerala literacy rates of over 90 per cent, high levels of health care and a life expectancy that is higher than in China have all been achieved. However, despite high educational levels, unemployment has remained high as the state has failed to attract inward investment.

<sup>87</sup> B. Harriss-White, "Liberalisation and Corruption: Resolving the Paradox (A Discourse Based on South Indian Material)", *IDS Bulletin*, Vol 27, Issue 2, 1996, p. 34

<sup>88</sup> S. Paul, "Corruption in India: A Strategic Agenda for Action", in S. Guhan and S. Paul eds, *Corruption in India* (New Delhi, 1996), p. 291

<sup>89</sup> Harriss-White, "Liberalisation and Corruption", p. 33

<sup>90</sup> M. Swaminathan, *Weakening Welfare: The Public Distribution of Food in India* (New Delhi, 2000) p. 9

while “more than half of all adult women suffer from anaemia”. Indeed, general undernourishment is “nearly twice as high in India as in sub-Saharan Africa”. Sen concludes that “India has done worse than nearly every country in the world” in terms of reducing endemic undernourishment and hunger”.<sup>91</sup> This is confirmed by a recent survey conducted jointly by the Indian Health Ministry and UNICEF, which found that “almost 46 per cent of children under the age of 3 suffer from malnutrition”. The comparable figure is 35 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 per cent in China. Despite India’s high rates of economic growth, there has been little change from seven years ago when 47 per cent of children were malnourished.<sup>92</sup>

India’s failure to eliminate malnutrition, including deaths from starvation, contrasts with its success at eliminating famines (deaths of large numbers of people due to widespread starvation).<sup>93</sup> China experienced a massive famine during Chairman Mao’s Great Leap Forward that resulted in 25-30 million deaths, but there has been no famine in India since independence. Sen has attributed this to the preventative powers of democracy. He argues that, in a democracy, the warning signals of a pending famine are picked up by the media, opposition parties and the public, meaning that governments are spurred into taking action at a relatively early stage to prevent a full-scale famine emerging. Sen believes that the failure of successive governments to take effective action to tackle malnutrition is linked to a comparative lack of interest on the part of the media and opposition parties.<sup>94</sup>

Many analysts conclude that there is a lack of political will in India to tackle food security and that this persists despite the “democratic upsurge” and increased political participation of the poor. The current Government has introduced new measures to tackle rural poverty in its Common Minimum Programme (see also Part 3A of this Paper). The effectiveness of these schemes will depend on the Government’s ability to ensure their effective implementation, but the new schemes provide a potentially significant contribution to reducing poverty levels. For example, the noon midday meal scheme, which requires that every child attending primary school should receive a cooked meal, is intended to tackle malnutrition and improve school attendance rates. The current Government has also introduced a pilot version of an *Employment Guarantee Act* guaranteeing 100 days employment per year at the minimum wage to one member of each rural household. It is argued that this will not only reduce rural poverty by providing a guaranteed source of income for part of the year but that it will also improve the bargaining power of agricultural labourers. In order to facilitate the operation of these schemes, the UPA has instituted measures to tackle corruption levels by introducing a greater degree of transparency through its *Right to Information Act*. This Act resulted from a nationwide Right to Information campaign, which argued that public access to official documents would enable the public to identify and therefore challenge the misappropriation of public funds.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> A.K. Sen, “Class in India”, in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (London, 2005), pp. 212-3

<sup>92</sup> “Indian children suffer more malnutrition than in Ethiopia”, *The Times*, 22 February 2007  
Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article1421393.ece>

<sup>93</sup> The last famine occurred in 1943.

<sup>94</sup> Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 199

<sup>95</sup> See the National Campaign for People’s Right to Information website: <http://www.righttoinformation.info/>

Overall, pessimistic predictions of an emerging ‘crisis of governability’ in India, as increased public expectations clash with the state’s limited capability to deliver, have so far proved exaggerated. Yet there is a real question mark over how long formal democratic equality can coexist with persistent social and economic inequalities. As poor people have become more involved in the democratic system, analysts have predicted that the state’s failure to deliver for these groups may result in them becoming disillusioned and resentful. Such feelings have already strengthened the hand of the Maoist Naxalite movement, which is targeting those whom it sees as enemies of the poor in nine states in Eastern and Southern India (see Part IIID of this Paper for further coverage of the Naxalites). Insurgencies in Kashmir and the Northeast of the country are also partly motivated by such feelings (see also Part IIIE for a discussion of these insurgencies). There have also been backlashes against the increased political assertiveness of the poor, either through localised upper caste militias confronting those they consider to be Naxalites or – more broadly – through the rise of Hindu nationalism in mainstream Indian politics (see Parts IIIB and C of this Paper for further details).

## B. India in the World

At the same time as renegotiating its domestic politics, India has sought to reposition itself within the wider world by establishing itself as a major power. During the post-independence period, Jawaharlal Nehru sought to keep India ‘non-aligned’ by maintaining its independence from the two main powers – the US and the Soviet Union (USSR) – as he believed that “the authority of the new state rested not solely on domestic procedures but also on establishing its sovereignty in the international arena.”<sup>96</sup> India’s military defeat in the war with China in 1962 undermined the credibility of Nehru’s foreign policy and ultimately led to Indira Gandhi signing a treaty with the USSR in 1971 that, according to one analyst, “finally buried the idea of non-alignment.”<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, India continued to be a key player in developing country coalitions within the UN like the G77, and later the G20.<sup>98</sup> More broadly, it has usually been a strong advocate of multilateral institutions. India has been a lead player in promoting the interests of developing countries within the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This has included opposing the inclusion of intellectual property rights within the WTO, and pushing for developed countries to provide lower agricultural subsidies to their farmers and to fulfil the promises they made in previous trade negotiations.

While India continues to act as a leader in coalitions of developing countries, its foreign policy is increasingly focused on promoting India as a major power in its own right. Since the beginning of the current era of economic reforms in 1991 India has sought to integrate itself more with the global economy. At times it has also sought to assert itself as a political and/or military power. This new agenda has emerged partly in response to the demands of India’s growing middle class, who “seek a new status for India in the world.”<sup>99</sup> One means of doing so has been by emphasising India’s status as a nuclear

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<sup>96</sup> S. Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London, 1997), p. 39

<sup>97</sup> S. Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London, 1997), p. 40

<sup>98</sup> ‘G’ stands for Group.

<sup>99</sup> S. Khilnani, “India as a Bridging Power”, *India as a New Global Leader*, Foreign Policy Centre, London, 2005, p. 1. Available at: <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/377.pdf>

weapons state. In 1998 the BJP tested nuclear weapons at Pokharan in Rajasthan. More secretive tests had previously been conducted under Indira Gandhi's Congress Government in 1974. It has been estimated that the cost of India's nuclearisation is about 0.5 per cent of GDP annually. According to Amartya Sen this is roughly the same as the additional money needed to provide elementary education for every child in the country through a comprehensive network of neighbourhood schools.<sup>100</sup> While India initially faced sanctions for this action, in 2006 India and the US "concluded a bilateral agreement to cooperate on civilian nuclear energy – a de facto recognition by the United States that India is a nuclear power."<sup>101</sup>

As part of this new emphasis in its foreign policy, "India has been anxious to portray itself as a giver, rather than a receiver" of international aid.<sup>102</sup> In June 2003 the NDA Government announced that it would not accept any tied aid and that it would only accept bilateral aid from five countries, with a further 22 countries invited to channel their aid through NGOs or multilateral institutions. This approach appears to have continued under the UPA Government. After both the Asian Tsunami and the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, India's initial response was to state that it did not need international aid. In 2003-4 India provided US\$380 million of grants and loans to other governments, and cancelled the debts of seven heavily indebted poor countries in 2003. India dispensing foreign aid is not new. It has dispensed \$2 billion since 1964 and its aid continues to be focused on countries in the region. However, despite its rejection of some bilateral aid, multilateral aid to India has actually increased in recent years.<sup>103</sup> India is also the largest recipient of aid from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). The most important change, therefore, is perhaps not in India's aid policy but in the way it seeks to promote that policy.

An increasingly important foreign policy issue for India is the question of energy security.<sup>104</sup> India is already "the world's sixth largest energy consumer."<sup>105</sup> The country's rapid economic growth means demand for energy is growing fast – India's energy consumption is predicted to rise by 50 per cent between 2002 and 2015 – and it is therefore increasingly dependent on foreign energy reserves.<sup>106</sup> Although India relies on coal for over half its energy needs, its fastest growing energy need is for natural gas, demand for which is expected to quadruple over the next twenty years.<sup>107</sup> It is therefore seeking to import natural gas from its neighbours. In January 2005 India signed a 25 year contract to import liquefied natural gas from Iran, while Pakistan and Iran have been

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<sup>100</sup> A.K. Sen, "India and the Bomb", in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (London, 2005), p. 259

<sup>101</sup> D.W. Drezner, "The New World Order", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.86, No.2, March/April 2007

<sup>102</sup> "Pride and Politics: India Rejects Aid", *New York Times*, 19 October 2005

<sup>103</sup> G. Price, "India's Aid Dynamics: From Recipient to Donor", Asia Programme Working Paper, Royal Institute for International Affairs, September 2004. Available at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/pdf/research/asia/WP200904.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> Energy issues are also discussed in Part IIG of House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 07/40, *An economic introduction to India*

<sup>105</sup> B. Chellaney, "India's Future Security Challenge: Energy Security", *India as a New Global Leader*, Foreign Policy Centre, London, 2005, p.67. Available at: <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/377.pdf>

<sup>106</sup> D. Messner and J. Humphrey, "China and India in the Global Governance Arena", p. 7. Available at: [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/global/AsianDriverpdfs/Messner-Humphrey.pdf](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/global/AsianDriverpdfs/Messner-Humphrey.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*

pushing for an India-Iran gas pipeline running through Pakistan.<sup>108</sup> Burma's reserves of natural gas are one reason why India has reduced its support for Burma's democracy movement and developed closer ties with Burma's military regime. A consortium of South Korean and Indian firms is developing Burma's Shwe gas field in partnership with the Burmese Government. Human Rights Watch has expressed concern that "the proposed construction of overland pipelines to transport the gas will involve the use of forced labour."<sup>109</sup> India has also decided to "deploy a fleet of Mig-29s in Tajikistan to establish a foothold in a region that it considers significant not only for strategic reasons, but because it could be a door to additional energy sources."<sup>110</sup>

Despite its growing demands for energy, "the average Indian produces around a 10<sup>th</sup> of the greenhouse gases of the average European – a 20<sup>th</sup> of the average American".<sup>111</sup> India's strategy on climate change to date has been to argue that this is an issue for developed countries to tackle first. As a non-Annex 1 country under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, India is under no obligation to reduce its emission of greenhouse gases. It argues that agreeing to any targets to cut its carbon dioxide emissions could impose a serious constraint on India's economic growth and hence on its prospects for lifting people out of poverty. In a country where "only 44% of all rural Indian households are electrified",<sup>112</sup> it is the more affluent who contribute most to global warming but the poorest who are likely to suffer most. The possible impacts of climate change include more extreme flooding, yields of some crops being reduced by up to 70 per cent in Northern India by 2100 and a 70 per cent decrease in the meltwater from Himalayan glaciers that currently provide 85 per cent of the dry season flow into the great rivers of the Northern Indian plain.<sup>113</sup> The 2006 Stern Review on the 'economics of climate change' predicts that, if temperatures rise by 5 degrees, the large Himalayan glaciers could disappear, affecting "hundreds of millions in India."<sup>114</sup> There are predictions that glaciers melting in the Himalayas will lead first to increased flooding and then to water shortages. This would impact upon some of the most densely inhabited areas of Northern India, where people are concentrated around rivers that are fed by water coming off the Himalayas. Those living in low-lying or coastal areas and those dependent on agriculture are likely to be most affected.

India is of rapidly increasing interest to the developed world, and particularly the United States (US). In the short-term its growing middle class means it presents a large potential market, but its status as a major power is also becoming increasingly hard to ignore. According to the National Intelligence Council, a US Government think tank, India is likely to be the world's fourth-largest economy by 2025. As a result, one analyst argues, "the US-dominated global institutions" will face an uncertain future unless China

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<sup>108</sup> B. Chellaney, "India's Future Security Challenge: Energy Security", p. 75

<sup>109</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Burma: Natural Gas Project Threatens Human Rights", 24 March 2007. Available at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/03/24/burma15557.htm>

<sup>110</sup> T. Madan, "India", The Brookings Foreign Policy Studies Energy Security Series, November 2006, p. 65. Available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/research/energy/2006india.htm>

See: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/6319921.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6319921.stm)

<sup>112</sup> V. Modi, "Improving Electricity Services in Rural India", CGSD Working Paper No.30, December 2005, p. 11. Available at: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/mechanical/modi/RuralEnergy.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> *Final Report of the Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change* (London, 2006), p. 104. The full report is available at: [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent\\_reviews/stern\\_review\\_economics\\_climate\\_change/sternreview\\_index.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_index.cfm)

<sup>114</sup> *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change*, p. 57

and India are more effectively incorporated.<sup>115</sup> In January 2006, US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice observed that the US State Department had “nearly the same number of State Department personnel in Germany, a country of 82 million people, that we have in India, a country of one billion people” and announced “that a hundred State Department employees would be moved from Europe to countries such as India and China by 2007.”<sup>116</sup>

The rise of both India and China presents new challenges for the global order. As one analyst notes: “in the twentieth century, poor states were usually weak and their demands could be brushed aside”. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century both China and India “will be relatively rich states, but will preside over relatively poor populations - they will have high national wealth but low per capita income”.<sup>117</sup> Critics argue that India’s focus on “becom[ing] a great economic and military superpower” ignores its more pressing domestic challenges.<sup>118</sup> Manmohan Singh has himself drawn attention to this tension, arguing that triumphal accounts of India as a new superpower risk overlooking the “vast segments of our people who are untouched by modernisation; who continue to do backbreaking labour.”<sup>119</sup> However, the interests of India’s poorest groups are inextricably linked to international issues such as global trade regimes and climate change. Therefore, the most pertinent question seems to be not whether India should seek to increase its influence on the international stage, but what agenda it should pursue – above all, whose interests it should promote and how.

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<sup>115</sup> D.W. Drezner, “The New World Order”, *Foreign Affairs* Vol.86, No.2, March/April 2007

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>117</sup> S. Khilnani, “India as a Bridging Power”, pp.7-8

<sup>118</sup> B. Parekh, “Defining India’s Identity: An Alternative Vision”, *The Hindu*, 20 November 2006

<sup>119</sup> “India eye’s riches at poor’s expense”, *The Observer*, 4 February 2007

Available at: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/world/story/0,,2005484,00.html>

### III Domestic Politics

This section combines a description of the activities and achievements of the present UPA Government, which has been in power since 2004, with brief discussions of four issues that are important for understanding India's contemporary political context: the changing dynamics of caste politics; Hindu nationalism and religious violence; the Maoist challenge in what is known as India's 'Red Corridor'; and the insurgencies in Kashmir and Northeast India.

#### A. The UPA Government since 2004

Until the May 2004 general elections, when the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), at the head of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), slipped to an unexpected defeat after six years in power, many observers were arguing that it was becoming the dominant player in Indian politics, eclipsing the Congress Party, which had been out of government since 1996. As the historian Paul Brass has argued, the BJP bases itself on India's Hindu traditions, "while pursuing even more relentlessly a Western ideal model of building a strong, centralised, militarily powerful state, possessing nuclear weapons, able to bring order to the country while commanding the respect of the great nations of the contemporary world".<sup>120</sup>

The BJP's slogan in the run-up to the elections was that 'India [is] shining'. It went into the May 2004 elections at the head of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) confident of victory. However, its defeat brought home to domestic and foreign observers – many of whom had been mesmerised by India's economic growth – that significant sections of the population did not feel they had benefited from that growth. Opponents garnered particularly strong support from those in the agricultural sector, which has largely been stagnant while services have boomed. 60 per cent of the nation's work force continues to depend on agriculture.<sup>121</sup> Some analysts also argued that the NDA's defeat represented a reaction against Hindu nationalism. Others asserted that changes in the electoral fortunes of coalition partners were a more important factor.

Following the May 2004 elections, Congress, leading a diverse coalition of parties in the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), formed a minority government. The second largest party in the UPA is the Bihar-based Rashtriya Janata Dal and the third largest is the Tamil Nadu-based Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam (DMK). To secure a parliamentary majority, the UPA Government has been able to rely upon the support of leftist parties outside the coalition, grouped within the Left Front, which collectively won 65 seats. The largest party within the Left Front is the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)). In February 2007 the Samajwadi (Socialist) Party, which was also supporting the coalition from the outside, withdrew its support for the UPA Government.

There are divisions over strategy within the CPI (M). In West Bengal, where it has been in power for three decades, its leadership has shown a pragmatic and reforming streak. At the national-level, the leadership appears more hostile to reform. However its

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<sup>120</sup> Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. xiii-xiv

<sup>121</sup> "India in 2005", *Asian Survey*, January/February 2006, p. 104

ambivalence about Congress is nothing compared with its hostility to the BJP. For this reason, while it sometimes campaigns against the Government, it does not want to bring it down.

The UPA Government has been fortunate that the main opposition party, the BJP, has responded to defeat by tearing itself apart. Divisions have centred over how best to reclaim the electoral initiative: by reverting to a more assertive Hindu nationalism or by becoming a more moderate inclusive party. In December 2005 BJP President Lal Krishna Advani was forced to stand down, having called for the party to take the moderate road.<sup>122</sup>

Below the national-level, May 2006 elections in five states strengthened the hands of the CPI (M) and regional parties at the expense of the two main national parties – Congress and the BJP. The CPI (M) took back power from Congress in Kerala and won for the seventh successive time in West Bengal. Congress also lost overall control in Assam. The DMK won in Tamil Nadu. Analysts interpreted the results as indicating a public preference for ‘pro-people’ policies.<sup>123</sup> In February 2007, Congress fared poorly in a further round of state elections, losing power in Punjab and Uttaranchal Pradesh.

As Chair of the UPA, Sonia Gandhi has prime responsibility for holding the Congress-led coalition together.<sup>124</sup> There are signs that Congress has learnt how to manage coalition politics and the UPA Government is not expected to fall before the next Lok Sabha elections in 2009. Nevertheless, maintaining its diverse coalition remains a challenge and has further complicated the Government’s efforts to maintain a balance between economic reform and tackling poverty, a balance that is of particular importance to the UPA because it “counts on the lower social orders as its most important voting bloc.”<sup>125</sup> On forming a government, the UPA agreed upon a Common Minimum Programme (CMP) designed to continue economic reform while strengthening levels of social protection.

There is continuing ambivalence within both the ruling coalition and the Left Front about further privatisation of state assets, which has been proposed by the Government as a means of reducing India’s high public debt (84 per cent of GDP).<sup>126</sup> There is similar ambivalence whenever there are suggestions that current labour laws require reform. The Left Front has also rallied against proposed rises in fuel costs, which are designed to stop state oil companies running at a heavy loss; in doing so it has had sympathisers within Congress. The Left Front has also been heavily critical of the civil nuclear co-operation deal that the Government has reached with the US.

On the economic front, the UPA Government has continued pre-existing efforts to extend a system of value added tax (VAT) across India’s different states, although there have been glitches in implementation. The UPA Government has also announced plans for

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<sup>122</sup> “India in 2005”, *Asian Survey*, January/February 2006, p. 105

<sup>123</sup> “Congress Party fares poorly in Indian vote”, *International Herald Tribune*, 12 May 2006

<sup>124</sup> Sonia Gandhi, wife of the assassinated former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, led Congress to victory in 2004 but resisted calls to become Prime Minister.

<sup>125</sup> A. Varshney, “India’s Democratic Challenge”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.86 No. 2, March/April 2007

<sup>126</sup> “Indian PM offers little hope of revived reform”, *Financial Times*, 16 August 2006



the liberalisation of India's capital account, to be phased in by 2011. In addition, it is pushing ahead with massive infrastructural projects that are crucial to sustaining economic growth – for example, improving the road system – and has made progress in reducing red tape for business.<sup>127</sup>

In February 2006, the Government passed a law permitting the establishment of Chinese-style Special Economic Zones (SEZ). However, protests against planned relocations of farmers living on land designated for this purpose and against efforts to relax labour laws within the zones have greatly slowed progress in setting them up.<sup>128</sup> In March 2007 at least 14 villagers were killed by police in Nandigram, West Bengal, during protests over land acquired for an SEZ.<sup>129</sup> The CPI (M)-led Left Front Government in West Bengal subsequently abandoned its plans to establish an SEZ there. Concerns have been raised about the loss of government revenue as a result of the concessions granted to firms investing in SEZs.<sup>130</sup> There are also worries that the SEZ process will provide opportunities for corruption.<sup>131</sup> The UPA Government has launched a review of the policy.

In August 2006, in an attempt to revive the stalled privatisation agenda, the Government announced new plans to reduce its 24 per cent stake in key public sector power companies. The left parties that support the UPA have given their consent to this move.<sup>132</sup> In October 2006 the Government announced its intention to sell 10 per cent of its stake in four such companies, but subsequently decided to reduce its stake by selling additional shares in the companies instead. This process began with the Power Finance Corporation in February 2007.<sup>133</sup> More than half of India's villages and about 40 per cent of those who live in cities do not have electricity. Critics argue that India's inadequate power generation capacity imposes a break on levels of economic growth.<sup>134</sup> For example, Mumbai and New Delhi regularly experience power cuts.

In late 2006 there were signals that the UPA Government was building up to a new round of economic reforms, with the pensions system and the insurance sector reportedly in its sights.<sup>135</sup> The UPA Government has proposed to raise the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) cap in the insurance sector. However, the Left Front has made it clear that its appetite for further economic liberalisation remains small. It is opposing the FDI proposal.

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<sup>127</sup> One such project, called the Golden Quadrilateral, is connecting the country's four biggest cities with four and six lane motorways.

<sup>128</sup> SEZs are only the most recent example of disputes over the social and environmental consequences of particular forms of economic development. A controversial case has been the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada river in Gujarat. Although the dam is now operational disagreements remain over plans to raise the height of the dam.

<sup>129</sup> "India's SEZ policy dilemma", *Business Times Singapore*, 28 March 2007

<sup>130</sup> CPI (M), "Note on Special Economic Zones", 19 October 2006. Available at: <http://www.cpim.org/statement/2006/10192006-sez%20note%20to%20upa.htm>

<sup>131</sup> "New SEZs in cold store, Left happy", *Hindustan Times*, 19 January 2007

<sup>132</sup> "Government may sell 24 per cent in power grid, other companies", *Economic Times*, 14 August 2006

<sup>133</sup> "Centre all set to dilute stake in power cos", *Economic Times*, 14 January 2007

<sup>134</sup> "India plans public offering of stakes in four power companies", *New York Times*, 14 October 2006

<sup>135</sup> "India ready to pursue a new round of reforms", *Straits Times*, 10 October 2006

On the social front, the UPA has introduced a *National Rural Employment Guarantee Act* (NREGA), which provides employment at the minimum wage for 100 days per year for one member of each rural household. This guarantee has been welcomed by many for its potential contribution to tackling rural poverty. However, others have expressed concern that it may prove unaffordable and could be open to abuse. It began to operate across 200 districts in February 2006.<sup>136</sup> The Left Front has made the case for an expansion of the NREGA to an additional 200 districts.<sup>137</sup> The UPA Government has now agreed to expand the scheme, despite early reports that so far it has had mixed results.<sup>138</sup>

The UPA Government has continued its predecessor's push towards universal primary education. It has increased spending and introduced a midday meal scheme through schools to improve attendance and learning. However, overall the state education system continues to perform extremely poorly. This has been reflected by a dramatic expansion in private primary schools, even down to village level, in recent years.<sup>139</sup> It has begun to increase public expenditure on health but levels remain low and delivery systems operate ineffectively.<sup>140</sup> Other issues that are on the UPA Government's agenda are the implementation of the federal *Right to Information Act*, which is intended to promote official accountability and reduce corruption, and the *Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act*. The latter is the product of years of campaigning by tribal rights activists against evictions of tribal groups from state-owned forests on behalf of the timber industry.<sup>141</sup> How effective either piece of legislation will prove in practice remains to be seen.<sup>142</sup>

Proposals to pass a long-awaited *Women's Reservation Bill* that will increase the proportion of female representation in the national parliament (lobby groups are calling for a 33 per cent reservation) have been held up by differences within the ruling coalition but could yet be revived.<sup>143</sup> By contrast, plans to reserve 27 per cent of state-financed college places for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) – those who within the caste system find themselves between the Dalits and the upper castes – have been passed into law. Places are already reserved for Dalits and Adivasis. These proposals are aimed at lower castes who are not Dalits, but they could also benefit sections of the Muslim and Christian communities who are not covered by reservations for Dalits. However, they have been subject to a range of legal challenges and in March 2007 the Supreme Court

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<sup>136</sup> "Indian PM offers little hope of revived reform", *Financial Times*, 16 August 2006

<sup>137</sup> "Tax corporates and the rich: Left", *The Hindu*, 2 February 2007

<sup>138</sup> "Rural jobs scheme may get an expansion", *Times of India*, 23 December 2006

<sup>139</sup> "India economy: The tricky politics of privatisation", *Economist Intelligence Unit*, 10 July 2006. Unlike China, whose population is ageing, India's demographic trends will make it a country of the young, as well as the most populous country on earth by the middle of the century. See Frances Cairncross, "A passage from India", *Oxford Today*, Trinity Issue, 2006, p. 11

<sup>140</sup> Problems in the sphere of health care could be sharply exacerbated should levels of HIV/AIDS infection rise. At present the infection rate is relatively low – an estimated 0.9 per cent of the population – but this still amounts to over five million people. "Reviving and completing the reform agenda", *The Hindu*, 19 January 2007

<sup>141</sup> "Struggles for tribal rights have to continue", *The Hindu*, 22 December 2006

<sup>142</sup> "The rising: Information, a right", *India Today*, 8 January 2007

<sup>143</sup> "No word on women's bill", *Hindustan Times*, 19 December 2006. 33 per cent of seats in panchayats (village councils) are already reserved for women.

suspended the programme until further information is provided by the Government on how different groups would be affected.<sup>144</sup>

In January 2007 the Supreme Court caused controversy when it overturned a previous convention that it had no jurisdiction over laws placed under the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, opening the way for it to review the constitutionality of these laws. Amongst others, laws establishing quotas for disadvantaged groups have often been placed under the Ninth Schedule. The Supreme Court has previously ruled that the quantum of reservation should not exceed 50 per cent, but states such as Tamil Nadu have gone well beyond this figure and sheltered behind the Ninth Schedule to avoid legal challenge.<sup>145</sup> This ruling has provoked calls from some political parties, including the DMK, and state governments for a revision to the Constitution that would explicitly prevent judicial scrutiny over reservation issues.<sup>146</sup> Social programmes are due to receive increased budgetary support during 2007-8.

## B. Caste in Indian Politics

The Indian caste system is a hierarchical system made up of a multitude of different caste identities (*jatis*).<sup>147</sup> Each caste identity is linked to an occupation, or set of occupations, traditionally carried out by members of that caste. The caste boundaries are maintained by restrictions on intermarriage between different castes and the status of different caste groups is demarcated by socially enforced restrictions.<sup>148</sup> The different castes are categorised into four groups (*varnas*) and the 'Untouchables'. In the hierarchical order of the traditional caste system, the four *varnas* are: (1) the Brahmins – the highest caste, whose traditional occupation is as priests and scholars; (2) the Kshatriyas (traditionally rulers and soldiers); (3) the Vaishyas (traditionally merchants and farmers); (4) the Shudras – the lowest of the four *varnas* and traditionally the servant class for the three higher *varnas*.

Beneath the Shudras and therefore outside the caste system are the Adi-Shudras or 'Untouchables', their traditional occupations include leather working, manual scavenging, sweeping, cremation work, removing dead animal carcasses and agricultural labour on other farmers' land.<sup>149</sup> The belief that these groups are ritually impure, or 'Untouchable', has led to multiple forms of discrimination against them, as they have been restricted to certain occupations that are themselves believed to be ritually polluting and have been barred access to many public resources. Today, 'Untouchables' are twice as likely as other castes to work as poorly paid daily wage-labourers, twice as likely to be

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<sup>144</sup> "Blow to Delhi as judges halt extension of low-caste quotas", *Financial Times*, 30 March 2007

<sup>145</sup> "OBC lobby ill at ease over ruling", *Times of India*, 13 January 2007

<sup>146</sup> "States urge centre to rewrite Constitution", *The Hindu*, 29 January 2007

<sup>147</sup> There are, of course, disagreements about where some groups fit within this hierarchy and about the boundaries of Hinduism. The aim here is to provide an account of caste as it has generally been viewed in mainstream Brahmanical Hinduism.

<sup>148</sup> Harriss-White defines a caste as "an inherited birth group, distinguished by intermarriage, by rules about food and those with whom food may be eaten and by ranked (hierarchised) social status (sometimes still associated with ritual dirt or pollution)." Harriss-White, *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy*, p. 176

<sup>149</sup> Information taken from the website of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). Available at: <http://www.Dalits.org/globalcastesystems.htm#India>

unemployed and twice as likely to be below the official poverty line.<sup>150</sup> ‘Untouchables’ are also referred to as Harijans (‘children of God’), Dalits (‘the oppressed’) and Scheduled Castes (referring to their special status in the Constitution). Also outside the caste system and subject to discrimination are the Adivasis, the indigenous or tribal population who are also known as Scheduled Tribes. Castes who are not ‘Untouchable’ but are still considered to be socially and economically deprived are referred to as Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The OBCs overlap closely with the Shudras – the lowest ranking of the four varnas – but also include some non-Hindu groups, including some Muslims.

According to the latest census, 16.2 per cent of the Indian population belong to the Dalits (Scheduled Castes) and 8.2 per cent to the Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes).<sup>151</sup> Other caste groups are not counted in the census but most estimates suggest that OBCs constitute about half of the Indian population. However, the proportions vary substantially across India with the upper castes forming a higher proportion of the population in North India than in the South.

## 1. The Law and its Enforcement

The Indian Constitution declares the practice of Untouchability to be an offence. Parliament has introduced a series of laws to ban caste-based discrimination including the *Untouchability (Offences) Act* in 1955, the *Protection of Civil Rights (Amendment) Act* in 1976, and the *Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act* in 1989. India also has a National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These legal measures represent important steps towards delegitimising the practice of Untouchability, but caste discrimination continues and prosecutions are rare.

Particularly in rural India, Dalits still face widespread forms of discrimination, deprivation, intimidation and violence. A survey by ActionAid found that in close to half of the villages surveyed Dalits were denied access to water sources used by the upper castes, necessitating a long journey to an alternative water source and/or using contaminated water. In close to a third of villages Dalits had to sit separately and use different utensils at restaurants or tea stalls. Many Dalits continue to carry out occupations that are considered ritually impure, including working as manual scavengers to clean dry latrines, a practice that has been banned but remains widespread.<sup>152</sup> Attempts to challenge the discrimination and restrictions they face frequently meet with violence, rape and other forms of intimidation.<sup>153</sup> Many analysts interpret such violence as an attempt by upper castes to protect their established privilege, including access to cheap compliant labour from the lower castes.<sup>154</sup> Despite the many legal provisions that exist, the criminal justice system in practice often offers little protection to Dalits and may itself at times practise Untouchability. According to Human Rights Watch, “widespread custodial torture and killing of Dalits, rape and sexual assault of Dalit women, and looting of Dalit property by

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<sup>150</sup> J. Overdorf, “The Untouchables”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 166, No. 12, 2003, p. 56

<sup>151</sup> Census of India 2001. See: [www.censusindia.net](http://www.censusindia.net)

<sup>152</sup> South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, “Manual Scavenging: Time to Clean up Our Act”, 31 October 2005. Available at: <http://www.hrdc.net/sahrdc/hrfeatures/HRF129.htm>

<sup>153</sup> Human Rights Watch, “India’s Dalit’s: between atrocity and protest”. Published in *openDemocracy*. Available at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/01/12/india15058.htm>

<sup>154</sup> S. Corbridge and J. Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalisation, Hindu Nationhood and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 203

the police “are condoned, or at best ignored.”<sup>155</sup> Human Rights Watch also claims that Dalits are subject to collective punishment by the police and that the “police also actively allow private actors to commit violence against Untouchables with impunity, and at times, collude with private actors in committing such atrocities.”<sup>156</sup>

## 2. Policy Responses – Reservations

In recognition of the limitations of legal measures, the Government’s response to Untouchability has included measures of affirmative action through policies for positive discrimination that reserve a proportion of parliamentary seats, government jobs and places in higher education for Dalits and Adivasis.

In total, out of 543 parliamentary constituencies in the Lok Sabha, 79 seats are reserved for Dalits and 41 for Adivasis, a figure that is supposed to represent their proportion in each state’s population.<sup>157</sup> Only Dalit candidates are entitled to stand for election in constituencies reserved for Dalits, while only Adivasi candidates can stand for election in constituencies reserved for Adivasis, but the entire electorate of these constituencies is entitled to vote for these candidates. Since Dalits rarely make up more than 30 per cent of total voters in a constituency, Dalit candidates in reserved constituencies thus depend upon the votes of non-Dalit voters to get elected. This system of reservations through joint electorates therefore constrains the ability of MPs from reserved constituencies to prioritise the interests of Dalits and Adivasis.<sup>158</sup>

Reservations for employment and places in higher education are also made on a proportional basis but are confined to jobs in the public sector (including state-controlled companies) and places in state-funded higher education institutions. As a result, the reservation policy only affects 20 million jobs out of a workforce of 300 million.<sup>159</sup> Even those jobs that are reserved frequently go unfilled, especially in higher-level government jobs, meaning that Dalits are over-represented in lower government jobs, particularly as sweepers – a job that is considered ritually polluting. Within the Dalits, the main beneficiaries of reservations have been relatively affluent groups. Reservations have contributed to the emergence of an urban middle class who have used their increased opportunities to confer advantages on their children, while doing little to tackle poverty and discrimination in the countryside where most Dalits still live.

Despite significant opposition from the upper castes, reservations in public sector jobs have been extended to the OBCs.<sup>160</sup> The Mandal Commission, which was formed by the

<sup>155</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Hidden Apartheid: Caste Discrimination Against India’s ‘Untouchables’”, Vol. 19, No. 7, February 2007, p. 4. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/india0207/>

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>157</sup> Article 330 of the Indian Constitution.

See: <http://lawmin.nic.in/coi.htm> and <http://www.indian-elections.com/electionfaqs/delimitation-of-constituencies.html>

<sup>158</sup> The system was the subject of disagreement between Dr B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, with Ambedkar favouring having separate electorates so that only Dalits would vote for Dalit candidates.

<sup>159</sup> A. Varshney, “Is India Becoming More Democratic?”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 2000, p.18

<sup>160</sup> In 1961 Nehru invited states to implement their own quotas for OBCs following the 1955 report of the Backward Classes Commission. As a result quotas were instituted for OBCs in the South but the dominance of upper castes in the North meant this did not happen there for another thirty years. See Corbridge and Harriss, *Reinventing India*, p. 219

Janata Government in 1979 to recommend steps to improve the condition of the socially and educationally backward classes, estimated that the upper castes held 69 per cent of all government jobs and that the OBCs, despite constituting 52 per cent of the population, had a lower representation in all categories of government jobs than the Dalits and Adivasis.<sup>161</sup> As a result, the Commission recommended that 27 per cent of posts in central government services and the public sector should be reserved for the OBCs.<sup>162</sup> However, it was only in 1990 that V.P. Singh's National Front government implemented the Mandal Commission's recommendation that employment reservations be extended to OBCs. Unlike reservations for Dalits and Adivasis, reservations for OBCs are subject to a 'creamy layer' rule to exclude 'socially advanced' people amongst the groups classified as OBCs from the benefits of reservations. In 2006 the current UPA Government announced reservations for OBCs in all publicly funded higher educational institutions, but it sought to minimise upper caste resistance by stipulating that the reservation would be provided by increasing the total number of places available rather than reducing the number of unreserved places.

Some authors argue that reservations have had a redistributive effect as Dalits and Adivasis have gained a legislative presence resulting in increased flows of patronage due to the reservation of electoral constituencies, improved education opportunities, and income and influence from the reservation of jobs. Others argue that such benefits are outweighed by the resentment and inefficiencies that reservations create. However, most agree that reservations alone can only improve the position of a small and relatively privileged section of the lower castes, and many express concern that debates over reservations have diverted attention from broader measures to tackle the deprivation of the lower castes.

### 3. Policy Responses – School Education

Education has been identified as an important element in tackling caste-based inequalities. Before independence, some scholarships existed for Dalit and Adivasi children, but new incentives have been introduced in the post-independence era. Nevertheless, literacy rates amongst Dalits remain much lower than among the rest of the population. The 2001 census found that the Dalit literacy rate was 54.7 per cent as against a national literacy rate of 64.8 per cent.<sup>163</sup> One researcher has reported that Dalits have close to a 50 per cent dropout rate in primary education and a 78 per cent dropout rate in secondary education, meaning that there are a "relatively lower number of Dalit and Adivasi children in higher grades".<sup>164</sup> This continuing educational exclusion of lower castes is attributed partly to their greater poverty making it harder to keep children in school, partly to the fact that the children are often the first generation to attend school and partly to the discrimination they face when at school.

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<sup>161</sup> G. Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Transformation in India* (London, 1993), p. 69

<sup>162</sup> The Mandal Commission's reference to 'backward classes' meant all future commissions had to justify the inclusion of various castes by data showing their social and economic condition.

<sup>163</sup> See: <http://www.education.nic.in/stats/detail/4.pdf> and <http://www.censusindia.net/results/provindia3.html>

<sup>164</sup> L.D. Jenkins, *Identity and Identification in India: Defining the Disadvantaged* (London, 2002), p. 184; S. Balagopalan and R. Subrahmanian, "Dalit and Adivasi Children in Schools: Some Preliminary Research and Findings", *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2003, p. 48

Although caste-based discrimination is now illegal, institutionalised discrimination against Dalit school children by their teachers is still common. One study found Dalit children were made to eat separately in 30-40 per cent of village schools, and to sit separately in the classroom and use a separate source for drinking water in 20-25 per cent of villages. It is also not uncommon for Dalit students to be humiliated by their teachers by referring to them by their caste name.<sup>165</sup> Many analysts attribute the continuation of such discrimination to the disjuncture between the caste of students and teachers. Large salary increases for government school teachers have made jobs as government school teachers highly sought after and attractive to the upper castes. Amartya Sen argues that this has drawn “the school teachers as a group further away from the families of children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.”<sup>166</sup>

#### 4. The Rise of Caste Politics

In the first decades after independence, Dalit MPs elected through the reserved constituencies were generally representatives of the mainstream political parties, particularly Congress, and therefore had limited influence within the political system. As a result, during the 1950s and 1960s, the Dalits, together with Muslims and the upper castes, formed a major support base for a Congress Party that, particularly in the North, was controlled by the upper castes, who relied on “vote bank politics” to win elections.<sup>167</sup> Parties representing lower castes came to power in the South in the 1950s and 1960s, but took longer to emerge as a serious electoral force in the North. However, in the 1990s a mainly Dalit party, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), challenged for power in India’s largest state of Uttar Pradesh and the BSP’s leader, Mayawati, was the first Dalit woman to become a Chief Minister at state-level.

The BSP was formed by educated government employees who found they still faced caste-based discrimination despite being the beneficiaries of reservations for Dalits.<sup>168</sup> The BSP received support from an increasingly politicised Dalit population. No longer acting as a Congress ‘vote bank’, lower castes have increasingly voted for parties representing their own caste. In India today, “the incidence of voting is higher among the poor than among the rich, among the less educated than among the graduates, in the villages than in the cities.”<sup>169</sup> The Dalits, as some of the poorest and least educated people in India, are 70 per cent more likely to vote than the upper castes.<sup>170</sup> According to one analyst, India is the only country in the world where “the composition of the electorate had changed in favour of the vulnerable section of the population between 1971 and 1996”, as voter turnout has remained at around sixty per cent but the composition of those voting has changed dramatically.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> G. Shah et al., *Untouchability in Rural India* (London, 2006), p. 129

<sup>166</sup> A.K. Sen, “Class in India”, in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (London, 2005), pp. 217-8

<sup>167</sup> C. Jaffrelot, *India’s Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India* (London, 2003), p. 8

<sup>168</sup> Z. Hasan, “Representation and Redistribution: The New Lower Caste Politics of North India”, in Z. Hasan ed., *Parties and Party Politics in India* (Oxford, 2002), p. 381

<sup>169</sup> Varshney, “Is India Becoming More Democratic?”, p. 20

<sup>170</sup> Hasan, “Representation and Redistribution”, p. 378

<sup>171</sup> J. Alam, “Is Caste Appeal Casteism? Oppressed Castes in Politics”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 March 1999, p. 757

With the declining dominance of the Congress Party in India and the growth of coalition politics, parties like the BSP and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD – which draws its support from OBCs in Bihar), have been increasingly influential in coalition governments at both the state and national levels. The BSP's core vote among the Dalits gives it state-wide coverage but it cannot win seats without support from other groups. It has therefore appealed to a broader electorate by fielding non-Dalit candidates and has formed coalitions with other parties, including the Hindu nationalist (and predominantly upper caste) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This has undoubtedly brought increased electoral success but many critics argue that it has also limited the BSP's ability to prioritise the interests of Dalits. A further concern is that the BSP has focused on exercising its powers of patronage by filling quotas for Dalits in government employment and on symbolic measures such as building statues of Dalit leaders, but has given relatively low priority to developmental activities and education that could improve the opportunities and status of a larger number of Dalits.<sup>172</sup>

The Indian state has introduced many measures that seek to tackle Untouchability through both legislation and positive discrimination, but the laws have not always been implemented and, while the situation of Dalits has improved over the past sixty years, many remain subject to multiple forms of discrimination and deprivation. India's complex and controversial system of positive discrimination has had a large impact on a small minority but done little to tackle widespread deprivation in the countryside. The lower castes have become increasingly active and politically aware, and new political parties have emerged that are led by and draw their core support from the lower castes. As a result, caste has become an increasingly visible force in Indian politics. However, many analysts express concern that parties claiming to represent the lower castes are failing to deliver the changes that are necessary to tackle the ongoing deprivation and discrimination faced by the majority of lower castes, particularly in the countryside.

### **C. Hindu Nationalism and Religious Violence**

The Indian Constitution declares India to be a secular state in which all citizens have the right to practise their religion. The state is forbidden from favouring any particular religion or discriminating between people on the basis of religion. For most of the past 60 years India has generally enjoyed high levels of religious tolerance with different religions living peacefully together. However, there have been periodic major outbreaks of religious violence since independence.<sup>173</sup> Indeed, India and Pakistan were born amid the terrible violence of partition. Furthermore, outbreaks of religious violence have become increasingly common since the early 1990s. Some analysts have argued that this upward trend has coincided with the rise of Hindu nationalism as a mainstream force in Indian politics.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Z. Hasan, "Representation and Redistribution", pp. 385-8

<sup>173</sup> In India, religious violence is often referred to as communal violence.

<sup>174</sup> For example, see T.B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Oxford, 1999)



## 1. The Rise of Hindu Nationalism

After independence, the Congress Party acted as an umbrella party that drew support from a wide range of groups, including lower castes and Muslims. Although many local Congress leaders made appeals to religious identity, the party was officially committed to secularism. However, after Congress's electoral defeat in 1977, its then leader, Indira Gandhi, placed greater emphasis on religion in order to mobilise Hindu supporters. Such flirtations with Hindu nationalism may inadvertently have helped to create the political space for an alternative national party to emerge. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was founded in 1980 to replace its predecessor, the Jan Sangh, which had been formed in 1951 but had been incorporated into the Janata party in 1977. The BJP is the political wing of the Sangh Parivar, a group of Hindu nationalist organisations which includes the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a national volunteer organisation, and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), an organisation of Hindu monks. The RSS is seen by many as the head of the Sangh Parivar and, although its support for the BJP is not unconditional, its over 4.5 million members provide the party with a grass-roots cadre that most of the other newer political parties lack. Collectively, the organisations of the Sangh Parivar espouse a Hindu nationalist agenda based upon the concept of 'Hindutva', which views India as a Hindu nation that should be run according to Hindu precepts.

Although the Hindu nationalist movement seeks to portray itself as incorporating all castes, the BJP's support comes primarily from the Hindu middle classes and the upper castes. There is little evidence of lower caste involvement.<sup>175</sup> The size of India's consuming middle class grew rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s, partly due to the progressive liberalisation of the Indian economy. For new entrants to the middle classes, religious assertion provided "a means of proclaiming social involvement and gaining community acceptance."<sup>176</sup> The middle classes and upper castes have also felt threatened by the increased politicisation of lower castes and particularly by proposals to extend reservations in government employment to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Hansen describes the rise of Hindu nationalism as a "conservative revolution [...] against a broader democratic transformation of both the political field and the public culture in postcolonial India."<sup>177</sup> He argues that the upper castes turned to Hindu nationalism as a force that promises to maintain the hierarchical caste-based order of Indian society. According to this explanation, the appeal of Hindu nationalism lies not primarily in its "religious subtext" but in its connection "with everyday anxieties about security, a sense of disorder, and more generally the ambivalence of modern life."<sup>178</sup>

The BJP's electoral strength is concentrated in the North and West of India. It wins few seats from Eastern and Southern regions of the country. This, along with the fact that its support amongst the lower castes has remained small, has meant that it has had to rely on forming coalitions with parties that do not share its Hindu nationalist agenda.

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<sup>175</sup> T. Basu, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (Hyderabad, 1993), p. 91

<sup>176</sup> S. Dubey, "The Middle Classes", in P. Oldenberg and L.A. Gordon eds, *India Briefing* (London, 1992), p. 157

<sup>177</sup> Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, pp. 4-5

<sup>178</sup> Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, p. 11

The BJP's approach to promoting Hindu nationalism has involved a balance between 'militant' and 'moderate' strategies.<sup>179</sup> 'Militant' strategies have focused on building an ideological identity by stigmatising non-Hindus, particularly Muslims, and depicting them as a threat to the Hindu majority. This 'militant' strategy has also involved building a network of activists to be able to mobilise people around the Hindutva ideology. 'Moderate' strategies, by contrast, have promoted a softer version of Hindu nationalism while placing greater emphasis on broader socioeconomic issues. These more moderate strategies have been directed at presenting the BJP as a mainstream political party and thereby enabling them to build pragmatic alliances with other parties. The balance between these 'militant' and 'moderate' strategies has been, and remains, a constant source of tension within the BJP and the wider Hindu nationalist movement.

The BJP's rise during the 1980s and 1990s was rapid. It won two seats in the Lok Sabha in 1984, 85 seats in 1989, 119 in 1991, 182 in 1998 and 182 in 1999. When it lost power in 2004 it was still the second largest party with 138 seats.<sup>180</sup> The BJP's promotion of Hindu nationalism has been balanced by the logic of winning and maintaining power, including the need to form alliances with other parties that do not necessarily share its religious agenda. Nevertheless, while the BJP was in power there were accusations that it was formulating policies that conflicted with the secular nature of the Indian state. For example, the BJP-led Government was criticised in 1998 when Hindu nationalists associated with the VHP were appointed to the Indian Council of Historical Research.<sup>181</sup> The BJP was also criticised when the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) deleted portions of its history books allegedly in order to portray India as having originated as a Hindu nation.

## 2. Outbreaks of Religious Violence – Ayodhya and Gujarat as Case Studies

The most serious and widely discussed challenges to secularism in India since independence have come in the form of incidents of religious violence. Critics have argued that the authorities have been implicated in many of these outbreaks.

Some of the most serious incidents of religious violence over the past two decades have been provoked by the controversy over the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Babri mosque in Ayodhya, in the Northern state of Uttar Pradesh, which was built on land that Hindus believe was the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram. In December 1992, following a movement by political parties and activist groups including the BJP, RSS, VHP and Shiv Sena, 150,000 people demolished the mosque and then attacked Ayodhya's Muslim neighbourhoods.<sup>182</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, "large-scale communal riots between Muslims and Hindus ensued in which thousands of men, women, and children were killed and

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<sup>179</sup> C. Jaffrelot, "Hindu Nationalism and Democracy", in N.G. Jayal ed., *Democracy in India* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 522-3

<sup>180</sup> Sen, "India Large and Small", in *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 50

<sup>181</sup> C. Jaffrelot, "The BJP at the Centre: A Central and Centrist Party?", in C. Jaffrelot ed., *The Sangh Parivar: A Reader* (Oxford, 2005), p. 297

<sup>182</sup> The Shiv Sena is a major political force in the Western state of Maharashtra and its capital Mumbai (formerly Bombay). It pursues a Hindu nationalist ideology and is known for being more extremist than the BJP.

hundreds of women and girls were raped”, while “tens of thousands were displaced.”<sup>183</sup> Television footage of the destruction of the mosque prompted violence in other parts of the country, particularly in Bombay (now Mumbai) where the Shiv Sena “began to attack Muslim households alongside the police.”<sup>184</sup> Official figures estimated that 167 people were killed in Bombay, but NGOs claimed the real figure was closer to 500.

The dispute over Ayodhya has remained passionate in the intervening years and retains the capacity to spark violence. In February 2002 a train carriage carrying Hindu activists back from Ayodhya caught fire at the town of Godhra killing 58 people. The cause of the fire is uncertain although most accounts attribute it to an attack by a group of Muslims. A retaliatory wave of anti-Muslim violence spread across the state of Gujarat, which was under the control of the BJP. Human Rights Watch claimed that “the attacks on Muslims throughout Gujarat were planned well in advance of the Godhra incident, and were organised with extensive police participation and in close cooperation with officials of the [BJP] state government.”<sup>185</sup> Government officials acknowledged that more than 850 people were killed in the ensuing communal violence, most of them Muslims, but “unofficial estimates put the death toll as high as 2,000.”<sup>186</sup> In March 2005 the chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, who is seen as representing the more extreme wing of the BJP, had his visa for the US revoked under a US law that prohibits the issuing of visas to foreign government officials who have been responsible for “particularly severe violations of religious freedom.”<sup>187</sup>

The violence left 150,000 Muslims living in refugee camps in Gujarat. These camps were initially recognised by the Gujarat state government, but after four months it withdrew the support it had been providing. In its 2003-4 annual report, the National Human Rights Commission estimated that 4,790 Muslim families were still displaced. Since the riots, there has also been criticism of the fact that the perpetrators of the violence have not been brought to justice. Of 4,208 cases that were registered, charge-sheets were filed in just over 2,100 cases, but by January 2006 only 345 cases had been concluded, resulting in just thirteen convictions.<sup>188</sup>

There is often an economic dimension to such outbreaks of religious violence. Private property is regularly targeted for attack and there are suggestions that this is partly driven by the interests of rival businesses, which stand to benefit if their competitors are targeted. Young people with limited opportunities to secure employment in the formal sector can be “forced for advancement into relations of clientelage for patrons eager to use them to foment communal violence.”<sup>189</sup> These economic tensions are an important reason why Hindu-Muslim violence occurs almost exclusively in urban areas. Between

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<sup>183</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Slaughter Among Neighbours: The Political Origins of Communal Violence* (London, 1995), p. 33

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>185</sup> Human Rights Watch, “‘We Have No Orders To Save You’: State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat”, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2002, p. 2. Available at: <http://hrw.org/reports/2002/india/index.htm#TopOfPage>

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>187</sup> See: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/4360259.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4360259.stm)

<sup>188</sup> National Alliance of Women, “India: Second NGO Shadow Report on CEDAW”, November 2006, p. 162. Available at: [www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/pdf/India%20Shadow%20report.pdf](http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/pdf/India%20Shadow%20report.pdf)

<sup>189</sup> Harriss-White, *India Working*, p. 150

1990 and 1995, only 3.6 per cent of the deaths resulting from religious violence occurred in rural areas. What is more, within urban India the vast majority of religious violence has occurred in eight cities representing only 18 per cent of India's urban population. Nearly 46 per cent of all deaths from religious violence have occurred in these cities.<sup>190</sup>

## D. Maoist Insurgencies: The Naxalites and India's 'Red Corridor'

Manmohan Singh, the Indian Prime Minister, has described India's Maoist insurgents (known as the Naxalites) as "India's single biggest internal security challenge."<sup>191</sup> Analysts claim that nine states are seriously affected by Naxalite violence – Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal – and that Naxalite groups are present in 170 of India's 602 districts covering a quarter of India's land mass.<sup>192</sup> In some of these districts the Naxalites collect their own taxes and deliver their own system of justice. Security analysts describe the Naxalite-affected areas as a 'Red Corridor' running from Eastern to Southern India. The Asian Centre for Human Rights reports that 749 people were killed in the Naxalite conflict in 2006, including 285 civilians, 135 security personnel and 329 alleged Naxalites.<sup>193</sup>

### 1. Who are the Naxalites?

The Naxalites are named after the village of Naxalbari in the state of West Bengal where 15-20,000 poor peasants rose up against the local landlords in 1967.<sup>194</sup> The Naxalite movement then spread to other parts of the country, particularly Andhra Pradesh, but met with extensive state repression and was crushed in the early 1970s. However, the Naxalites have since regained strength. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), there are currently 9,000 armed Naxalite rebels, together with 40,000 full-time cadres who are less heavily armed.<sup>195</sup> The Naxalites today are a fairly disparate movement, with up to sixty different factions.<sup>196</sup> Analysts have identified three dominant groups: the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist)-Liberation – considered 'revisionist' by other Naxalites as they favour the parliamentary path; the CPI (ML)-Party Unity – considered to occupy the middle ground; and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) – considered to be on the extreme left.<sup>197</sup>

The Naxalites espouse revolution through violent class struggle, including the 'annihilation of class enemies', but say relatively little about what they would do after

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<sup>190</sup> A. Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol.1, No.1, 2003, pp. 371-3

<sup>191</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Countering Naxalite Violence in India", *IISS Strategic Comments*, Vol.12, No.7, 2006

<sup>192</sup> "Maoist Rebels at War in India", *The Economist*, 19 August 2006

<sup>193</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights, *Naxal Conflict in 2006* (New Delhi, 2007), p. 2

<sup>194</sup> A. Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.213-4

<sup>195</sup> IISS, "Countering Naxalite Violence in India"

<sup>196</sup> B. Bhatia, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar", in M. Randle ed., *Issues in Peace Research*, (Bradford, 2002), p. 255

<sup>197</sup> In September 2004 the MCC merged with the People's War Group (PWG) to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which remains underground.

capturing power. They focus particularly on the social, economic and political rights of Dalits and Adivasis, India's most oppressed and marginalised groups. In practice, much of the Naxalites' activity focuses on realising rights that are enshrined in the Indian Constitution but that have not been delivered. In terms of social rights, the Naxalites describe themselves as fighting "for basic dignity" and "a basic acknowledgement of [lower caste and tribal people] as human beings."<sup>198</sup> This includes lower castes not being called by derogatory caste-based names, being allowed to wear clean clothes in front of higher castes and lower caste women not being subjected to sexual harassment.

In terms of economic rights, the Naxalites focus on issues such as land reform and the payment of minimum wages by confronting farmers with landholdings in excess of the legal limit or who pay agricultural labourers less than the stipulated minimum wage.<sup>199</sup> In West Bengal, the relatively effective implementation of land reform by the Left Front state government may have helped to limit support for the Naxalites, but recent attempts to make agricultural land available to the private sector for industrial use are seen by some as providing the conditions for increased support for the Naxalites. In terms of political rights, those Naxalite factions that contest elections have sought to ensure that lower castes are not prevented from voting.<sup>200</sup> This appears to have had some effect. Previously, "people were often kept away from the polling booths by henchmen of the upper castes and classes who would cast the votes on their behalf in favour of their own candidate". This has changed as "the party ensures that its supporters are able to vote."<sup>201</sup> The Naxalites have also sought to promote broader political rights of the lower castes, including the right of labourers to hold meetings. By providing protection from upper-caste and state-sponsored violence, some analysts have argued that they have enabled lower castes to be more assertive in claiming their rights.

Although the leaders of the Naxalite movement tend to be drawn from the higher castes, the majority of supporters are drawn from the most poor and marginalised, landless agricultural labourers and poor farmers, particularly Dalits and Adivasis. The Naxalite movement is concentrated in the tribal belts of some of India's poorest states where state infrastructure is limited and infant mortality rates amongst the Adivasis are more than double the all-India average.<sup>202</sup> According to one analyst, these groups turn to the Naxalites because they feel other political parties are not working for them and because they wish to improve their current situation rather than out of commitment to the Naxalites' revolutionary ideology.<sup>203</sup>

## 2. Naxalite Violence and State Responses

A large part of the Naxalite movement's activities are non-violent. They are carried out through meetings, sit-ins, rallies, boycotts and strikes to mobilise poor people in pursuit of their rights. The Naxalites' violent activities include killing landlords, attacking police

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<sup>198</sup> Bhatia, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar", in *Issues in Peace Research*, p. 257

<sup>199</sup> In one village, Naxalite-led wage struggles are reported to have succeeded in getting wages increased from 1.75kgs of coarse rice per day to 3-3.5kgs. B. Bhatia, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 9 April 2005, p. 1542

<sup>200</sup> Bhatia, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar", in *Issues in Peace Research*, p. 259

<sup>201</sup> B. Bhatia, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, p.1544

<sup>202</sup> Sagar, "The Spring and its Thunder", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 July 2006, pp. 3176-7

<sup>203</sup> Bhatia, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 1542-4

pickets, strikes on other Naxalite factions, looting grain from granaries, looting rifles from landlords or the police and forcibly harvesting crops on contested fields, as well as responding to attacks on villages.<sup>204</sup> The Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) “has retaliated against massacres by upper caste landlords by carrying out counter-massacres of upper caste men [and] threatened to kill four ‘class enemies’ for every victim of a massacre.”<sup>205</sup> Such killings have been criticised by other Naxalite groups. The MCC has also been criticised for carrying out brutal punishments through its people’s courts and threatening those who participate in elections. Human Rights Watch accuses the Naxalites of having “killed civilians, tortured and mutilated those they believe to be enemies, and engaged in extortion and forced recruitment.”<sup>206</sup> Most incidents of violence by the Naxalites are relatively small-scale. However, in March 2007 Maoists attacked a security post in Chhattisgarh state, killing 50 policemen.<sup>207</sup>

Analysts argue that the use of violence discredits Naxalite ideas of ‘people’s power’, on the grounds that the movement cannot be truly democratic as long as it is controlled by a secretive underground group. They also claim that possession of arms has had a corrupting influence on the movement. As the desire for sophisticated weapons has increased, the Naxalites have relied not just on raiding police pickets and armouries but also on ‘levies’ on private contractors and development funds.<sup>208</sup> Development activities, in which the Naxalites have shown little interest, have been impeded as a result. For example, the destruction of transport and educational infrastructure by the Naxalites “has deprived local populations of whatever few benefits they ever derived from the Indian state.”<sup>209</sup>

The Indian Government has recognised the role that poverty and inequality play in fuelling the Naxalite movement. The Planning Commission of India stated in 2006 that “backward districts of otherwise well performing states, present a dismal picture of intra-state imbalance and neglect” and argued that “the centre and the states together must deal with this problem on a priority basis.”<sup>210</sup> The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has acknowledged that “the factors leading to the spread of the violent movements include the existence of acute poverty, severe disparities in living standards, lack of economic and livelihood opportunities and being treated as offenders and even criminals when they exercise their traditional rights.”<sup>211</sup>

The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, has stressed the need for a two-pronged strategy of effective policing alongside a socioeconomic development programme. In March 2006 the UPA Government set out a 14-point policy to combat the Naxalites. This policy recognises the importance of promoting socioeconomic development including the need “to distribute land to the landless poor as part of the speedy implementation of the land

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<sup>204</sup> Bhatia, “The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar”, in *Issues in Peace Research*, p. 260

<sup>205</sup> Bhatia, “The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, p. 1537

<sup>206</sup> Human Rights Watch, Press Release, 27 April 2006, “India: Draconian Response to Naxalite Violence”. Available at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/04/27/india13279.htm>

<sup>207</sup> *BBC News Online*, “Maoists kill 50 Indian policemen”, BBC News, 15 March 2007. Available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/6452759.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6452759.stm)

<sup>208</sup> Bhatia, “On Armed Resistance”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 July 2006, p. 3179

<sup>209</sup> Sagar, “The Spring and its Thunder”, 22 July 2006, p. 3177

<sup>210</sup> As quoted by the Asian Centre for Human Rights in *Naxal Conflict in 2006*, p.22

<sup>211</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights, *Naxal Conflict in 2006*, p.22

reforms, ensure development of physical infrastructure like roads, communication, power, etc. and provide employment opportunities to the youth in these areas.”<sup>212</sup> However, the policy also states that state governments will not engage in peace dialogue with the Naxalite groups unless they “agree to give up violence and arms.” This was one reason why peace talks in 2004 with Naxalites in the Southern state of Andhra Pradesh broke down.<sup>213</sup>

Overall, the official response to the Naxalites continues to focus on maintaining or re-establishing law and order. Human rights groups claim that this has led to serious human rights abuses by the authorities. According to Human Rights Watch, the *Special Public Protection Act* that came into force in March 2006 allows people to be detained for up to three years for ‘unlawful activities’. The organisation states that the Act “also criminalises any support given to Naxalites, with no defence of duress” – meaning people can be detained even if they were forced to help the Naxalites.<sup>214</sup> One analyst goes as far as to claim that, “given the atmosphere of suspicion, anyone can be described as a Naxalite and killed.”<sup>215</sup> The response of state governments has also focused on strengthening the security apparatus. At the beginning of 2006 the Naxalite-affected states demanded 100 central paramilitary battalions with over 100,000 armed personnel to confront the 9,000 Naxalites.<sup>216</sup> Villagers often lack confidence in the police as neutral enforcers of the law, viewing the police as “an additional, more powerful, and more dangerous band of robbers than those for whom robbery is a vocation.”<sup>217</sup>

The use of violence on the part of the Naxalites has also invoked retaliation from upper caste groups, who have formed militias that often act with the support of the local police or the political authorities. Bhatia describes how one upper caste militia carried out massacres and killings in central Bihar, often while the police were present. In one such massacre in 1996, “houses were burnt, and twenty one Dalit women and children were killed”. In another incident, the same militia killed sixty people.<sup>218</sup> In Chhatisgarh a citizens’ anti-Naxalite vigilante group, the Salwa Judum, was set up in 2005. It is reported to receive substantial state support and operate “with complete impunity”.<sup>219</sup> The Salwa Judum has been accused of widespread human rights abuses, including burning down villagers’ houses and displacing large numbers of people.<sup>220</sup> According to the Asian Centre for Human Rights, the Salwa Judum activists are also “involved in illegal checking of all vehicles passing through their area and levying of illegal taxes just like the Naxalites”.<sup>221</sup> As a result of the Salwa Judum’s activities and its clashes with the

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<sup>212</sup> Government of India, “Status Paper on the Naxal Problem”, 13 March 2006. Available at: [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/papers/06Mar13\\_Naxal%20Problem%20.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/papers/06Mar13_Naxal%20Problem%20.htm)

<sup>213</sup> Editorial, “Deathly Cycle of Violence”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 10 September 2005

<sup>214</sup> Human Rights Watch, “India: Draconian Response to Naxalite Violence”

<sup>215</sup> N. Sundar, “Bastar, Maoism and Salwa Judum”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 July 2006, p. 3188

<sup>216</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights, “Naxal Conflict in 2006”, p. 23. Available at: <http://www.achrweb.org/reports/india/naxal0107.pdf>

<sup>217</sup> P. Brass, cited in S. Corbridge et al., *Seeing the State: Governance and Governmentality in Rural India* (Cambridge, 2005), p.238

<sup>218</sup> Bhatia, “The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar”, in *Issues in Peace Research*, p. 265

<sup>219</sup> People’s Union for Civil Liberties, “Where the State Makes War on its Own People: A Report on Violation of People’s Rights during the Salwa Judum Campaign in Dantewada, Chattisgarh”, April 2006. Available at: <http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Human-rights/2006/slajawudum.htm>

<sup>220</sup> Sundar, “Bastar, Maoism and Salwa Judum”, p. 3188

<sup>221</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights, *Naxal Conflict in 2006*, p. 9

Naxalites, over 40,000 people have reportedly been displaced as “thousands have fled their villages and abandoned their paddy fields fearing attacks” from either side.<sup>222</sup> The Asian Centre for Human Rights found the conditions in the temporary camps where many of these people are housed to be “deplorable and sub-human.”<sup>223</sup>

The nature of the Naxalite movement – with its multiple factions, many of which operate in secret – makes it difficult to assess its full impact or significance. The Naxalites have protected many low-caste people from caste-based violence and helped secure some people’s rights. However, the spiral of violence between the Naxalites, the police and anti-Naxalite citizens’ militias has created new forms of insecurity in people’s lives, with all sides being accused of serious human rights violations. Despite widespread public agreement that the Naxalites draw their support from the poorest and most marginalised people in some of the most isolated parts of the country, little systematic official effort has so far been made to promote development in these areas or to offer the lower castes alternative sources of protection from upper caste repression.

## **E. Other Insurgencies: Kashmir and the Northeast**

Most analysts would expect a developing country like India with high poverty levels to experience periodic challenges from ethnic groups that feel marginalised and/or oppressed. However, the vast majority of Indian states have remained peaceful. Apart from the Naxalites, the other main insurgencies faced by India since independence have been in Punjab, Kashmir and Northeast India. This section of the paper focuses on the insurgencies in Kashmir and the Northeast. The conflict in the Punjab, in which Sikh militants campaigned for an independent Sikh homeland of *Khalistan*, which raged during the 1980s and into the 1990s, has largely been contained for now. Serious as some of the insurgencies have been and remain, they have not spread to threaten the security of the country as a whole.

The Government’s approach towards combating insurgencies has varied across the country. In Punjab and Kashmir successive national governments are seen to have played a role in fomenting conflict by variously undermining democratic institutions, supporting particular factions in the interests of short-term political gain and using an excessively authoritarian approach. By contrast, in the Northeast region, national governments have been more open to accommodative strategies, including granting degrees of autonomy or statehood to different groups. As a result, although insurgencies have continued in the Northeast, resentment has often been directed against state-level governments rather than the central government.

### **1. Kashmir**

#### **a. Background**

The conflict over Kashmir since 1947 has had two interlocking dimensions. The first dimension has been inter-state rivalry between India and Pakistan over which country is

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<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19



entitled to sovereignty over Indian Kashmir. The two countries have been to war twice over Kashmir (in 1947 and 1965). The second dimension has been political protest by Kashmiri political organisations on both sides of the border, which since the late 1980s has included armed insurgency. Some of the insurgents are based in 'Free' (or *Azad*) Kashmir, the Pakistan part of Kashmir, and are pro-Pakistan; others – mainly based in Indian Kashmir (now part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir) – argue for independence for the whole of Kashmir from both India and Pakistan.<sup>224</sup>

In the run up to independence in 1947, the departing British asked Indian princely states such as Kashmir to decide their future. Kashmir was in the peculiar position of being a Muslim-majority state ruled by a Hindu Maharaja.<sup>225</sup> The Hindu Maharaja, Hari Singh, was reluctant to relinquish his authority by joining either country and therefore delayed making a decision. The decision was forced upon him following independence when Kashmir was invaded by tribesmen from Pakistan. As a result, the Maharaja lost effective control of much of the state and turned to India for military support, signing an Instrument of Accession to India in October 1947. This marked the beginning of the first war between India and Pakistan, which lasted until January 1949 when the two countries agreed a ceasefire line. The conflict left two-thirds of Kashmir under Indian control.

In January 1948 India asked the UN Security Council to take action against Pakistan. The Security Council passed resolutions calling on Pakistan to withdraw its troops from Kashmir and on India to hold a plebiscite to determine which country the state should be part of. However, India never held the plebiscite called for in Security Council Resolution 47 and Pakistan never withdrew its troops from what it calls *Azad* (free) Kashmir. A further outbreak of war between the two countries over Kashmir in 1965 ended with agreement of an identical ceasefire line. With minor alterations, this line later became the Line of Control that exists today, following the Simla Agreement of July 1972.

Despite initially bringing Kashmir to the Security Council, India became strongly opposed to the involvement of the UN and other third-parties in resolving the situation in Kashmir. It contends that the Simla Agreement renders UN resolutions redundant. Pakistan disputes this contention and has continued to call for a plebiscite.

Kashmir is officially guaranteed a high degree of autonomy within India through its special status under the Indian Constitution. However, the holding of elections in Jammu and Kashmir was delayed until the 1960s and its autonomy has regularly been overridden by the Union Government on the grounds of national security or maintaining public order. Such political marginalisation, compounded by heavy-handed interventions by the Indian security forces, has played an important part in fuelling protest and violence in Indian Kashmir since 1947. While India and Pakistan dispute the demarcation of territory, many Kashmiris prefer a solution based on independence from both states. In addition, growing ambivalence about Pakistan's role over Kashmir, has led some

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<sup>224</sup> These 'dual dimensions' meant that aspects of this discussion of Kashmir could also have gone into Part IV of this Paper on India's Foreign and Security Policy. However, for ease of reference it was decided to cover both dimensions in one place here.

<sup>225</sup> It does, however, have a significant Hindu minority: in the Kashmir Valley 4 per cent of the population is Hindu and 95 per cent Muslim, while in Jammu 66 per cent of the population is Hindu and 30 per cent Muslim.

Kashmiris to argue for a solution based on independence from both states.<sup>226</sup> Following flawed elections in 1987, a pro-independence insurgency emerged. In the 1990s other insurgent groups with more Islamist agendas were formed.

The response of the Indian authorities to these insurgencies has been highly controversial. Special powers granted to the security forces in Indian Kashmir have led to widespread allegations of killings, torture and disappearances carried out by the security forces. Human Rights Watch cites local human rights defenders as claiming that “at least eight thousand people have ‘disappeared’ since the conflict began”.<sup>227</sup> There have also been reports of suspected militants being held in custody for over ten years without trial. To prevent them being granted bail they are often held under the *Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act*. Human Rights Watch has also expressed concern about human rights abuses carried out by the militants, including “numerous massacres, bombings, killings, and attacks on schools”.<sup>228</sup> It reports that militants “have targeted civilians, including women and children, whom they consider to be ‘traitors to the cause’” – informers, security personnel, or surrendered militants, and their families. They have also sought to disrupt the electoral process by killing or torturing electoral officials, and assassinating “nearly six hundred Kashmiri politicians” over the course of the conflict.<sup>229</sup>

The conflict has also had wider implications for people’s livelihoods in Indian-controlled Kashmir. In particular, Kashmir’s substantial tourism industry has declined drastically as a result of militant activity, including the kidnapping of tourists. The number of tourists fell from 700,000 in 1989 to less than 8,000 in the 1990s. Human Rights Watch also reports “a heavy toll on the state’s infrastructure” as the conflict has led to the destruction of government buildings, public infrastructure and “more than ten thousand private houses and shops.”<sup>230</sup>

#### **b. Political Developments since 2002**

In 2002 India and Pakistan again came close to war over Kashmir following the December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament by two Kashmiri-led armed groups, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. However, since April 2003 there have been renewed efforts by both India and Pakistan to reduce violence and re-start peace negotiations on Kashmir. Full diplomatic relations have been restored and a range of confidence-building measures introduced. In November 2003 a ceasefire was agreed along the Line of Control by Pakistan and India. Since then there have been several rounds of talks at different levels of seniority, which are formally known as ‘the composite dialogue’. Since January 2004 India has also held talks with more moderate Kashmiri groups that have been willing to engage bilaterally, following a split within the ranks of

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<sup>226</sup> For a brief discussion of the origins of the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, see House of Commons Library Paper No. 272, 11 June 1991, *Kashmir*. For background on subsequent developments, see Library Paper 04/28, 30 March 2004, *Kashmir*

<sup>227</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Everyone Lives in Fear: Patterns of Impunity in Jammu and Kashmir”, September 2006. Available at: <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/india0906/>

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13

the coalition known as the All Party Hurriyat Conference. Pakistan's endorsement of these talks represented a shift in its position as previously it had insisted on it (or the UN) also being involved. But there are parts of the security establishment that remain ambivalent about such shifts. This dialogue has periodically come under strain because Kashmiri groups involved have accused India of failing to rein in its security forces and prevent human rights abuses against civilians, but so far it has not collapsed.<sup>231</sup>

While the talks between India and Pakistan have assisted in promoting significant confidence-building measures and certainly helped to facilitate mutual co-operation following the devastating earthquake in Kashmir in 2005, which killed at least 79,000 people, progress on substantive issues has so far been harder to achieve. India sees Kashmir as one of a number of issues that it wishes to resolve with Pakistan but the latter wants real progress on Kashmir first before addressing other issues (such as economic co-operation, the nuclear issue and water sharing). India continues to state that any solution cannot involve a change in its external borders. Pakistan's President, General Pervez Musharraf, has engaged in periodic exploratory 'thinking aloud', in which he has floated ideas for breaking the impasse – for example, demilitarisation, self-governance or joint Pakistan-Indian control – which would not require a redrawing of borders. In March 2006 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh indicated that India was willing to consider initiatives that rendered the Line of Control irrelevant. Pakistan welcomed this announcement.

Periodic outbreaks of violence by Kashmiri-led armed groups continue to occur and appear designed to prevent 'new thinking' from gaining momentum. The most notable pro-independence armed group, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, has been gravely weakened by the counter-insurgency strategies of the Indian security forces. However, pro-independence sentiment remains strong in the Kashmir Valley. The Kashmiri-led Islamist armed groups have remained active. There were attacks in April 2006 and, most notably, in June 2006, when at least 200 people died in bombings in Mumbai. The bombings were widely attributed to Lashkar-e-Taiba.<sup>232</sup> The April and June 2006 attacks inevitably froze the gradual rapprochement between Pakistan and India for a period. Foreign Secretary-level talks were suspended and in August 2006 there was a tit-for-tat expulsion of diplomats for alleged spying.

The militant Islamist influence within some of the Kashmiri armed groups has increased. India has long argued that parts of the Pakistani security establishment continue to provide support to these groups. These groups want talks that simultaneously include India, Pakistan and Kashmiri representatives under the auspices of the UN, leading to a plebiscite on the future of Kashmir. They calculate that if levels of violence are raised, bilateral peace efforts of the kind pursued since 2003 will not advance far. This has tended to be the case to date. For example, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was due to visit Pakistan in 2006, but indicated that a date could not be set for the visit while levels of violence were high.

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<sup>231</sup> "NC pulls out of working groups", *The Hindu*, 26 October 2006

<sup>232</sup> The same group was reportedly involved an attack in 2001 on the Indian Parliament, which nearly led to war between the two countries.

Despite regular setbacks over the past three years, neither side has abandoned the peace track. A brief meeting between Musharraf and Manmohan Singh in September 2006 at the Non-Aligned Movement's summit reactivated it. Known as the 'Havana handshake' in the Indian media, the two men agreed to establish a joint mechanism to address terrorism. The foreign secretaries of the two countries met in mid-November 2006 to put some flesh on the bones of this proposal. In December 2006, Musharraf stated that Pakistan might be willing to give up its claim over all Kashmir in return for autonomy and self-governance for the region, some form of joint India-Pakistan supervision across the Line of Control and a gradual demilitarisation on both sides of the border.<sup>233</sup>

Known as the 'four-point formula', it has provoked an angry reaction in some quarters within Pakistan and from Kashmiri-led armed groups. The Indian Government initially responded warmly to this indication of willingness to compromise, offering Pakistan the possibility of a comprehensive treaty of peace, security and friendship. However, in recent weeks there have been signs of a cooling in attitude as the opposition BJP has expressed scepticism about the proposals. There are also tensions within the ruling coalition in Jammu and Kashmir over the best way ahead, with the state-level Congress Party taking a sceptical line about 'making concessions'.<sup>234</sup> Following the most recent round of talks in the 'composite dialogue', the Indian Government expressed opposition to any ideas of joint supervision across the Line of Control and reiterated that demilitarisation could only become possible towards the end of any peace process.<sup>235</sup> Nonetheless, there has been renewed talk of Manmohan Singh travelling to Pakistan during 2007.<sup>236</sup>

Some Kashmiri political forces do accept that the armed struggle for independence has failed and that new strategies are required. But this does not mean that all of them are willing to go as far as Musharraf has now proposed. There have been reports that Pakistan's military intelligence is currently seriously clamping down on the movement of armed groups into Indian Kashmir.<sup>237</sup> Both sides have reiterated their commitment to the idea of a joint mechanism to counter terrorism, although its first formal meeting in March 2007 produced no appreciable result, raising doubts about what it will amount to in practice.<sup>238</sup>

If there has been a Pakistani clamp-down on armed groups, it has some way to go. During the night of 18-19 February 2007, bomb blasts 50 miles west of New Delhi hit the 'Friendship Express' that travels directly between India and Pakistan, killing at least 66 people – mostly Pakistan nationals. Although there is still no certainty about which organisation was behind the attack (for many analysts, the most likely candidate is Lashkar-e-Taiba and its affiliates), it was clearly designed to disrupt the peace process. The 'Friendship Express' is itself a product of that process, symbolising the cautious rapprochement between the two countries since 2003. The Indian and Pakistan

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<sup>233</sup> "Musharraf gives a hint of progress on Kashmir", *International Herald Tribune*, 6 December 2006

<sup>234</sup> "Azad meets PM, stays firm against troop withdrawal", *Times of India*, 20 March 2007

<sup>235</sup> "Musharraf's plan gets a thumbs down", *Times of India*, 10 March 2007

<sup>236</sup> "PM offers Pak treaty of peace and friendship", *Times of India*, 21 December 2006

<sup>237</sup> "Kashmir militants feel the squeeze", *BBC News Online*, 7 February 2007

<sup>238</sup> "India-Pak terror pact sinking fast", *Times of India*, 12 March 2007

Governments have both been very measured in their response, in contrast to previous such incidents. No official accusations of culpability have been exchanged, although other commentators have not been as restrained. It has been reported that at least five people have been arrested by the Indian authorities in connection with the bombing.

Human Rights Watch published a report in late 2006 on 'Azad (free) Kashmir' – that part of Kashmir that is in Pakistan – which was highly critical of the performance of the authorities post-earthquake. Human Rights Watch accuses the authorities of being more preoccupied with maintaining their control over the region than with assisting reconstruction. Indeed, they allegedly encouraged radical Islamic groups to take a lead role in reconstruction efforts, thus bolstering their legitimacy.<sup>239</sup>

There have been some hopeful signs that the Indian authorities may be prepared to adopt a less heavy-handed approach to security issues. In early February 2007, responding to a general strike on the Indian side of the border in protest against extra-judicial killings and other human rights abuses by the security forces, the Jammu and Kashmir state government acknowledged for the first time that there is evidence to support such allegations.<sup>240</sup> In late February seven policemen were charged with killing a Kashmiri carpenter who they falsely claimed had been an Islamic militant.<sup>241</sup>

Neither the US nor the EU considers Kashmir to be the lodestone of its policies towards India and Pakistan. Both are encouraging peace efforts and the apparent flexibility currently being shown by both sides. Pakistan would like to see greater international engagement but is more pragmatic about this than in the past. India is happy for the issue to be addressed through bilateral channels.

As we approach the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the dispute over Kashmir, expectations have been rising of a dramatic breakthrough. This may be over-optimistic. There is strong opposition on both sides of the border to any idea of compromise. Further terrorist operations in India by Kashmiri-led armed groups could change the dynamics again. On issues of substance, the two countries remain far apart. But the apparent willingness of both India and Pakistan to begin thinking in different terms about possible solutions does offer growing hope.

## 2. The Northeast

India's Northeast region encompasses 7.7 per cent of the country's territory spread over seven states, sometimes referred to as the 'seven sisters': Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.<sup>242</sup> These are not only some of the smallest states in India but also some of the least densely populated: the area has 38.5 million people in total, 22 million of whom are in the region's largest state of Assam. Most of the states also have a high proportion of tribal people. The highest is Mizoram with 94.5 per cent; the lowest is Assam with 12.4 per cent. The national average is 8.2

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<sup>239</sup> "Emperor's new clothes", *Guardian*, 31 October 2006

<sup>240</sup> "Restoring faith", *Times of India*, 7 February 2007

<sup>241</sup> "Kashmir: police charged in civilian killing", *New York Times*, 1 March 2007

<sup>242</sup> At independence, all of these apart from Manipur and Tripura, which were independent princely states, were part of Assam. Manipur and Tripura were absorbed into India in 1949.

per cent.<sup>243</sup> The area receives little international media coverage because access to the region is restricted. Foreign visitors are required to obtain restricted area permits to visit Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram or Nagaland.

Ethnic insurgencies with different groups seeking varying degrees of autonomy or independence from the state-level or national governments have been a constant issue over the last sixty years, prompting one analyst to argue that the Northeast “is the one region of the country where centre-state relations have been and remain unmanageable much of the time.”<sup>244</sup> The longest of these insurgencies, the Naga insurgency, began one day before independence on 14 August 1947, but many other insurgent groups emerged from the 1960s onwards. The South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP) reports that in Assam alone there are two proscribed insurgent groups, a further six active insurgent groups and 26 inactive insurgent groups. SATP reports that in 2006 a total of 640 people (231 civilians, 92 security force personnel and 317 terrorists) were killed in militancy-related violence in India’s Northeast. The largest number (290) were killed in Manipur, followed by 174 in Assam, 92 in Nagaland, 60 in Tripura and 24 in Meghalaya.<sup>245</sup> In total, about 50,000 people have been killed as a result of the insurgencies in the Northeast since independence. There were also estimated to be 285,000 internally displaced people in the Northeast in 2006, most of whom are in Assam, Manipur and Tripura.<sup>246</sup>

#### a. **Assam**<sup>247</sup>

Assam is the most populous state in the Northeast and the most linguistically diverse state in India. The state has experienced extensive immigration, both from Bangladesh and from the rest of India, including West Bengal. Assamese nationalists became resentful of these immigrant groups, particularly Bengali Hindus, who “historically dominated the government and the professional services”, and Bengali Muslim cultivators of Bangladeshi origin.<sup>248</sup> Assamese leaders therefore promoted a ‘sons of the soil’ policy to prioritise the interests of the Assamese over immigrant groups. They sought to push the Assamese language as the dominant language in schools, universities and administrative offices in order to ensure that the Assamese would have access to the most attractive public sector jobs.<sup>249</sup> The movement was largely peaceful until 1979 when the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) launched a mass movement against immigrants from Bangladesh that quickly turned violent. In 1979 the anti-immigrant focus of the AASU and the AAGSP was augmented by the explicit secessionist agenda of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which was formed to “liberate Assam from Indian colonial rule.” ULFA not only attacked immigrants from outside India but also the

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<sup>243</sup> Census of India 2001. Available at: [http://www.censusindia.net/t\\_00\\_005.html](http://www.censusindia.net/t_00_005.html)

<sup>244</sup> J. Manor, “Centre-State Relations”, in A. Kohli ed., *The Success of India’s Democracy* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 98

<sup>245</sup> See: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/fatalitiesnortheast2006.htm>

<sup>246</sup> See: [http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/crisisprofiles/IN\\_CLA.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/crisisprofiles/IN_CLA.htm)

<sup>247</sup> For a brief discussion of the other states in the Northeast, see Reuters’ briefing, “Northeast India Clashes”. Available at: [http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/crisisprofiles/IN\\_CLA.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/crisisprofiles/IN_CLA.htm)

<sup>248</sup> A. Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 174

<sup>249</sup> J. Dasgupta, “Community, Authenticity, and Autonomy: Insurgence and Institutional Development in India’s Northeast”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 1997, p. 352

property of Indians who originated from outside the Northeast. It is estimated that ULFA has killed 10,000 people in total and has caused the displacement of many more, including thousands of migrant workers who recently fled Assam.<sup>250</sup>

In August 1985 the Congress-led Government in New Delhi signed an Accord with the AAGSP that made concessions to protect the 'sons of the soil' against 'foreigners', including deporting any illegal immigrants who had arrived after 1971. The AAGSP entered the political arena, renaming itself the the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), and won the ensuing elections. However, the Accord did not fit with ULFA's demand for independence, so ULFA continued its violent struggle even after the AGP had assumed power. Whereas the AGP wanted to pursue a moderate approach to secure Assam's autonomy within India, ULFA wanted armed action to promote Assam's 'independence', although it sometimes talked more broadly of 'self-determination'. There were intermittent ceasefires with ULFA throughout 2005 and in August 2006 the UPA Government suspended military operations against it. However, the peace talks collapsed in September. ULFA is considered by analysts to be "a difficult negotiating partner", as "it has a record of seeking peace talks when weak, only then to rearm and return to the fight."<sup>251</sup> ULFA's violence against migrants has continued. Over five days in January 2007, 73 people – most of whom were Hindi-speaking migrants – were killed in a series of targeted killings.<sup>252</sup>

The ethnolinguistic focus of Assamese nationalist leaders has not only created tensions with the rest of India but also fostered resentment amongst non-Assamese tribal groups within Assam. Tribal hill groups responded by voicing their own demands for independence or autonomy as protection against the numerically dominant Assamese. These groups' demands for self-government resulted in the formation of the separate new states of Nagaland in 1963, Meghalaya in 1971, and Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1987. Later, tribal groups on the plains, particularly the Bodos, also started to resist the Assamese. Bodo separatists "accuse the Assamese state government of conducting a deliberate policy of Assamisation through the imposition of 'Assamese language and culture upon the tribals."<sup>253</sup> They felt particularly aggrieved when Assamese was chosen as the official language, thus disadvantaging tribal speakers in terms of education and employment opportunities. In 1987 a mass movement was started led by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and the Bodo People's Action Committee (BPAC). Like the Assamese movement before it, "its youthful participants engaged in conspicuous violence and destruction of property".<sup>254</sup> The AGP moved swiftly to suppress them. Hard-line leaders amongst the Bodo responded in 1989 by forming an insurgency organisation called the Bodo Security Force (BSF), which was renamed the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) in 1994. The ABSU also formed its own militant group, the Bodo Volunteer Force (BVF) in 1987.

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<sup>250</sup> "Assam's troubled brew: India's north-east", *The Economist*, 13 January 2007

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>252</sup> M.S. Prabhakara, "Assam: Updating the Past", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 January 2007

<sup>253</sup> Dasgupta, "Community, Authenticity, and Autonomy: Insurgence and Institutional Development in India's Northeast", p. 357. The Bodos first expressed their demands for community rights in 1929 but, as plains (rather than hill) tribals, they were ignored by the Constituent Assembly's subcommittee dealing with the Northeastern tribals.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359

In 1993 the Assamese state government signed the Bodoland Accord. The Accord did not give the Bodo their own state or union territory, but instead granted them a degree of autonomy within Assam by setting up the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC), while leaving the Assam state government in charge of law and order. The BVF accepted the accord and laid down its weapons, but later re-formed in 1996 as the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT). Both the NDFB and the BLT opposed the Accord and, despite a decline in popular support, the NDFB initiated a violent campaign against other minority ethnic groups within what they consider 'Bodo areas'. Much of the violence by Bodo militants has been focused against the Santhals, another tribal group. Fighting between the two groups is reported to have led to the displacement of 250,000 people since the early 1990s, of whom 110,000 were still in relief camps at the end of 2005. Others had been forced out of the camps and became destitute.<sup>255</sup> While the NDFB is seeking independence, the BLT wants an autonomous state within India. Its priority has been that the powers of the Bodoland Autonomous Council should be redefined. Thus, in 2000 the BLT signed a ceasefire agreement. In 2003, when the Bodoland Autonomous Council was reformed as the Bodoland Territorial Council, the former Commander-in-Chief of the BLT became its Chief Executive Member. The agreement was opposed by the NDFB. However, the NDFB has become increasingly weak. In May 2005 it signed a one year ceasefire with the Union Government and the Assam state government. In May 2006 an agreement was reached to extend the ceasefire for a further year.

#### **b. Government Strategies in the Northeast**

Prior to independence, the British had never fully established their authority over the region. Instead, they allowed traditional rulers to govern the more remote areas of the Northeast. After independence, and facing threats from neighbouring countries, the Indian Government sought to establish its authority, with mixed results. According to Manor, "enlightened central government efforts to manage relations with states in the Northeast have often, especially in recent years, been admirable", including "openness to tribal preferences, offers of elections, and a willingness to revise boundaries", as well as "generous developmental assistance [that] has raised per capita incomes in most Northeastern states to quite high levels."<sup>256</sup> Yet, the number of different insurgent groups in the Northeast has made lasting agreements difficult to achieve. Agreements tend to break down because negotiators cannot ensure that all groups will adhere to them. Furthermore, an agreement reached with one group sometimes leads to resentment amongst other groups. This has been apparent in Assam where, "in their anxiety to protect and promote their own language and culture", the Assamese fomented resentment amongst minority groups within Assam.<sup>257</sup>

Indian Government strategies to resolve insurgencies in the Northeast can be divided into three categories: military response, political negotiations and packages of financial aid. The Indian Government "acknowledges that only political solutions will work" in the

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<sup>255</sup> See: [http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/crisisprofiles/IN\\_CLA.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/crisisprofiles/IN_CLA.htm)

<sup>256</sup> Manor, "Centre-State Relations", p. 100

<sup>257</sup> B.G. Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development* (New Delhi, 2004), p. 7



longer term.<sup>258</sup> As a result, India announced in 2004 that it would hold talks with any group that refrained from violence without requiring them to disarm first. Nevertheless, military activity has remained an important element of the Government's strategy, particularly in relation to weakening rebel groups. This has prompted concerns from human rights organisations. The Asian Centre for Human Rights reports that the security forces in Assam have been "responsible for arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and other abuses."<sup>259</sup> Concerns have been expressed that the *Armed Forces Special Powers Act*, which has been in force in parts of the Northeast since 1958 and which was extended to the whole of the region in 1972, gives the armed forces excessive immunity. According to Amnesty International, the Act allows "security forces to arrest people and enter property without a warrant, and to shoot to kill even in circumstances where they are not at imminent risk."<sup>260</sup> The Asian Centre for Human Rights also accuses the insurgents of "gross violations of international humanitarian laws especially by targeting civilians through explosive devices" as well as "hostage taking, extortions and issuing other threats."<sup>261</sup>

Efforts to reduce resentment and promote economic development through the provision of financial aid have, according to one analyst, been "hijacked by a corrupt and/or inefficient administration."<sup>262</sup> In Manipur, the insurgent groups are reported to "skim money off government contracts", in addition to extorting money from the people. According to one source, "Manipuri politicians survive, and thrive, through corrupt ties to militants."<sup>263</sup> Similarly, ULFA's chiefs are reported to "have grown rich through extortion in Assam and business in Bangladesh."<sup>264</sup> There is thus concern that the leaders of some insurgent groups enjoy lucrative sources of income that reduce the incentive to find a lasting peace.

A further obstacle to economic development has been the region's geographic isolation from the rest of India. Following partition, the Northeast was cut off from its former trade routes down to the port of Chittagong in present-day Bangladesh. This meant that the Northeast "stood at the extreme end of poorly developed communication and transport lines which [...] made and continues to make the commodities which must be brought in from the rest of India extremely expensive."<sup>265</sup> The Northeast shares 98 per cent of its borders with Bangladesh, China, Burma and Bhutan, while only 2 per cent of its borders, known as 'the chicken's neck', connect it to India.<sup>266</sup> This has both contributed to the region's instability and increased its potential economic and security significance for India, particularly following the rapid economic growth of many countries in East and Southeast Asia. It has also increased the scope for immigration to become a politically

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<sup>258</sup> See: [http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/crisisprofiles/IN\\_CLA.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/printable.htm?URL=/db/crisisprofiles/IN_CLA.htm)

<sup>259</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights, *India Human Rights Report 2006*, p. 19. Available at: <http://www.achrweb.org/reports/india/AR06/AR2006.htm>

<sup>260</sup> See: <http://web.amnesty.org/wire/July2005/India>

<sup>261</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights, *India Human Rights Report 2006*, p. 19

<sup>262</sup> R. Egretau, "Instability at the Gate: India's Troubled Northeast and its External Connections", Centre de Science Humaines de New Delhi Occasional Paper No. 16, New Delhi, 2006, p. 6. Available at: <http://www.csh-delhi.com/publications/publications.php>

<sup>263</sup> "The mayhem in Manipur: India's wild north-east", *The Economist*, 3 March 2007

<sup>264</sup> "Assam's troubled brew: India's north-east", *The Economist*, 13 January 2007

<sup>265</sup> Manor, "Centre-State Relations", p. 98

<sup>266</sup> A. Upadhyay, "Cross-Border Illegal Migration and Conflicts in India's North-East: Emerging Challenges and Responses", *Asian Profile*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 2005

sensitive issue. Throughout the Northeast, politics “has been deeply influenced by the influx of people from other regions as well as neighbouring countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh.” The population of the Northeast went up six fold between 1901 and 1981 while the national population increased less than three fold.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Dasgupta, “Community, Authenticity, and Autonomy: Insurgence and Institutional Development in India's Northeast”, p. 350

## IV Foreign and Security Policy

This part of the Paper surveys India's foreign and security policy. It begins by looking at its role within the UN and regional organisations. It goes on briefly to describe India's relationships with other countries – both within the Asian region and more widely.<sup>268</sup> It concludes by reviewing India's military and nuclear capabilities.

### A. Global and Regional Organisations

#### 1. The UN

India was a founder member of the UN at its inception in 1945. India called upon the UN Security Council to take action following the first war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir between 1947 and 1949. However, it subsequently lost enthusiasm for UN involvement and Security Council resolutions on Kashmir came to be invoked by Pakistan, which endorsed their call for the holding of a plebiscite in Kashmir to decide its future.

The issue of Kashmir apart, India has generally placed a high premium on multilateral approaches to international peace and security issues. At the global level this has meant strong support for the UN and its agencies, which it has traditionally viewed as a bulwark against the unilateral tendencies of the great powers and as a vehicle for the defence of 'Third World' interests.<sup>269</sup> India's support for internal reform is shaped by these views. India is a longstanding member of the G77 group of developing countries.<sup>270</sup> It is also currently a member of two recently created UN bodies, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. As at 30 April 2006 India was the third largest contributor to UN peace operations around the world.<sup>271</sup> During 2004-06 India contributed 0.421 per cent of the UN's total budget.<sup>272</sup> Like most countries, India's adherence to the principle of multilateralism is not always sustained when its own interests are directly concerned. India's non-adherence to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a particularly striking example of this selectivity.

A high foreign policy priority for India today is permanent membership of the UN Security Council. It believes that this would confirm India's rise to global power status. However, its own claims have inevitably been complicated by the fact that many other countries and regions are also seeking elevation to the Security Council and by wider horse-trading about UN reform agendas.<sup>273</sup> India has been part of the G4 group, along with

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<sup>268</sup> According to one media report, the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs undertook an internal 'Relevance for India' review during 2006. The top six countries identified, starting with the most important first, were the US, UK, France, Japan, Russia and China. These were followed by India's regional neighbours. See: "India maps its equation with the world", *Hindustan Times*, 20 October 2006

<sup>269</sup> Its role as one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement also reflects this long-held position.

<sup>270</sup> 'G' stands for Group.

<sup>271</sup> UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, "UN Peacekeeping: Meeting New Challenges – Frequently Asked Questions"

Available at: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/faq/q&a.pdf>

<sup>272</sup> *Europa Regional Survey. South Asia 2006*, p. 569

<sup>273</sup> On wider UN reform issues, see Library Standard Note SN/IA/3997, *UN Reform: A Snapshot of Progress*

Brazil, Germany and Japan, that has pushed for Security Council reform. In January 2006 Brazil, India and Germany introduced a resolution that would add 10 seats to the Council, including six new permanent members, of which India would be one. The new permanent members would not have a veto. However, the move was not supported by Japan. Of the current permanent members, India's bid has the support of the UK, France and Russia. The US and China, whose relations with India have improved in recent years but who have long been strong allies of Pakistan, have not yet taken a clear public position. The unresolved dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir may be one reason why such countries are withholding support. Counter-proposals from other countries and regions are also on the table. The current situation appears one of stalemate. India is currently also bidding for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2011-12.

A complicating factor in India's relations with the UN is the periodic criticism it receives from the UN's human rights mechanisms. This includes criticism of its record on caste-based discrimination. In March 2007 the UN Human Rights Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) commented upon India's report to it on the issue, disagreeing with India's contention that the caste system does not amount to racial discrimination based on descent. CERD also acknowledged the measures that India has been taking to counter caste-based discrimination.<sup>274</sup> Critics claim that India has a relatively patchy record for a democracy in terms of the ratification of international human rights treaties – for example, signing but not ratifying the UN Convention Against Torture.<sup>275</sup>

## 2. The World Trade Organisation (WTO)<sup>276</sup>

The WTO is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which governed the rules of international trade until the establishment of the WTO in 1995. India was a founder member of the GATT and subsequently the WTO following the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. India has been an active contributor to WTO negotiations during the chequered Doha Round. It has long argued against the inclusion of labour and environmental issues (non-tariff barriers) into the WTO's rules, on the grounds that these would constitute a form of protectionism by the West.<sup>277</sup> Of the 84 cases that India has been involved in at the WTO, it has acted as complainant on 17 occasions, as respondent on 19 occasions and as third party on a further 48 occasions.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> "Caste system is racial discrimination: UN rights panel", *Economic Times*, 30 March 2007

<sup>275</sup> See the Table in Part IE of this Paper for a fuller description of India's treaty ratification record.

<sup>276</sup> For a more detailed discussion of India and the WTO, see the companion Library Research Paper, *An Economic Introduction to India*, RP 07/40.

<sup>277</sup> For more information see: <http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/WTO/overview.html>

<sup>278</sup> Figures accurate at 16 April 2007. For the case breakdown see: [http://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/countries\\_e/india\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/india_e.htm)

### 3. The South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC)

Apart from the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC),<sup>279</sup> South Asia has relatively few organisations to promote regional cooperation. Most analysts view SAARC as weak and ineffective.<sup>280</sup> Its present mandate is economic, social and cultural. The key objective is to establish a Free Trade Area, which was scheduled to enter into force from January 2006 but has not yet fully done so due to continuing differences over tariff barriers between India and Pakistan.<sup>281</sup> Although the members signed a regional convention on measures to combat terrorism as long ago as 1987, adding an additional protocol on the issue in 2004, and have reached agreements to combat crime, concerted regional political and security co-operation is unlikely to advance far unless India and Pakistan resolve more of their differences. SAARC co-operates with UN agencies, the EU and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Its most recent summit took place in April 2007 in New Delhi. Non-members, including the EU, US, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, attended for the first time as observers.

### 4. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

India has developed closer relations with ASEAN over the last decade on the basis of a 'Look East' policy. The fact that China has been following a similar course is no coincidence. In past decades India's diplomatic relations with some Southeast Asian states had been poor. However, recently there has been an improvement. It became a summit-level partner with ASEAN in 2002. In 2004 an ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity was agreed, with a view to facilitating co-operation in areas such as trade and anti-terrorism. India is also part of the East Asian Summit process, which includes ASEAN countries plus India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. India and ASEAN are currently negotiating a Free Trade Agreement.

### 5. Asian Development Bank (ADB)

The ADB is a multilateral development financial institution for Asia. It was founded in November 1966 by 31 member governments, including India, to reduce poverty and to promote social and economic progress in Asia and the Pacific. For the year 2004, India provided 6.402 per cent of the capital for the ADB and had 5.429 cent of the voting power within the institution. India received more than \$1 billion in investment from the ADB during 2004.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> For further information see <http://www.saarc-sec.org/main.php>

<sup>280</sup> Some observers suggest that SAARC could ultimately be eclipsed by BIMSTEC – The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation – whose membership comprises India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Bhutan and Nepal.

<sup>281</sup> "Pak to defend decision not to fully implement SAFTA with India", *Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies*, 22 February 2007

<sup>282</sup> *Europa Regional Survey. South Asia 2006* (London, 2005), p. 617. For further information on ADB activity in India see <http://www.adb.org/India/default.asp>

## 6. Other Inter-Governmental Organisations

Since 2005 India has had observer status within the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO), a six-country organisation committed to security and economic co-operation in Central Asia and surrounding areas. The leading countries in the SCO are China and Russia. It was Russia that pushed for India to be granted observer status. China agreed to this in return for Pakistan and Iran having the same status. India's involvement also reassures a nervous US, whose attempts to join have been rebuffed by the organisation's architects, China and Russia. India remains part of the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>283</sup>

Although not currently a member, India has applied to join the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum (APEC). Its application is being considered.

India is a member of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum. Created in 2003, its members view it as a club of 'southern democracies' with shared agendas – particularly in the spheres of trade and development. It has facilitated co-operation between the three countries in the WTO's 'Doha Round'. There are signs of an emerging political dimension to the Forum. All three countries have worked together in pursuit of a more 'representative' UN. However, the Forum is not at present a high foreign policy priority for India.

Finally, India is a powerful member of the Commonwealth.<sup>284</sup> While a strong supporter of the organisation, it has often resisted what it perceives as the dominant role played by the UK, Australia and New Zealand within it. It has also tended to be sceptical about efforts to single out and discipline countries in violation of the 1991 *Harare Declaration*. One exception was the case of Pakistan immediately following the coup which brought President Musharraf to power in 1999. The 2010 Commonwealth Games are due to be held in New Delhi.

## B. Bilateral Relationships<sup>285</sup>

### 1. Afghanistan

Since independence, India has tended to maintain reasonably cordial relations with whichever government was in power in Afghanistan. In future, Afghanistan could be crucial as one of the countries involved in the building of an oil pipeline between India and Tajikistan. India views the Karzai Government in Afghanistan as an important regional counterweight to Pakistan – through which this pipeline would also have to pass. India is supporting current reconstruction efforts and is the largest regional donor to Afghanistan.<sup>286</sup> There are reports that Indian aid to Afghanistan since 2002 is due to

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<sup>283</sup> The Non-Aligned Movement was a product of the cold war, when states such as India sought to establish an identity that was 'neither East nor West'.

<sup>284</sup> For more information, see Commonwealth Secretariat, "India and the Commonwealth", August 2005. Available at: <http://meaindia.nic.in/onmouse/India-Commonwealth.pdf>

<sup>285</sup> The countries selected for coverage here are organised by alphabetical order. The political and military relationship between India and the UK is discussed in Part V of this Paper.

<sup>286</sup> "Indian 'idol' in Afghanistan", *The Hindu*, 16 March 2007

reach \$750 million by the end of 2007.<sup>287</sup> India also supported Afghanistan's successful application to join SAARC in 2007.

## 2. Bangladesh

Armed Indian intervention in favour of the Bengali secessionist movement in what was then East Pakistan in 1971 helped bring the independent state of Bangladesh into being. However, relations between the two countries since then have often been difficult. India has alleged that armed rebel groups have bases in Bangladesh from where they launch attacks in India's Northeast.<sup>288</sup> Bangladesh has denied this.<sup>289</sup> India is uneasy about the rise of Islamic fundamentalist groups within Bangladesh. There are ongoing tensions over water, given that both countries depend heavily upon the same sources. In 1997 the two countries signed a water-sharing agreement. However, India and Bangladesh are currently in dispute over the Farakka Barrage constructed by India across the river Ganges, which Bangladesh alleges has led to reduced water flow. There is also disagreement over Indian plans to link rivers and divert allegedly excess water in the North of the country to the South, which Bangladesh claims will also reduce the water flow into Bangladesh.<sup>290</sup>

India supports a peaceful resolution of the protracted dispute between the two main parties in Bangladesh, the Bangladeshi National Party and the Awami League, which led to the postponement of elections originally due in January 2007. India supports the holding of elections as soon as it can be done credibly but is pragmatic about the current army-backed caretaker government.<sup>291</sup>

## 3. Burma (Myanmar)

After the Burmese military's crackdown on pro-democracy activists in Burma in 1988, India supported the Burmese democracy movement more openly and more proactively than Burma's other neighbours. However, India ceased to take a forceful position on Burma's political and humanitarian crisis during the 1990s, when it decided to prioritise economic and strategic interests over considerations of human rights and democracy. These interests include access to Burma's natural gas reserves and counter-insurgency activities in India's Northeastern region. India is Burma's second-largest export market and the seventh largest exporter to Burma. Another strong motivation for close ties with Burma is India's desire to prevent it falling entirely into the 'pro-China' camp within the region.<sup>292</sup> Since 1994 India and Burma have held annual Ministerial-level meetings to discuss bilateral relations, including cross-border issues.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> "India pledges \$100m. aid for Afghanistan", *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 24 January 2007

<sup>288</sup> Northeast India is largely cut off from India by Bangladesh. It is connected only by a thin sliver of territory.

<sup>289</sup> "India to snub US on Burma arms embargo", *Australian*, 23 January 2007

<sup>290</sup> C. Bajpae, "Asia's coming water wars", *Power and Interest News Report*, 22 August 2006

<sup>291</sup> "India favours free, fair election in Bangladesh for a government of people's choice", *United News of Bangladesh*, 19 February 2007

<sup>292</sup> "India's weapons for junta to fight Assam rebels sow fear in Myanmar", *South China Morning Post*, 6 February 2007

<sup>293</sup> "India proposes border fencing to Burma", *Mizzima News*, 14 March 2007

In July 1995 India and Burma launched a joint anti-insurgency operation, although Burma later withdrew from the operation because India announced that it was awarding Burma's pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, the Jawaharlal Nehru Prize for Peace and Understanding. Collaboration on anti-insurgency operations has increased since then and India has in turn "obliged the Burmese junta in driving out and even killing Kachin, Chin and Arakanese rebels from its territory."<sup>294</sup> In February 2007 it was reported that the Burmese government had agreed to launch a joint offensive with the Indian army to drive Indian insurgent groups out of Burma.<sup>295</sup>

India has become a supplier of military equipment to the Burmese junta. In 2006 India sold Burma two BN-2 Islander maritime surveillance aircraft, despite objections from the UK, which had sold the aircraft to India in the 1980s. As a result, the UK has now refused to provide spare parts and maintenance for India's remaining Islander aircraft.<sup>296</sup> Also in 2006 there were reports that India had offered to sell Burma helicopters that could be used as helicopter gunships against insurgents.<sup>297</sup> A Burmese general visited Delhi to enquire about buying military hardware, including spare parts and servicing for MiG-29 jet fighters.<sup>298</sup> India has also increased its development aid to Burma in recent years.<sup>299</sup> In December 2006 it was reported that India would invest US\$100 million in developing Burma's Sittwe port in order to connect India's Northeast with the ASEAN countries of Southeast Asia.<sup>300</sup>

There are an estimated 49,600 Burmese refugees in India. Of these, 1,800 are in Delhi and have mostly been recognised by the UNHCR. The remainder are in the Northeast and lack any legal status. The UNHCR's only office in India is in New Delhi and the agency does not have access to the Northeast. India is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention.<sup>301</sup> There are periodic deportations of Burmese refugees from Northeast India.

As the world's largest democracy, India continues to come under pressure to do more to promote democracy in Burma. When George Bush visited India in 2006 a joint statement was issued calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. However India Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been unwilling to call for democracy to be reinstated. Some Indian MPs and civil society groups are calling for India to adopt a tougher stance towards Burma. However, according to one observer there is currently "no indication that India intends to do anything else but continue to talk business with Burma."<sup>302</sup>

#### 4. China

Since 1959, China and India have periodically clashed over the Eastern and Western sections of their border. In 1962, they came close to all-out war. India was widely viewed

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<sup>294</sup> S. Bhaumik, "India's Balancing Act", *The Irrawaddy*, April 2006

<sup>295</sup> M. Anand, "Burma, India joint operation on rebel flushout", *The Asian Age*, 21 February 2007

<sup>296</sup> Human Rights Watch, "India: Military Aid to Burma Fuels Abuses", 7 December 2006

<sup>297</sup> S. Mishra, "Indian Air Chief Offers to Upgrade Burma's Air Force", *The Irrawaddy*, 24 November 2006

<sup>298</sup> "India: Burma's dishonest neighbour", *The Irrawaddy*, 2 March 2007

<sup>299</sup> "Assistance for Myanmar doubled", *The Hindu*, 1 March 2007

<sup>300</sup> "India to invest in Myanmar port", *Xinhua General News Service*, 18 December 2006

<sup>301</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights, *Burma Briefing*, Vol. 1, October-December 2005

<sup>302</sup> S. Bhaumik, "India's Balancing Act", *The Irrawaddy*, April 2006



as the loser in the military clashes that did take place in that year. China has been a close ally of Pakistan since its creation, including in the sphere of defence co-operation. It has supplied missile and nuclear technology to Pakistan but still refuses to recognise India as a nuclear weapons state. China has also helped to build up Pakistan's navy and is currently increasing the presence of its own navy in the Indian Ocean. India has historically been sympathetic to the cause of Tibetan exiles, including the Dalai Lama, who lives in India with his followers. However, such issues are currently largely being put to one side in pursuit of mutual economic advantage – although this does not mean that they might not recur in future. In 2005 China recognised that Sikkim was 'part of India'. In exchange, the Indian Government accepted that Tibet was part of China'.<sup>303</sup>

One basis for greater co-operation is the long-standing commitment of both countries to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. They also share a general scepticism about the effectiveness and sovereignty implications of sanctions as a means of changing the behaviour of a government.

The turning-point in relations came when the then BJP-led Government signed a Joint Declaration on Co-operation with its Chinese counterpart in June 2003. Although the main focus of co-operation has been in the economic, social and scientific spheres, since 2004 the two Governments have also been engaging in a strategic dialogue about outstanding border disputes, although little substantive progress appears so far to have been made. President Hu Jintao made the first visit to India by a Chinese head of state in almost a decade in November 2006. In February 2007, the Indian and Chinese foreign ministers – along with their Russian counterpart – met in New Delhi to emphasise their commitment to multilateralism through the "democratisation" of international relations. They are also upgrading their co-operation on terrorism and trans-national organised crime and both sides are exploring the possibility of a bilateral free trade agreement.<sup>304</sup>

While China is wary of the US-India *rapprochement* that has occurred since the mid 1990s – which some claim is partly motivated on both sides by the desire to mitigate Chinese power and influence – it chooses, for now at least, not to make too much of it.<sup>305</sup>

The economic advance of India over the last decade has come close to matching that of China, which has led some analysts to speculate that the two countries could increasingly become competitors for markets and energy supplies (they are the two fastest growing energy consumers in the world).<sup>306</sup> However, others argue that, because the two countries are pursuing very different strategies for economic development, fierce competition is not inevitable. Nor would either side benefit much in the long-term from such competition.<sup>307</sup> To date, China has so far won on most of the occasions when the

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<sup>303</sup> "MPs push for Tibetan cause", *Hindustan Times*, 23 February 2007

<sup>304</sup> "India, China and Russia to fight terrorism together", *Hindustan Times*, 15 February 2007

<sup>305</sup> Not all agree with the idea that the US sees India as a counterweight to China. Foreign Affairs Select Committee, *East Asia*, Oral Evidence by Professor David Wall, 1 February 2006, Q53

<sup>306</sup> They are certainly often at loggerheads in the World Trade Organisation, where India has reportedly filed the largest number of anti-dumping cases against China. "India, US refuse to give China status of market economy", *Times of India*, 16 January 2007

<sup>307</sup> For example, see A. Panagariya, "A Passage to Prosperity", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 2005. See also the transcript of a Chatham House debate, "India will overtake China in the next 25 years", 2 March 2006 (available from Jon Lunn on request)

two countries have been in competition for a stake in new oil fields. India is more dependent on oil imports than China, importing three-quarters of its needs.<sup>308</sup>

For now, both sides are stressing the 'win-win' nature of relations in the sphere of energy. In December 2006 India and China signed a memorandum of understanding for strategic co-operation in exploration and production activities in developing countries.<sup>309</sup> They also made a successful joint bid for a stake in a Syrian oil field.<sup>310</sup> There have been reports of cooperation between private Indian and Chinese oil companies in West Africa.<sup>311</sup> At present, India is less engaged in Africa than China. However, some believe that should it become more involved, it would be able to take advantage of well-established trade and diaspora networks throughout much of the continent.<sup>312</sup>

## 5. Japan

Relations with Japan, which were tense in the wake of India's 1998 nuclear tests, have improved considerably in recent years. In 2005 the two countries announced their own strategic partnership.<sup>313</sup> Since then there has been a series of high-level meetings aimed at giving this partnership substance. A likely component will be energy co-operation. Japan sees India as an important counter-balance to China in Asia and wants to strengthen its political and economic relationship with India. It has been a strong advocate of India's involvement in the East Asia Summit process. Japan characterises the relationship as one based on shared values, lacking the historical baggage which plagues its relationship with China. Japan also places a high priority on the role of India in maintaining the security of sea lines of communication in the South Asian region.<sup>314</sup> In return for its support for the US-India civil nuclear co-operation agreement, Japan has called upon India to play a full part in international efforts to prevent Iran becoming a nuclear weapons state and to dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.<sup>315</sup> With trade between them on the increase, the two countries have also committed themselves to achieving a Free Trade Agreement by the end of 2009.

## 6. Nepal

India has a long history of involvement in Nepal. Despite the inevitable ambivalence with which many Nepalis view their powerful neighbour, links remain strong. India has a strong vested interest in preventing Nepal becoming a failed state. The two countries share a long and highly porous border. Over the past year or so, this has led India to play a leading role in trying to end the civil war there – so far, with considerable success.

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<sup>308</sup> "Government to set up energy security panel to counter China", *Times of India*, 7 March 2007

<sup>309</sup> "India, China to co-operate in oil exploration", *The Hindu*, 18 December 2006

<sup>310</sup> "China and India forge alliance on oil with aim of ending 'mindless rivalry'", *Financial Times*, 13 January 2006

<sup>311</sup> "CNOOC moves into Africa with Reliance", *The Business*, 18 December 2005. See also S. Singh, "India and West Africa: A Burgeoning Relationship", Africa/Asia Programme Briefing Paper, Chatham House, April 2007. Available at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/pdf/research/africa/bpindiawestafrica0407.pdf>

<sup>312</sup> "India and Africa: It's old friends, new game and rules", *Nation*, 8 February 2007

<sup>313</sup> C. Raja Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2006, p. 24

<sup>314</sup> Oral Evidence of Rahul Roy-Chaudhury to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on *South Asia*, 20 November 2006, HC 55-i, Q31

<sup>315</sup> "India must help rein in nuclear rogues: Japan", *Hindustan Times*, 10 January 2007

For example, the Indian Government played an important part in brokering a resolution of the crisis between the King and the political parties in April 2006.<sup>316</sup>

The Indian Government would prefer to see a government in Nepal that is democratically elected but not dominated by the Nepalese Maoists. However, in contrast to its view of the Naxalites within its own borders, India has accepted the need to include the Nepalese Maoists in the peace process. Some concern has been expressed in India about links between the Nepalese Maoists and the Naxalites, but there is little evidence of such links. The Nepalese Maoists have undertaken not to provide military support to the Naxalites.<sup>317</sup>

A further consideration for India in shaping relations with Nepal is the fact that the country could be a vital source of hydroelectric power for India in future.<sup>318</sup> However, India and Nepal are currently in dispute over the Mahakali River Treaty.<sup>319</sup>

## 7. Pakistan<sup>320</sup>

Despite some signs of potential progress, Kashmir continues to cast the largest shadow over relations between India and Pakistan (see also Part III E of this Paper). A successful resolution of the conflict over Kashmir is integral to achieving a real sea-change in relations between the two countries. As we have seen, India is currently dangling the possibility of a comprehensive Peace, Security and Friendship Treaty between India and Pakistan should the Kashmir issue be resolved. However, the seeming intractability of the conflict over Kashmir has recently prompted greater efforts on both sides to build mutual confidence by addressing other important disputes between them – partly in the hope that an improved atmosphere will ultimately lead to a breakthrough over Kashmir itself.

Two examples of efforts to make progress on issues that are not wholly dependent on an overall resolution of the conflict over Kashmir are nonetheless strongly ‘Kashmir-related’. They have sought to address the specific border dispute between them over the 74 kilometre Siachen glacier in the strategic heights of Kashmir. The status of the Siachen glacier as part of the Line of Control has never been resolved. In 1984 Indian troops took control of the previously unoccupied glacier, fearing moves by Pakistan to seize it. Pakistan then moved its own troops and claimed to have seized part of the glacier too. India disputes that there are any Pakistan forces on the glacier. Indian and Pakistan forces have clashed in the area on several occasions, most notably in 1999 (known as the Kargil operation). India has accused Pakistan of seeking to push their troops off the glacier.

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<sup>316</sup> “Release from jail of Nepalese Maoist leaders sought”, *The Hindu*, 1 July 2006

<sup>317</sup> Oral Evidence of Gareth Price, Head of the Asia Programme, Chatham House, to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Enquiry on *South Asia*, 31 January 2007, HC 55-iv, Q208

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, Q211

<sup>319</sup> C. Bajpae, “Asia’s coming water wars”, *Power and Interest News Report*, 22 August 2006

<sup>320</sup> The conflict over Kashmir is discussed elsewhere in this Paper (see Part III E). This section of the Paper reviews some of the other outstanding issues between the two countries and what progress has been made towards resolving – or at least neutralising – them.

There appears to have been some progress on the issue in recent years, although a resolution still seems some way off. Both sides have agreed to the principle of demilitarising the glacier. Pakistan has given undertakings that it would not seize the glacier if Indian troops were to withdraw. India is reported to be removing detritus from the glacier. However, India has demanded that Pakistan must give full details of its troop positions in the area before it begins to withdraw and that such details should be part of any final agreement. Pakistan is prepared to do so only if India agrees not to use such information to make a legal claim over the glacier in future.<sup>321</sup>

Both countries' arrival as nuclear weapon states has greatly raised the stakes for the world whenever conflict between them is threatened. However, the two countries have signed two agreements on nuclear issues to reduce the likelihood of resorting to the use of nuclear weapons. The most recent agreement was signed in February 2007. Neither is in the public domain.

In late July 2006 there were reports that Pakistan was intensifying its nuclear collaboration with China. This was viewed as in part a response to increased US-India co-operation on nuclear power (see below for more detail).<sup>322</sup> India has indicated that it would not view this development with any great alarm.<sup>323</sup> When Pakistan tested a new version of one of its nuclear-capable missiles in February 2007, the response of the Indian authorities was extremely muted by previous standards.<sup>324</sup>

One incentive towards improved relations with Pakistan is India's growing energy needs. It has been discussing the building of an oil pipeline between it and Iran since the 1990s. This would need to travel through Pakistan. However, this proposal currently remains on paper only.<sup>325</sup> The two countries are working together in discussions with Iran about a proposed pipeline that will bring natural gas from there to India, again via Pakistan. The prospects in this regard appear more favourable.<sup>326</sup>

Kashmir is not the only area where there are border disputes between India and Pakistan. Negotiations have advanced in the dispute over the land and maritime boundary between India and Pakistan in Sir Creek, which is a narrow 96 kilometre strip of marshland between Sindh in Pakistan and Gujarat in India. Both sides have agreed to a joint survey. Maps were subsequently exchanged in March 2007.<sup>327</sup> An incentive for co-operation is the fact that if the two countries have not resolved their disagreement over Sir Creek by 2009, the maritime area would be open to exploitation by any party under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The area is rumoured to have gas and oil deposits.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> "India doesn't buy Pak 'promise' on Siachen", *Times of India*, 12 February 2007

<sup>322</sup> "As India debates N-deal, China and Pak move close to rival pact", *Indian Express*, 17 August 2006

<sup>323</sup> "India OK with China-Pak N-deal", *Times of India*, 28 November 2006

<sup>324</sup> "Pakistan stages new missile test", *BBC News Online*, 23 February 2007

<sup>325</sup> Oral Evidence of Matthew Nelson, School of Oriental and African Studies, to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Enquiry on *South Asia*, 31 January 2007, HC 55-iv, Q209  
Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmfaff.htm#uncorr>

<sup>326</sup> "India, Pakistan discuss tri-nation gas pipeline project", *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, 22 February 2007

<sup>327</sup> "Sir Creek maps exchanged", *The Hindu*, 24 March 2007

<sup>328</sup> "Sir Creek model for Siachen?", *Hindustan Times*, 5 January 2007

Control over natural resources has also been a key issue in relations between India and Pakistan. Water is a good example. There has been a long-running dispute about the proposed Baglihar dam on the river Chenab in Jammu and Kashmir. However, in February 2007 both countries accepted the binding judgment of a neutral expert appointed by the World Bank under the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty to arbitrate between the claims of the two sides. The Treaty allocated the three eastern rivers originating in Punjab for India's exclusive consumption and the three western rivers for Pakistan's exclusive consumption. However, India was allowed to use the western rivers for hydro-electric power generation so long as this did not deplete the water supply. Pakistan had alleged that the dam, with which India planned to supply electricity to Indian Kashmir, would do so. The project will now go ahead on a modified basis.<sup>329</sup> The two countries are still in dispute about the Wular Barrage.<sup>330</sup>

Indian allegations about Pakistan's support for terrorism go beyond the conflict over Kashmir. India has also accused Pakistan's security agencies of supporting the United Liberation Front of Assam over the three decades of its existence.<sup>331</sup> Pakistan counters by accusing India of providing assistance to Baluchistan insurgents in its North-West Frontier Province, an accusation India denies.<sup>332</sup>

Both India and Pakistan currently appear more willing to resolve – or at least mitigate – the areas of conflict that have shaped their relationship in the past. But their *rapprochement* remains fragile.

## 8. Russia

Relations with Russia have until recently been predominantly about defence co-operation. Russia is the largest supplier of military equipment to India. Key areas of future co-operation are likely to be in relation to advanced strike aircraft and cruise missiles. Over time, it may be that energy co-operation becomes the most important sphere of co-operation between India and Russia. India has invested heavily in the Sakhalin oil and natural gas fields.<sup>333</sup> Russia has not opposed the US-India civil nuclear co-operation deal, seeing opportunities in it for profitable investments. During a visit to India in January 2007 President Vladimir Putin offered Russian assistance in building four new nuclear power plants in India. It is already assisting in the construction of two such plants.<sup>334</sup> India is in discussions with Russia about building an oil pipeline between the two countries. The pipeline would go through China, which is also involved in the negotiations.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> "Baglihar award a finely balanced verdict", *The Statesman* (India), 22 February 2007

<sup>330</sup> C. Bajpae, "Asia's coming water wars", *Power and Interest News Report*, 22 August 2006

<sup>331</sup> "Trouble brews in India's northeast", *Gulf News*, 3 February 2007

<sup>332</sup> "India denies role in Balochistan insurgency", *Times of India*, 8 March 2007

<sup>333</sup> Oral Evidence of Rahul Roy-Chaudhury to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on *South Asia*, 20 November 2006, HC 55-i, Q29

<sup>334</sup> "Russia offers 4 reactors for India's energy needs", *International Herald Tribune*, 26 January 2007

<sup>335</sup> "Russia-China-India pipeline being discussed", *China Daily*, 7 December 2006

## 9. Sri Lanka

India's relations with Sri Lanka have been fraught and complex since independence. Military intervention in the late 1980s, following the signing of the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, ended in disaster and led to the hurried withdrawal of India's forces. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which received extensive Indian support in the 1980s, is now viewed as a terrorist organisation by the Indian Government. It attacked Indian forces that were in Sri Lanka under the 1987 Agreement. In 1991 an LTTE supporter assassinated the then Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

India has a large Tamil population of its own in the state of Tamil Nadu, but in recent decades there has been only limited political mobilisation there in support of the LTTE.<sup>336</sup> Nonetheless, Tamil-led regional parties – above all, the DMK – are influential within Indian politics and other political parties such as Congress and the BJP have to tailor their approach to events in Sri Lanka carefully in response. The Sri Lankan authorities regularly complain that arms are supplied to the LTTE via Tamil Nadu.<sup>337</sup>

In general, India has left Norway to take the lead in terms of mediation between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE since a ceasefire was agreed in 2002. However, it has maintained regular contact behind the scenes with Norway and has periodically taken public positions on the peace process. It has urged the Sri Lankan Government to take serious steps towards producing proposals for extensive autonomy for the Tamil areas of the North and East while pressurising the Tamil Tigers to end their violence. However, as violence escalated during 2006, India's voice again became relatively muted. Some analysts argue that India's role can be decisive in bringing peace if it can shake off its reticence about becoming more involved again.

Following the 2002 ceasefire in Sri Lanka, the vast majority of Tamil refugees based in the South returned home. However, following the effective breakdown of the peace process over the past year, Tamil refugees have begun to flee to South India again.<sup>338</sup>

There have been some expressions of concern by Indian commentators about the 10-year Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement signed in March 2007 by the US and Sri Lanka, which provides logistical and refueling facilities for US naval vessels. However, the Indian Government has not voiced any public opposition to the Agreement.<sup>339</sup>

## 10. The US

The confirmation of India's nuclear capability in May 1998 was probably designed not just to send a signal to its neighbour, Pakistan, but also to the US. Although the initial US response to the tests was to impose sanctions on India, since 2001 the US has sought to

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<sup>336</sup> The population of Tamil Nadu is an estimated 55 million. There are three million Tamils in Sri Lanka.

<sup>337</sup> "Sri Lanka urges India to stop rebels alleged gun running", *Dow Jones Commodities Service*, 21 February 2007

<sup>338</sup> Oral Evidence of Gareth Price, Head of the Asia Programme, Chatham House, to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Enquiry on *South Asia*, 31 January 2007, HC 55-iv, Q203-4

<sup>339</sup> "Another US base in the Indian ocean?", *The Hindu*, 9 March 2007

create a set of more balanced relationships with India and Pakistan, shaped in part by its pressing need for the support of both governments in the 'war on terror'. The then BJP-led Government agreed a 'Strategic Partnership' with the US and established joint military exercises with US armed forces.<sup>340</sup>

The improvement in the bilateral relationship was illustrated by the understanding reached in July 2005 (and elaborated during President Bush's visit to India in March 2006) whereby the US pledged to resume full civil nuclear energy cooperation and India undertook to separate its military and civil nuclear facilities and to submit the latter to international inspections.<sup>341</sup> The move marked a break with three decades of US non-proliferation policy. Prior to the agreement, the US position had been that India, as a non-signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), should join the treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state. US Congressional approval was required for the introduction of a number of India-specific exceptions to national export controls. These amendments were provisionally endorsed by Congress in December 2006, despite concerns from some that the deal effectively rewarded India for ignoring the NPT and could indirectly boost India's nuclear weapons capability.

The nuclear agreement shows how close relations between India and the US have now become.<sup>342</sup> However, it is a new and often fragile intimacy. There is discomfort within the left parties supporting the UPA Government that India is now too closely aligned to the US. Hindu nationalists argue that India has already conceded too much in its negotiations on the issue with the US.<sup>343</sup> India has yet to decide whether to accept the stipulations attached by the US Congress. It is far from inevitable that it will do so. Negotiations between the US and India resumed in March 2007 on the detailed nuclear cooperation agreement, known as the '123 agreement', which will also require the endorsement of the US Congress. Furthermore, India has begun talks with the International Atomic Energy Agency on a Safeguards Agreement that would establish an inspection regime.<sup>344</sup> The proposed India-specific exceptions to export controls will also require the approval of the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group. It is hoped to obtain this approval by the end of 2007.

Other tensions also remain – for example, over the reluctance of the US to support India's claim to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. On Iran's nuclear programme, India is seeking to maintain good relations with Iran without alienating the US. It has taken steps to comply with UN resolutions on Iran while calling for continued dialogue.<sup>345</sup> However, if the US were to increase the pressure on other governments to scale down energy deals with Iran, India might feel compelled to protest. India's closeness to Russia in the military and energy spheres also causes some US concern.

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<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81

<sup>341</sup> For a fuller discussion of the US-India nuclear deal, see Library Standard Note SN/IA/4127, *US-India Nuclear Co-operation*

<sup>342</sup> Other states have complained about the US's allegedly favourable treatment of India on the nuclear issue. North Korea has asked the US to treat it similarly. "North Korea dreams of international kudos as a nuclear power", *Chosun Ilbo*, 30 March 2007

<sup>343</sup> "India should not sign nuclear deal: RSS chief", *The Hindu*, 1 January 2007

<sup>344</sup> "Talks on 123 pact restart", *Times of India*, 26 March 2007

<sup>345</sup> "India imposes ban on nuclear trade with Iran", *The Hindu*, 22 February 2007.

There have been disagreements during the course of the Doha Round of world trade negotiations.

Neither the US nor India want specific areas of discord to destabilise what is overall a much more positive relationship than was the case in the past. Defence and security co-operation is higher than ever following the June 2005 signing of a wide-ranging defence partnership agreement providing for increased arms sales, technology transfer and co-production of military equipment.<sup>346</sup> Joint military exercises are being held with increasing frequency. By contrast, the US has proposed a 35 per cent cut in aid to India in its 2008 budget and has announced its intention eventually to close the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) programme in India. For its part, "India has been stressing that what it needs from [the] US is fair practice in trade, not aid."<sup>347</sup>

### C. Military and Nuclear Capabilities<sup>348</sup>

India's military capabilities have largely been shaped by its regional interests and concerns within South Asia. Since independence in 1947 Pakistan has been regarded as the main threat to India's security, with China ranking second. However, internal security threats from different insurgent groups have also been important.

#### 1. Military Capabilities

Over the last four years Indian defence expenditure has risen considerably.

##### Defence expenditure

	India			Pakistan			China		
	US \$m	US\$ per		US \$m	US\$ per		US \$m	US\$ per	
		capita	% of GDP		capita	% of GDP		capita	% of GDP
2002	13,749	13	2.7%	2,687	18	3.6%	68,963	16	1.6%
2003	15,508	15	2.6%	3,129	20	3.7%	75,500	17	1.5%
2004	19,821	19	2.9%	3,644	23	3.9%	87,150	20	1.4%
2005	21,726	20	2.7%	4,050	25	3.7%	103,956	23	1.3%

Source: The Military Balance, IISS, Various years

In 2006 defence expenditure was increased by a further 8.5 per cent to US\$ 23.5bn. For the 2007-08 fiscal year, a further rise of 7.8 per cent was announced at the end of February 2007.<sup>349</sup> By comparison, Pakistan's defence expenditure is about one fifth of India's, although it represents a higher percentage of its GDP. China on the other hand spends nearly five times more than India, although that expenditure is significantly less if measured as a percentage of GDP.

<sup>346</sup> However, recent calls for a 'quadrilateral security accord' between the US, India, Japan and Australia appear to have been sidelined on the grounds that China might find such an accord a threat. "India's inclusion in security pact risks alienating China", *Australian*, 16 March 2007

<sup>347</sup> "US decided to end all aid to rising India", *The Times of India*, 9 February 2007

<sup>348</sup> The statistics in this section are taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2007* (London, 2007), pp. 308-10 and 315-9

<sup>349</sup> "India debates impact of budget increase", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 7 March 2007



The current Indian Government has projected that defence spending (excluding military pensions) can rise to 3 per cent of GDP provided that overall economic growth remains at 8 per cent a year or more. Defence spending was last above 3 per cent of GDP at various points during the 1990s.<sup>350</sup>

#### **a. Conventional Forces**

India has the largest conventional forces in the South Asian region.<sup>351</sup> It has 1.3 million active serving personnel, including 1.1 million army personnel, 55,000 naval personnel and 161,000 air force personnel. A further 1.3 million are deployed as part of a range of paramilitary forces. The reserve strength of the armed forces is an additional 1.2 million, while the reserve strength of the paramilitary forces is almost 1 million.<sup>352</sup> India does not have a system of conscription, which is unusual for a force of this size.<sup>353</sup> The professional nature of the Indian armed forces has a positive impact on the operational effectiveness of those forces.<sup>354</sup> The armed forces are closely modelled on the British military system, a result of the close historical ties between the two countries.

Nearly 75 per cent of India's conventional military capabilities are imported. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), between 2001 and 2005 India was the second largest importer of conventional weapons in the world,<sup>355</sup> which accounted for approximately US\$9.4 billion, or 10 per cent of the global total of international arms transfers during that period.<sup>356</sup>

Traditionally the Soviet Union – more recently, Russia – has been India's main supplier of conventional weapons systems.<sup>357</sup> Between 2001 and 2005 for example, India accounted for 25 per cent of Russia's overall arms exports.<sup>358</sup> However, in recent years India has increasingly turned to Western suppliers for its conventional weapons. This shift has been a consequence of moves to open up procurement to international competition, with the overall aim of attracting military offsets and establishing licensed

<sup>350</sup> IISS, *The Military Balance 2007*, pp. 308-10 and 315-9

<sup>351</sup> It is second only to China within Asia as a whole.

<sup>352</sup> By comparison, the other prominent regional actor in South Asia, Pakistan, has a manpower strength of approximately 619,000 regular personnel (550,000 in the army, 24,000 in the navy and 45,000 in the air force) and 302,000 paramilitary personnel (figures taken from *The Military Balance 2007*).

<sup>353</sup> China, for example, has an active strength of 2.3 million personnel, which is based upon selective conscription. Of the 1.6 million members of the Chinese Army 50 per cent are conscripts, while nearly 38 per cent of the Chinese air force and 15 per cent of the Chinese Navy are also conscripts. Iran which has the largest force relative to the rest of the Middle Eastern region at 545,000 active personnel also has a high number of conscripts. Of its 350,000 army personnel approximately 62 per cent are conscripts (figures taken from *The Military Balance 2007*).

<sup>354</sup> Armed Forces that consist of large numbers of conscripted personnel are widely considered to be less combat effective due to the limited military training they traditionally receive and the age and effectiveness of the equipment with which they are issued.

<sup>355</sup> Second only to China which imported approximately US\$13.3 billion (in cash terms) of military equipment during the same period (figures taken from *SIPRI Yearbook 2006*).

<sup>356</sup> *SIPRI Yearbook 2006*, Appendix 10A. A detailed list of India's arms imports is available from the SIPRI FIRST database, which is available at: <http://first.sipri.org/index.php>

<sup>357</sup> To formalise this relationship an Indo-Russian Intergovernmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation was set up in October 2000.

<sup>358</sup> *SIPRI Yearbook 2006*, p. 451

production in the country.<sup>359</sup> Since 2002 Israel has become the second largest supplier of military equipment to India. The US, France and the UK have also increasingly featured on India's supplier list.

Over the next decade those platforms and technologies purchased from the Soviet Union during the Cold War will become increasingly obsolete. Some analysts have estimated that modernising India's outdated weaponry alone could cost in the region of US\$30 billion.<sup>360</sup> India's dependence upon foreign suppliers for its conventional weapons is therefore likely to continue, given the limited capabilities of its domestic industrial base. Indeed, due to the combination of its military requirements and its economic resurgence, India is regarded by defence manufacturers globally as a key market for the future. However, Russia's predominance in the Indian defence market appears to have been safeguarded by the conclusion of an intellectual property rights agreement between Russia and India in December 2005. That agreement not only allows for future military-technical co-operation between the two countries, but also provides for joint development and production of 'next generation' weapons systems. A series of bilateral military exercises between India and Russia over the last few years has been an opportunity for Russia to engage in 'operational marketing' of its weapons systems. Further bilateral exercises are scheduled for September 2007.

## Army

India's army is vast, both in terms of its manpower and its conventional arsenal. The regular forces are divided into six regional command Headquarters (HQs), one training command and 11 Corps HQ consisting of three strike Corps and 8 'holding' Corps, including one Desert Corps. Within that overarching structure there are: three armoured divisions, equipped with Soviet-era T-55 and T-72 main battle tanks and the recently upgraded Russian T-90S (3,978 main battle tanks and 190 light tanks in total); 25 mechanised infantry brigades; four divisions of infantry; 10 mountain divisions; seven commando brigades, including one airborne brigade; two artillery divisions and a significant air defence capability, including three regiments equipped with *Prithvi* and *Agni* surface-to-surface ballistic missiles (see below). In addition the Army has 17 helicopter squadrons equipped with assault, utility and transport helicopters. Among the army's conventional armoury are two amphibious landing craft; a reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicle capability; in excess of 1,700 armoured infantry fighting vehicles; more than 10,360 artillery pieces; reconnaissance vehicles; armoured

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<sup>359</sup> Offsets can take two forms: direct offset involving the supplier incorporating components, materials or sub-assemblies from the importing country, and indirect offset in which the supplier enters into long-term industrial co-operation and undertakes to stimulate inward investment into the importing country, although not necessarily connected to the original contract. Offsets are increasingly used in defence procurement as a means of attracting private investment into a country's domestic economy, thereby modernising industrial sectors which may have become stagnant or are in decline. At present, however, India has limited offsets for its defence procurement contracts purely to investment in its military sector through the transfer of technology.

<sup>360</sup> "Eyeing the prize", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 January 2007

personnel carriers; in excess of 3,500 surface-to-air missiles and more than 2,620 man portable air defence systems (MANPADS).<sup>361</sup>

The Indian Army's immediate procurement priority is the modernisation of its ageing Soviet fleet of main battle tanks. However, in an annual defence press conference on 13 January 2007 the Chief of the Indian Army, General Joginder Jaswant Singh, acknowledged that this was only one capability among 300 requirements that the Army is intending to replace through to 2012, at an estimated cost of \$10bn.<sup>362</sup>

## Navy

Of the Indian Navy's 55,000 personnel 7,000 are part of the naval aviation arm and 1,200 are Marines. It also has a reserve capability of 55,000 personnel. Although significantly smaller than the other branches of the Indian armed forces, the Navy is sizeable and well-equipped, a reflection of India's focus on regional power projection. It has 16 tactical patrol submarines; 58 principal surface combatant vessels, including one aircraft carrier equipped with Sea Harrier aircraft and Sea King helicopters, eight destroyers, 24 frigates and 25 corvettes all equipped with surface-to-surface, surface-to-air missiles and anti-submarine torpedoes; 19 patrol and coastal combatant vessels, 14 mine warfare and countermeasures vessels; 16 amphibious vessels and 27 logistics and support vessels.<sup>363</sup> The Fleet Air Arm has 34 combat capable aircraft largely consisting of the Sea Harrier in a fighter ground attack role and a range of fixed-wing and rotary aircraft for maritime reconnaissance, search and rescue, transport and anti-submarine warfare, including the Sea King helicopter.

Fleet HQ is based at New Delhi, while naval commands are also located at Mumbai (Western Command), Vishakhapatnam (Eastern Command) and Kochi (Southern Command). The naval aviation HQ is based at Arakonam, while the Marines also have a joint command HQ based at Port Blair on the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal.

The Indian Navy has embarked upon an ambitious procurement programme in the last few years with the intention of modernising its capabilities. In the last year alone India has ordered three modified Krivak III frigates from Russia, in a deal worth US\$1.1 billion, and purchased an amphibious transport dock-class vessel, along with four landing craft from the US in a deal worth US\$48 million.<sup>364</sup>

Although India's focus for the present is on regional power projection, its naval forces have the potential to provide an expeditionary capability, should the Indian Government's strategic priorities change. The only capability gap that may require addressing in this circumstance would be the procurement of an additional aircraft carrier.

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<sup>361</sup> A division in the Indian Army typically has about 15,500 combat troops with 8,000 supporting personnel. A brigade generally consists of approximately 3,000 personnel and a battalion consists of 300-400 personnel (source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/army.htm>)

<sup>362</sup> "Indian Army Chief promotes \$10b wish list", *Defense News*, 22 January 2007

<sup>363</sup> Albeit with a smaller coastline, Pakistan has 8 tactical submarines, 6 principal surface combatants, 6 patrol and coastal combatants, 3 mine countermeasures vessels and 9 logistics and support vessels.

<sup>364</sup> IISS, *Military Balance 2007*, p. 306

## **Air Force**

The Indian Air Force (IAF) comprises five regional operational air commands at New Delhi (Western Command), Gandhinagar (South-Western Command), Shillong (Eastern Command), Allahabad (Central Command) and Trivandrum (Southern Command). It also has a Maintenance Command at Nagpur and a Training Command based at Bangalore.

Estimates suggest that the IAF possesses 849 combat capable fixed-wing aircraft. The majority of its fighter and ground attack aircraft are Soviet-era MiG 21s and 29s<sup>365</sup> and the Anglo-French Jaguar S International, 40 of which were purchased directly and a further 100 built under licence in India.<sup>366</sup> However, the IAF has made modernisation of its fighter aircraft fleet a priority over the last few years and has brought into service the Russian Su-30 Mk1 aircraft, which was designed specifically for the IAF and is built under license in India, and the French Mirage 2000H aircraft. India also has an advanced fighter aircraft requirement for 126 platforms over the next 15 years in order to upgrade its forces, a deal estimated to be worth over US\$9-11bn. Despite India's historical reliance on the Russian fighter aircraft market, the IAF has outlined its intention to consider other fighter aircraft to meet its requirement, including the US F-16 and F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet, the Eurofighter Typhoon, the BAE/Saab JAS-39 Gripen and the French Rafale aircraft.

The remainder of the fixed-wing fleet consists of airborne early warning aircraft, reconnaissance aircraft (including some ex-British Canberra aircraft), tanker aircraft and a sizeable transport aircraft fleet (288 aircraft). The IAF also possesses an unmanned aerial vehicle capability and has over 288 training aircraft. In March 2004 the Indian Government and BAE Systems concluded a contract for the delivery of 66 Hawk 132 Advanced Jet Trainers. Under that contract (worth approximately £1.65bn), 24 AJT aircraft are being assembled in the UK, and are expected to be delivered by the end of 2007, while the remaining 42 are to be assembled in India. Six of those aircraft will be in kit form for local assembly, while 36 will be manufactured under licence by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in Bangalore. Those aircraft are expected to be delivered between 2008 and 2010. As part of this industrial arrangement over 300 HAL employees are expected to undergo technical training at the BAE Systems facility in Brough over a period of two years.

The IAF's rotary capabilities include 60 attack, 153 support and 83 utility helicopters. In order to modernise its helicopter fleet the IAF currently has a requirement for the purchase of 80 medium-lift helicopters.

The weapons complement for the IAF consists of AM-39 Exocet, AS-7, AS-12, AS-17 and AS-30 air-to-surface missiles; AS-11 anti-tank guided weapons and AA-7, AA-8, AA-10, AA-11, AA-12, R-550 and Super 530D air-to-air missiles. Air defence is also provided

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<sup>365</sup> The IAF's remaining fleet of MiG 23 aircraft were retired from service on 20 March 2007.

<sup>366</sup> The Jaguar S International was the export version of the Jaguar and was built to RAF standard specifications.

by a mixture of MANPAD capabilities, and surface-to-air missiles. The IAF also has a small complement of *Prithvi-2* missiles as part of its weapons inventory.

The Indian Government is also considering whether to set up its own manned space programme under a new Aerospace Defence Command. In January 2007 India launched its first recoverable satellite into space. Hitherto, its space programme has been predominantly civilian in character. India opposes the 'weaponisation of space'. However, there is speculation that China's space programme, which involved the downing of a military satellite by a ground-launched missile in early 2007, may push India to develop a 'military dimension' of its own programme.<sup>367</sup>

### Paramilitary Forces

The paramilitary are the largest branch of the military with just over 1.3 million personnel regularly deployed. The purpose of the paramilitary is to maintain internal order and provide border security, although a small number of forces are also deployed for specific protection duties. Below are some examples of these forces:

1. **Assam Rifles** – 63,883 personnel under the remit of the Ministry of Home Affairs. They provide security within India's Northeast region and are largely military trained
2. **Central Reserve Police Force** – 229,699 personnel under the remit of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Only lightly armed and deployable anywhere in the country, they have responsibility for maintaining internal security.
3. **Indo-Tibetan Border Police** – 36,324 personnel under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Responsible for security of the Tibetan border. These personnel are Special Forces/guerrilla warfare trained, and include high altitude warfare specialists.
4. **National Security Guards** – 7,357 personnel specialising in counter-terrorism. This force includes elements of the Armed Forces, Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police Force.
5. **State Armed Police** – 450,000 personnel, some issued with army standard infantry weapons. Although largely assigned to home state duties, they can be deployed to other states when necessary.

In addition to these regularly deployed personnel, the paramilitary also has a reserve strength of nearly 1 million. Half of those personnel form a fully trained civil defence organisation, while the remaining personnel form the Home Guard. Present in all states except for Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala, Home Guard personnel are not armed in peacetime and receive no regular training. The intention is for these personnel to be called up if necessary during wartime for the purposes of civil defence, rescue operations and firefighting duties.

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<sup>367</sup> "India raises the ante on its space program", *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 January 2007

## 2. Nuclear Capabilities

India has been a self-declared nuclear weapon state since it, along with Pakistan, conducted a publicised series of nuclear tests in May 1998. Successive Indian governments had previously maintained a policy of ambiguity on the country's nuclear status after what appeared to be a partially successful nuclear test in 1974.

Despite its self-declared status, India is not recognised as a nuclear weapon state under the 1968 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)<sup>368</sup> and has consistently declined to join the treaty as a non nuclear weapon state, arguing that it cements in place an unfair distinction between the five recognised states with nuclear weapons and the remainder that have to forego such a capability.<sup>369</sup>

India is generally assumed to have sufficient weapons grade plutonium to produce between 40 and 90 weapons, depending on the sophistication of the warhead design.<sup>370</sup> Indian Government sources claim the country has developed a range of fission warheads and more powerful, two-stage thermonuclear devices, although some observers have expressed doubts about the reliability of the latter.<sup>371</sup>

The effectiveness of a nuclear capability is largely determined by the strategic ability to deliver those assets. India currently has a number of combat aircraft (the Mirage 2000 and possible the Su-30 Mk1) which are capable of delivering a nuclear payload. It also has a developing ballistic missile programme. At present India is estimated to have 42 short and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in service capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Under the remit of Strategic Forces Command there are three strategic missile regiments, two of which are equipped with *Prithvi-I* and *Prithvi-II* short-range missiles (30 missiles in total), and one regiment which is equipped with 12 *Agni-II* intermediate-range missiles. The *Prithvi-I* is estimated to have a range of 150 kilometres, while the *Prithvi-II* has a range of 250 kilometres. The *Agni-II* is estimated to have a range of 2,000-2,500 kilometres, thereby providing access to Southern China.

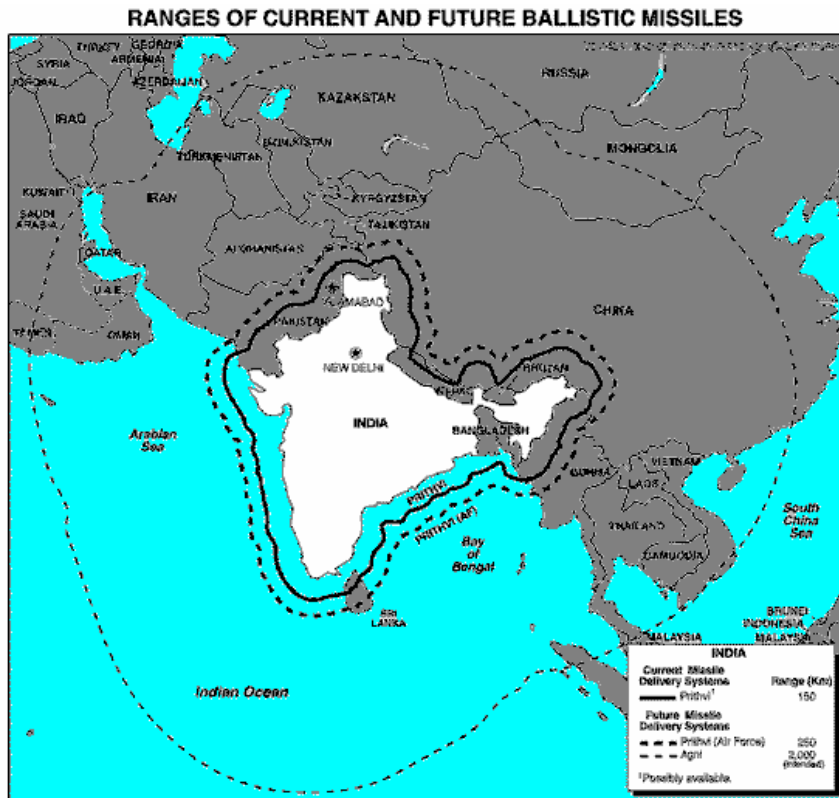
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<sup>368</sup> The NPT defines a nuclear weapon state as one that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967. India's first nuclear test was in 1974.

<sup>369</sup> The five nuclear weapon states recognised under the NPT are China, France, the Russian Federation, the United States and the United Kingdom. The other states parties – referred to as non-nuclear weapon states – are allowed to access peaceful nuclear technology but must forego nuclear weapons. A safeguards system under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is used to verify compliance and to prevent the diversion of fissile material for use in weapons.

<sup>370</sup> By way of comparison, Pakistan is believed to have sufficient stocks of highly enriched uranium to build between 30 and 50 fission bombs. Sources: Nuclear Threat Initiative, [India Profile](#), updated September 2006, and [Pakistan Profile](#), updated April 2007.

<sup>371</sup> Source: Nuclear Threat Initiative, [India Nuclear Overview](#), updated April 2007. There are two main types of nuclear weapon: those that rely on nuclear fission (colloquially known as atomic bombs) and those more powerful devices that use nuclear fission and fusion (commonly referred to as thermonuclear or hydrogen bombs).



Source: Global Security

Both the *Prithvi-I* and the *Agni-II* are capable of carrying a 1,000 kilogram payload, while the *Prithvi-II* is capable of carrying a 500 kilogram payload.

India is currently developing a new version of the *Agni* missile which would have a range of 3,500 kilometres.<sup>372</sup> A first test flight of the new missile in July 2006 reportedly failed after the second stage of the missile failed to ignite.<sup>373</sup> However, a second test conducted on 12 April 2007 off the coast of eastern India was reportedly successful. With a range of in excess of 3,500 kilometres the *Agni III* would provide India with the ability to strike targets as far off as Beijing and Shanghai.

A third, navalised, variant of the *Prithvi* missile (the *Dhanush*), which has a range of 350 kilometres, is also currently under development for potential deployment with the Indian Navy. A number of analysts have suggested that this missile variant could be deployed as a means of fulfilling the Indian Government's current interest in acquiring a sea-based element to its nuclear architecture, thereby achieving the nuclear triad.<sup>374</sup>

There have also been a number of reports that India is potentially seeking to augment its ballistic missile capabilities through the development of a longer range inter-continental

<sup>372</sup> See: <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/india/missile/prithvi.htm> and <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/india/missile/agni.htm>

<sup>373</sup> IISS, *The Military Balance 2007*, p.306

<sup>374</sup> The nuclear triad refers to the possession of ground-launched, air-launched and sea-launched nuclear capabilities.

ballistic missile with a range of 12,500 kilometres based upon the *Agni* missile.<sup>375</sup> However, other commentators have questioned this speculation. The Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) has commented:

New Delhi's restraint in this regard is probably the result of a conscious political choice to avoid threatening or challenging the legally recognized members of the nuclear club, with the exception of China, which India regards as a potential long-term threat to its security. Furthermore, as India moves in the direction of an operational nuclear force, Indian elites perhaps feel reduced pressure to rely on technological symbols to demonstrate political resolve.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Reported by the Federation of American Scientists. Available at:

<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/india/missile/surya.htm>

<sup>376</sup> See: [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/India/Nuclear/index.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/India/Nuclear/index.html)



## V Political and Military Relations with the UK and the EU

### A. The UK<sup>377</sup>

#### 1. The New Delhi Declaration

UK-India relations are currently broadly positive and cordial. The historic links between the two countries are acknowledged by both Governments. The overarching framework for UK-India relations today is provided by the 2002 New Delhi Declaration:

The 'New Delhi Declaration', formally endorsed by the two Prime Ministers in January 2002, provides the new road-map for bilateral activity. The Declaration commits the UK and India to continuing to work closely in four areas:

**Peace and Security:** terrorism, peacekeeping, defence cooperation, non-proliferation; Afghanistan;

**Development:** working together to meet Millennium Development Goals including halving the proportion of people in poverty by 2015; UK development assistance to increase to £300 million by 2007/8; working together on climate change and in the run-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development;

**Education and Science and Technology:** the declaration noted the contribution of 1.3 million strong community of Indian origin in Britain, an increase in Chevening scholarships to £2 million, and the British Council's new Knowledge and Learning Centre in Delhi (which allows people to get UK qualifications online);

**Trade and Investment:** The UK is India's largest trading partner in Europe and one of the largest in the world; more than 440 Indian firms have now set up operations in the UK, of which 75% are from the Information and Communications Technology; the UK and India are committed to working together on WTO issues.<sup>378</sup>

In 2004, Tony Blair and Manmohan Singh, Vajpayee's successor, agreed a further Declaration in 2004, known as the 'Prime Minister's Initiative'.<sup>379</sup> Five main areas of co-operation were identified in the 2004 Declaration: foreign and defence policy; sustainable development; economic and trade issues, public diplomacy; and security challenges. As part of efforts to ensure that the Declaration produced concrete results, it was agreed to hold annual UK-India summits. At the October 2006 summit, measures were announced on counter-terrorism and a new area of co-operation was identified: climate change. The UK engages with India on climate change through the Structured Dialogue on Climate

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<sup>377</sup> For a discussion of UK-India economic relations, see Parts IIIA and IIIC of House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 07/40, *An economic introduction to India*. For a discussion of the activities of DFID in India, see Part IV of the same Paper.

<sup>378</sup> FCO *Country Profile – India*. Available at: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1018965323192>

<sup>379</sup> For the full text of the 2004 Declaration, see: <http://www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1101400864001>. For a detailed discussion of the economic dimensions of the UK-India relationship, see the companion Library Research Paper, *An economic introduction to India*, RP 07/40.

Change. Indian projects make up a large proportion of the 'Clean Development Mechanism' projects that are funded by the UK.<sup>380</sup>

Co-operation is also facilitated by a UK-India Round Table. Composed of business people and public figures from all walks of life in both the UK and India, its agenda is set by the areas of co-operation that have been identified by the two Governments. The reports of the Round Table are submitted to their respective Foreign Ministers.<sup>381</sup>

Tony Blair, last visited India in September 2005. The Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett, visited India in November 2006.<sup>382</sup> Other Ministers, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, have visited India during 2007. The British Government set out its overall view of relations with India in some detail in its evidence to the recent Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on South Asia.<sup>383</sup>

The Department for International Development's largest single bilateral aid programme is to India.<sup>384</sup> The British Council is also active in India, including running the UK-India Education and Research Initiative, which has identified its key target audience in India as 15-35 year olds.<sup>385</sup> India is also an important audience for the BBC World Service.

A significant proportion of the Pakistani community in the UK is from Mirpur, which is part of 'Azad Kashmir'. Large parts of that community are strongly engaged on the issue of Kashmir and are active in making their views known to their elected representatives. However, they do not speak Kashmiri and there are sometimes tensions between Mirpuris and the Kashmiris who come from the Kashmir Valley in Indian Kashmir.<sup>386</sup>

The Indian community in the UK tends to be strongly supportive of the Indian position on Kashmir. Such domestic factors produce a need for the British Government to tread carefully in terms of whether or how it intervenes on the issue.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Memorandum of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on *South Asia*, Session 2006-7

Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmcaff/uc55-iv/ucmem102.htm>

<sup>381</sup> For minutes of its seventh meeting, see:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/Report%20on%20the%20Eighth%20Meeting%20of%20the%20UK-India%20Round%20Table.doc>

<sup>382</sup> See her speech of 7 November 2006, "Faith in our shared values will defeat extremism". Available at: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029391647&a=KArticle&aid=1161594833116>

<sup>383</sup> Memorandum of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on *South Asia*, Session 2006-7

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>385</sup> See:

<http://www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1136906398090>

<sup>386</sup> Oral Evidence of Victoria Schofield to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on *South Asia*, 22 November 2006, HC 55-ii, Q85

<sup>387</sup> Oral Evidence of Gareth Price, Head of the Asia Programme, Chatham House, to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on *South Asia*, 31 January 2007, HC 55-iv, Q177

## 2. Defence Co-operation

Since Indian independence in 1947 the UK and India have maintained a strong military relationship. In answer to a Parliamentary Question in March 2006 the then Secretary of State for Defence, Dr John Reid, commented:

Our defence engagement with India is growing significantly. Last year, for instance, we held the first joint Army exercise, and we are now planning for joint naval and air exercises later this year. We have a number of other bilateral relations. On the industrial side, there has been a major contract for the Hawk jet trainer, and there are other aspects, too. We have also formed an excellent platform, through the purchase of the Hawk, for co-operating on other defence matters, such as the joint training of Indian pilots alongside their British counterparts at RAF Valley. Of course, we have strongly supported the US-Indian nuclear initiative from its inception. We are beginning to put a lot of flesh on the bones of our partnership.<sup>388</sup>

Bilateral defence relations between the UK and India are largely conducted through the India-UK Defence Consultative Group (DCG) which was established in 1995. The DCG meets annually (alternating between London and Delhi) and is co-chaired by the UK's Permanent Under Secretary of State for Defence and the Indian Defence Secretary. The main priorities of the DCG over the last few years have been the conduct of joint Indo-UK military exercises, reciprocal exchanges of military personnel, co-operation in defence research and technology and defence equipment collaboration. Subsequently three sub-groups of the DCG have been established in order to address these latter two areas, covering military-to-military contracts, defence equipment and science and technology.

According to the British High Commission in Delhi, the level of bilateral exercises, exchanges, training courses and high-level visits between the UK and India has almost tripled since 2002-2003. Although largely naval exercises, in March 2005 the UK and India also held their first joint land exercise in Hyderabad, which marked the largest land deployment of British military personnel in the country since independence. In October 2006 the first ever joint exercise between the RAF and the IAF was also held.

The number of Indian military personnel trained at UK defence establishments since 2002 has also markedly increased. In 2002-03 11 personnel attended training courses in the UK, which rose to 18 in 2003-04 and 40 in 2004-05.<sup>389</sup> As part of the Hawk contract between the IAF and BAE Systems, 75 IAF pilots are also undertaking advanced jet training at RAF Valley in Wales over a three and a half year period. Approximately 28 pilots have already graduated from the training programme,<sup>390</sup> while the last of the IAF pilots are expected to graduate in February 2008. More recently, the RAF and IAF have reportedly been involved in discussions over the possibility of extending that training contract to include instructor training.

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<sup>388</sup> HC Deb 27 March 2006 c537-8

<sup>389</sup> HC Deb 1 February 2005 c780W

<sup>390</sup> The first pilots graduated in May 2005.

At present just over 55 Indian personnel are serving in the UK Armed Forces. 50 of those personnel are in the Army and five are in the Royal Navy. Exact figures for the RAF are not available although the number of personnel serving is denoted as less than five.<sup>391</sup>

As outlined in Part IVC, the equipment inventory of the Indian armed forces includes a number of British platforms and capabilities. In the past the British Government has concluded sales of Canberra, Jaguar and Sea Harrier combat aircraft, ex-Royal Navy aircraft carriers, transport aircraft and Sea King helicopters. More recently, BAE Systems concluded the Hawk Advanced Jet Trainer contract with the Indian Government; while India also expressed an interest in procuring up to 8 Sea Harrier FA2 aircraft which were officially withdrawn from UK service in March 2006. However, in October 2006 the Indian Navy confirmed that the Sea Harrier purchase would not go ahead as the aircraft were being offered without an offensive capability, which would entail significant additional expense to the Indian Government.<sup>392</sup>

Details of all the UK export licences that are granted to India each year are outlined in the *Strategic Export Controls Annual Report*. Those reports, dating back to 1997 are available [online](#).

India's refusal to join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, coupled with the nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998, led the international community to impose restrictions on nuclear cooperation with New Delhi. The primary coordinating body for these restrictions has been the Nuclear Suppliers Group,<sup>393</sup> which operates a set of guidelines to prevent the export of nuclear and dual-use technology to countries, like India, that do not have adequate full-scope IAEA safeguards in place on their nuclear facilities.<sup>394</sup>

The conclusion of a nuclear cooperation agreement between India and the United States in 2005 has paved the way for greater International Atomic Energy Agency oversight of India's civilian nuclear facilities and for a revival of US-Indian civilian nuclear cooperation.<sup>395</sup> Talks on revising the Nuclear Suppliers Group guidelines on the export of nuclear technology are ongoing. Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells set out the view of the British Government on the issue in answer to a Parliamentary Question in July 2006:

We believe the agreement between the US and India on nuclear arrangements can make a significant contribution to energy security, development, economic and environmental objectives for India and the international community, as well as representing a net gain for the non-proliferation regime. The UK has strongly supported this initiative from its inception and has been actively involved throughout. We also believe that the initiative can have a positive impact on the

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<sup>391</sup> HC Deb 13 March 2007 c199W

<sup>392</sup> See <http://www.india-defence.com/reports/2605>

<sup>393</sup> See <http://www.nsg-online.org/>

<sup>394</sup> India already has facility-specific IAEA safeguards in place on some of its civilian facilities, these being two U.S.-supplied reactors at Tarapur and two Canadian-supplied reactors at Rajasthan. It has also concluded a safeguards agreement for two Russian-supplied reactors under construction at Kudankulam and it applies intermittent safeguards at its reprocessing plant at Tarapur when safeguarded fuel is present.

<sup>395</sup> For background, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4127, *US-India Nuclear Cooperation*.

broader nuclear non-proliferation framework, of which the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) is the cornerstone. We do not believe the agreement will have a direct impact upon the NPT. We remain committed to the objective of universal NPT adherence. India has undertaken for the first time to put a large proportion of its nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, including all future civilian reactors, to sign an additional protocol with the IAEA, to adhere to the guidelines of the missile technology control regime and the nuclear suppliers group, to continue its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, and to work with the US for a multilateral fissile material cut off treaty. Implementation of these commitments will bring India further into, and thereby strengthen, the broader nuclear non-proliferation framework, which is underpinned by the NPT. We judge that these steps will enhance regional stability.<sup>396</sup>

In an answer to an earlier Parliamentary Question on 3 May 2006 the then Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, set out the British Government's position on exporting nuclear-related items to India. He stated:

As for all destinations, export licence applications covering defence equipment to India are rigorously assessed on a case-by-case basis against the consolidated EU and national export licensing criteria, as announced by the then Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister of State (right hon. Peter Hain) in a written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Laura Moffatt), on 26 October 2000, *Official Report*, columns 199–203W, taking account of the circumstances prevailing at the time and other relevant announced Government policies.

In August 2005, the Government revised the position adopted in 2002 on our policy regarding the export of nuclear related items to India. The restrictions now in force are less stringent than those in force in 2002 and conform to the UK's current international obligations and non-proliferation commitments.

In line with our Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) commitments, we will continue to refuse applications in respect of all NSG Trigger List items, and applications in respect of all items on the NSG Dual-Use List, when they are destined for unsafeguarded nuclear fuel cycle or nuclear explosive activities, or when there is an unacceptable risk of diversion to such activities.

We will now, however, consider on a case-by-case basis licence applications for items on the NSG Dual-Use List destined for other activities. (Our March 2002 policy was to refuse all such exports to nuclear or nuclear-related end-users in India, regardless of the stated end-use of the item).

We will also consider all applications to export other items assessed as licensable, including those assessed as licensable under the weapons of mass destruction end-use control, on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the risk of use in, or diversion to, unsafeguarded nuclear fuel cycle or nuclear explosive activities, or acts of nuclear terrorism; the risk of possible onward transfer of these items to other states for proliferation purposes, including the recipient state's export control performance; and the potential utility of the items concerned for, and contribution that they would make to, such activities.

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<sup>396</sup> HC Deb 24 July 2006 c981W

We will continue to consider applications for exports which will contribute to the physical protection or security of civil or military nuclear facilities or assets in India. Licences may be issued in exceptional cases, consistent with our obligations and commitments.

We will encourage contacts between UK nuclear scientists, academics and those working in or with the UK nuclear industry with their Indian counterparts, except where we consider that such contacts might be of assistance to the weapons-related aspects of its nuclear programme. Where such contacts involve the transfer of technology, which require export licences, we will continue to consider applications for such licences in accordance with the provisions of UK export control legislation, on a case-by-case basis.<sup>397</sup>

## B. The EU

Relations with the EU, India's largest trading partner, are generally good but the cumbersome nature of the 'Common Foreign and Security Policy' process holds back their development. Since 2000, the EU and India have been holding annual summits. Although a strategic partnership agreement was signed in 2005, it currently lacks specific content.

According to one observer, "for India the EU essentially means Britain". However, this could change if proposals for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement bear fruit. Talks on the issue remain at an early stage. There is controversy about reports that the European Commission is proposing that this agreement exclude 'human rights and democracy' clauses that have become a standard feature of such agreements. It has proposed that a clause on Weapons of Mass Destruction should also be excluded. The Commission is said to be arguing that a 1994 Agreement between India and the EU covered these issues adequately. India claims that such clauses would provide cover for protectionist measures by EU Member States.<sup>398</sup>

India's campaign for support for its civil nuclear co-operation agreement with the US has led it to engage for perhaps the first time in sustained lobbying of individual EU member states that are members of the Nuclear Supplier Group.<sup>399</sup> A complicating factor has been the EU's collective ambivalence towards the deal and its continuing insistence that India sign the NPT. However, France and the UK have broken ranks and declared their support for the deal.<sup>400</sup> India is also participating in the Galileo satellite navigation project.

India has been a prominent participant in the Doha Round of world trade negotiations. India has agreed in principle to grant greater market access for industrial products and services in return for a lowering of agricultural tariffs by the EU and US, but a deal failed to materialise in July 2006.

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<sup>397</sup> HC Deb 3 May 2006 c1651-2W

<sup>398</sup> "EU-India trade pact stumbles", *Financial Times*, 4 March 2007

<sup>399</sup> Oral Evidence of Rahul Roy-Chaudhury to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on *South Asia*, 20 November 2006, HC 55-i, Q26

<sup>400</sup> "India in 2005", *Asian Survey*, January/February 2006, p. 100

There is an EU-India 'human rights dialogue'. Issues of caste discrimination feature regularly on the agenda. There has also been some unease within the Kashmiri diaspora, including in the UK, about a recent European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee report on Kashmir. Diaspora leaders have claimed that the report takes a 'pro-India' position on Kashmir.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> "European Union report on Kashmir backs India's stand", *Times of India*, 23 March 2007

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South Asian Terrorism Portal

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UNDP India Country Page

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# Appendix 1 Maps

## INDIA



Geographic Support Main Building, DGC, GSGS 12307, Edition 4, August 2002 922/02 Produced by DGIA, Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom 2002  
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# JAMMU & KASHMIR AREA



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**Please note:** Map intended for briefing purposes only and should not be taken as necessarily representing the views of the UK Government on boundaries or political status.

## Appendix 2 UK Parliamentary Proceedings on India, 1919-47<sup>402</sup>

### List of Key Proceedings<sup>403</sup>

*Debate on the Punjab disturbances* – Vol.131, c1712, 8 July 1920 [Sir Edward Carson, Edwin Montagu, Sir Winston Churchill]

*Debate on the boycott underway in India* – Vol. 252, c1242, 13 May 1931

*Debate on Indian Constitutional Reform* – Vol. 283, c89, 22 November 1933 [Isaac Foot, Churchill]

*Debate on the Government of India Bill* – Vol. 297, c1593, 11 February 1935 [George Lansbury, Hugh O'Neill, Churchill]

*Prime Minister Chamberlain's statement on India and the war* – Vol. 355, c1342, 14 December 1939

*Debate on India's involvement in the war* – Vol. 378, c315, 25 February 1942

*Debate on Sir Stafford Cripps' Mission to India* – Vol. 379, c826, 28 April 1942 [Major General Sir Alfred Knox, Graham White, G. Mac Donald]

*Statement by Prime Minister Attlee on the Royal Indian Navy Mutiny* – Vol. 419, c1441, 22 February 1946

*Cabinet Mission to India* – Vol. 422, c2109, 16 May, 1946 [Attlee, Clement Davis, Churchill]

*Constitution of India debate* – Vol. 431, c1346, 12 December 1946 [Sir Stafford Cripps, Churchill, Earl Winterton]

*Statement by Prime Minister Attlee on transfer of power to India* – Vol. 438, c35, 3 June 1947

*Indian Independence Bill second reading* – Vol. 439, c2441, 10 July 1947 [Attlee, Harold Macmillan]

*King's Speech* – Vol. 441, c2546, 20 October 1947

*India Independence Bill Committee Stage* – Vol. 440, c39, 14 July 1947

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<sup>402</sup> This Appendix was compiled by Eleanor Kelly, Reference Services Section, House of Commons Library.

<sup>403</sup> The full Hansard Reference is provided for each debate. Where appropriate, the names of speakers who made noteworthy contributions to the proceedings are provided in brackets.

*Third Reading of India Independence Bill* – Vol. 440, c277, 15 July 1947 [Cripps, Churchill]

*Royal Assent to the Indian Independence Act* – Vol. 440, c758, 18 July 1947

## **Selected Extracts from Proceedings<sup>404</sup>**

### **a. *Contrasting views of events at Amritsar in 1919***

#### **Colonel Wedgwood – Vol. 123, c1230, 22 December 1919<sup>405</sup>**

Think what this means. There has never been anything like it before in English history, and not in the whole of our relations with India has there ever been anything of this magnitude before [...] By this incident you have divided for all time, races that might otherwise have loved one another [...] it has not only destroyed that; but it has destroyed our reputation throughout the world [...] all the decent people in the world will think that England really likes what happened at Amritsar, and that all this sort of thing is English [...] This damns us for all time. Whenever we put forward the humanitarian view, we shall have this tale thrown into our teeth.

#### **Sir Edward Carson – Vol. 131, c1712, 8 July 1920<sup>406</sup>**

You talk of the great principles of liberty which you have laid down. General Dyer has a right to be brought within those principles of liberty. He has no right to be broken on the *ipse dixit* of any Commission or Committee, however great, unless he has been fairly tried. Do look upon the position in which you have put an officer of this kind. You send him to India, to a district seething with rebellion and anarchy. You send him there without any assistance whatever from the civil government [...] He went to this place on the 10<sup>th</sup> April, as I understand it. He found the place all round and all the great towns in the immediate neighbourhood in a state of rebellion [...] The civil power had to abandon their entire function, and what did you ask this officer to do? To make up his mind as best he could how to deal with the situation, and now you break him because he made up his mind wrongly. Yes Sir, the armchair politician in Downing Street [...] has no doubt a very difficult task to perform.

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<sup>404</sup> Brief biographical details are provided when required for some of those cited.

<sup>405</sup> Wedgwood, Josiah Clement, first Baron Wedgwood (1872-1943), Labour Politician, author of *The Future of the Indo-British Commonwealth* (1921).

<sup>406</sup> Carson, Edward Henry, Baron Carson (1854-1935), Leader of the Irish Unionist MPs in Parliament.

**b. Debate on Indian Policy, 1931**

**Isaac Foot – Vol. 247, c662, 26 January 1931<sup>407</sup>**

[...] I believe if the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had come two years earlier we should have had a very different story. I am sorry the Conference itself was not held two years ago. Again, the great statesman [...] Edward Burke, once said:

*“If there is any eminent criterion which above all the rest distinguishes a wise government from an administration weak and improvident it is this – well to know the best time and manner of yielding what is impossible to keep.”*

[...] We do not look upon this question of self government for India as something we ought to begrudge and deplore. We say that it indicates the day for which this country has looked for many years. In the year 1833, speaking in this house Macaulay said – I quote from memory – *“The day may come when they will outgrow our system and demand European institutions. If ever that day comes it will be the proudest day in European history.”* One of the most gallant British soldiers who ever fought in India and one of the wisest of her administrators said: *“It is an impossible thing to contemplate that God meant that thirty million people from an alien country should forever control the destinies of two hundred millions.”*

**c. Supply Committee Debate, 1932**

**Sir Winston Churchill – Vol. 265, c760, 29 April 1932**

Let us reverse the process of the last few years [...] Let us freely give all that can be given, and let us bluntly and frankly refuse anything which would not suit us, would not suit British interests, or would not be good for Indian interests. Let us in the late Lord Birkenhead's words; tell the truth to India [...] I say that we ought to look at the broad proletarian masses ... I believe that the interests of the Indian proletariat and the interests of the Great Britain are in absolute harmony [...] in the cheap and specious guise of giving what is called “more freedom to India” it would be monstrous if we were to hand over these hundreds of millions of human beings to be exploited and harried by small, bitter and unrepresentative groups, gangs and cliques [...] The leader of the Opposition at the close of his interesting and discursive oration dwelt with relish upon the frequent and inevitable fall of Empires and the effacement of their civilisations. He even seemed to me to represent the fall of the Roman Empire as a most fortunate and auspicious episode in the history of mankind. He gleefully prophesied that if and when we were driven out of India the Indians would soon make short work of any vestiges of modern civilisation or improvement which we had imparted to them. He may be right. I think that it may well be so. It may well be that the departure of Great Britain from India would be followed very like the Dark Ages which succeeded the fall of the Roman Empire.

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<sup>407</sup> Foot, Isaac (1880-1960), Liberal MP for Bodmin, member of the round-table conference on India during 1930–31

**d. Government Policy on India, 1947**

**Prime Minister Clement Attlee – Vol. 433, c1395, 20 February 1947**

It has been the policy of successive British governments to work towards the realisation of self government in India. In pursuance of this policy an increasing measure of responsibility has been devolved on Indians and today the civil administration and the Indian Armed Forces rely to a very large extent on Indian civilians and officers [...] The declaration of the Prime Minister of 15<sup>th</sup> March last which met with general approval in Parliament and the country, made it clear that it was for the Indian people themselves to choose their future status and constitution and that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government the time had come for responsibility for the Government of India to pass into Indian hands [...] His Majesty's government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948. This great sub-continent now containing over 400 million people has for the last century enjoyed peace and security as a part of the British Commonwealth and Empire. Continued peace and security are more than ever necessary today if the full possibilities of economic development are to be realised and a higher standard of life attained by Indian people. His Majesty's Government are anxious to hand over their responsibilities to a Government which, resting on the sure foundation of the support of the people, is capable of maintaining peace and administering India with justice and efficiency. It is therefore essential that all parties should sink their differences in order that they may be ready to shoulder the great responsibilities which will come upon them next year.

**e. Indian Independence Bill – Third Reading, July 1947**

**Lord John Hope – Vol. 440, c250, 15 July 1947<sup>408</sup>**

[...] I have wondered sometimes whether the House, as a whole, has realised, and does realise, the gravity of the hour. I feel that support for this measure is really no excuse for shirking an objective analysis of the situation. Besides we in this house have a duty to the people of this country as well as to India. Stripped of all sentimental embroidery what does this Bill do? It enables us to leave India [...] As a result of this Bill a fundamental factor in the whole Indian situation will have been irrevocably removed. I mean British responsibility [...] Above all, in spite of communal dissension, we gave to India political unity. By the desire of the Indians that unity goes at a stroke. We cannot help it, but we can say that we regret it. In that connection, I record my own regret, which I know I share with most hon. Members in this House that the names of the two Dominions are what they are now to be. I wish profoundly that the name "India" had been kept out of it for the time being, because it may be only a name, but the name "India", as I see it, should have stood as a prize to be won; a prize for unity [...] it is going to be very easy, in my opinion, unless great care is taken, to fall between two stools during the period into which we are now moving. As we are no longer to be responsible in India, so I say it is essential that we must not get involved in any possible quarrel or disagreement between the two Dominions [...] I started my speech on a valedictory note

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<sup>408</sup> Hope, John Adrian (1912 – 1996), Conservative MP for Midlothian and Peebles North.



because it must be realised that we are saying “goodbye” to India. As we do so, I think we may all of us look back with pride on the fact that united, India has stood. I think also we should look forward with a prayer that divided, she shall not fall.