INDIAN EXCEPTIONALISM IN PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE

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February 10, 2004
India’s democracy has long been considered not only exceptional, which, as perhaps the only large country to have sustained democratic governance for its entire post-colonial history, it most certainly is, but also (in chronological order) anomalous, paradoxical, puzzling, baffling, and defiant of reigning theoretical interpretations.\footnote{\textbf{For nearly four decades now democracy in India has appeared somewhat of an anomaly,}’ is the opening line penned by Atul Kohli, “Interpreting India’s Democracy: A State-Society Framework,” in Atul Kohli ed., \textit{India’s Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 3. Myron Weiner provides the most arresting characterization, prefacing his book of essays with the claim that “The Indian paradox is not the familiar apparent contradiction between India’s poverty and India’s democracy, but the far more puzzling contradiction between India’s high level of political violence and its success at sustaining a democratic political system.” See his \textit{The Indian Paradox: Essays in Indian Politics} edited by Ashutosh Varshney (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989), 9. “India has long been a puzzle for students of comparative democratic politics,” is the formulation favored by Arend Lijphart to begin his “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation,” \textit{American Political Science Review} 90 (June 1996): 258-268. “India has long baffled theorists of democracy,” is how Arshutosh Varshney begins his essay, “Why Democracy Survives,” \textit{Journal of Democracy} 9 (1998): 36-50. Atul Kohli’s most recent contribution to the discussion deviates from the rule by waiting until the second paragraph to write more soberly that “The success of democracy in India defies many prevailing theories that stipulate preconditions for democracy.” See his “Introduction” to Atul Kohli, ed., \textit{The Success of India’s Democracy} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2001.} India’s longstanding democracy counts as anomalous (and its synonyms), scholars argue, when juxtaposed to many of its enduring features--widespread poverty, profound inequality, hierarchical social structures, linguistic divisions, and ethnic heterogeneity--which are taken to be inhibitors of democracy and even reliable markers of authoritarian politics.

The works making these claims of exceptional status for India constitute, individually and collectively, an empirically rich and theoretically informed literature providing profound insights into the Indian case. Yet these works mirror their object of study by evincing a couple of paradoxical features of their own. First, the continued use of each theorist of terms like puzzling implies that each author remains unconvinced by the arguments of his predecessor; novel synonyms signal novel arguments. Yet while there are important differences in the formulations and the emphases of each author, each of them overlaps in significant ways, not only with one another, but with perhaps the earliest formulation (and frequently overlooked ) of the keys to Indian success put forth more than four decades ago by Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber
Rudolph.²

Second, each of the works conceives of its tasks in an important but partial way: given the range of conditions considered inhospitable to democracy, they ask what countervailing features exist to overcome these obstacles. Their answers, in other words, describe attributes that perform democracy-enhancing functions so effectively that they more than compensate for India’s less democratic-friendly traits. In answer to the question, “given its inauspicious qualities, why is India a stable democracy,” they conceive the relevant contrast space to be “stable democracy/some other regime type,” but not the related contrast space “India/some other country.” They thus answer the question “Why is India a democracy?” but not the question “Why is India a democracy,” informing us cogently what functional attributes India has but not why India has those functional attributes.

Finally, while they all make implicit reference to broader theories and cases, their explanations for Indian democracy are almost exclusively formatted in idiographic, India-exceptional terms. As one scholar recently put it, “the standard explanation for the survival of Indian democracy appears to offer few lessons for the study of other democracies.”³ This feature of the literature follows from its predecessor: by investigating India’s functional attributes but not their origins, they implicitly frame their inquiry in India-specific terms.

It is not my intent to deny the importance of the functionalist mode of inquiry; surely we would have to identify India’s pro-democracy functional attributes prior to investigating their origins. The first burden of this essay must thus be to establish that there is consensus about why India is an enduring democracy. The task now is to push the causal chain back a step and ask about India’s political development in comparative perspective; why does India have these

³Arun Swamy, “Consolidating Democracy by Containing Distribution: ‘Sandwich Tactics’ in Indian Political Development, 1936-1996,” India Review 2 (April 2003): 3-34, citation at page 3. The exception to this claim is Lijphart’s usage of his consociational framework. But as Ian Lustick convincingly demonstrates, Lijphart employs this theory only by altering the meaning of its main terms and ignoring key features of Indian politics that comport poorly with the model. For Lustick’s critique, see his “Lijphart, Lakatos, and Consociationalism,” World Politics 50 (October 1997) 88-117.
An Unrecognized Conventional Wisdom

Given India’s continent-sized territory, its sociocultural heterogeneity, and its importance to scholars of comparative politics, it is no surprise that a large and heterogeneous set of answers have been given to the Indian paradox. Some of the more idiosyncratic explanations, such as Rajni Kothnari’s cultural argument linking Hindu toleration and cultural pluralism to the political pluralism supportive of democracy, for example, have garnered little assent. Instead, analysts converge on the general position that the resilience of India’s democracy in the face of widespread poverty in a non-industrial economy requires an explicitly political explanation. Under this broad rubric, we find scholars regularly returning to three broad themes: the legacy of British colonialism, the institutionalization of the Congress party, and the formation of a cross-class coalition in which middle-class peasants play a vital role. To be sure, stressing the overlap in analytic coverage focuses attention away from the nuanced specificities articulated by each author; yet the brute fact of overlapping analysis provides grounds for believing that it is the broad theme that matters, not the nuanced specificities.

Colonial Legacies. There is broad consensus that the political institutions and traditions inherited from the British are of central importance to Indian democracy. Rudolph and Rudolph
point to the profound and prolonged process by which India’s western educated elites were
socialized into the norms of democracy via their participation in a broad array of colonial
institutions.\textsuperscript{4} Echoing this claim, Atul Kohli writes that

Colonialism was the crucible of India’s democracy. Early manifestations of
colonial influences included the democratic inclinations of Western-educated
leaders like Nehru, internal democracy within the Congress-led nationalist
movement, and the participation of Congressmen in elections and legislatures prior
to independence. Other lasting contributions of colonialism were traditions of
constitutional government, freedom of the press, an effective civil service, and an
“apolitical” armed force. It is not surprising, therefore, that when a panel of India
experts...were asked...to comment on the factors relevant to India’s democracy, all
of them considered the political traditions inherited from a colonial past to be
important.\textsuperscript{5}

Myron Weiner makes the strongest case that while many inheritors of British political
institutions did not sustain democracy, competitive democracies have been sustained only
among former British colonies.\textsuperscript{6}

No scholar deems the colonial legacy sufficient for India’s democracy: all who invoke this
claim recognize, at minimum, that the same British colonial legacy issued in military dictatorships
in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{7} But there are three other issues that must be addressed in relation to the colonial
inheritance. First, it is too easy to treat the colonial legacy as a decontextualized and ahistorical
package of institutions and practices that were simply handed over to the Indians. In fact, each
and every instance of British constitutional reform was a begrudging and direct response to
pressure applied by Indian nationalists. Most of these reforms, moreover, were denounced by
contemporary Indian nationalists as patently anti-democratic. Varshney is thus correct to insist
that “It was not the British legacy per se, but rather the strategic interactions that took place
between British authorities and national-movement leaders that laid the foundations of
democracy.”\textsuperscript{8} I follow up on Varshney’s acute suggestion below.

\textsuperscript{4}Rudolph and Rudolph, “Toward Political Stability,” 150-54.
\textsuperscript{5}Kohli, “Interpreting India’s Democracy,” 9.
\textsuperscript{6}Weiner, Institution Building in India,” 78.
\textsuperscript{7}Varshney presses this point hardest; it would be good to hear his response to Weiner’s claim that the
Pakistani inheritance is in fact substantially different: whereas India inherited the Westminster model,
Pakistan inherited the Viceregal model, a claim seconded by some historians of Pakistan.
\textsuperscript{8}Of all the authors who invoke a colonial legacy, only Varshney truly appreciates this point. He errs,
however, in attributing British concessions instead of repression to the nationalists’ use of non-violent
Second, however we conceive the origins of the colonial legacy and its influence on the origins of Indian democracy, it is difficult to see how it can explain the persistence of democracy: legacies cannot, presumably, explain themselves. We need, in other words, to distinguish between “mechanisms of production” and “mechanisms of reproduction,” a task that can be accomplished by linking together the legacy argument with other strands of the literature under discussion.9

Finally, we have to confront squarely the Pakistani paradox: given that the Muslim politicians who would establish Pakistan in 1947 also experienced the give and take of electoral politics and legal-rational administrative structures during the colonial period, why did the British colonial legacy produce stable democracy in India but unstable military dictatorships in Pakistan? These points are developed below.

Organized Mass Support. The Congress party acted as an ideal--the concretization of India’s imagined community--and as a collection of leaders. But it also functioned as an organizational structure linking elites and masses.10 The popular obsession with Gandhi as an ascetic ideal and a charismatic leader obscures the fact that he was an effective organizer, one who “took the ramshackle Indian National Congress of the second decade of the century, and rebuilt it as an effective nationwide organization, extending from a full-time working central executive, link-by-link to representative committees in virtually every district of British India...[that] reached even to the villages.”11 The democracy-stabilizing function of the Congress party as an effective institution marshalling mass support is celebrated by all commentators on Indian democracy. Once again, the Rudolphs were the first to make this claim, observing that “Well articulated party organizations reaching down into the population are rare in underdeveloped areas, but crucial if the electoral process is to be more than a formality.”12

9On mechanisms of reproduction, see Stinchcombe and the Colliers.
10Several authors speak of this relationship in terms of nationalism; although I have no principled objection to this terminology, neither do I see that it adds much to the analysis.
12Toward Stability, 161.
Weiner considers the conflict-managing role of the Congress Party to be “the central thesis” of his approach to explaining democratic stability. Varshney argues with great insight that Congress’ combination of a mass base with “rule-based internal functioning” made it the unrivaled leader of the nationalist movement. The luxury of secure incumbency its dominant position afforded India’s post-independence leadership meant that India “was spared the internecine conflict and even open warfare that would scar several of the national movements in Africa and cripple democratic functioning after the advent of independence in the early 1960s.” Indeed, the emphasis placed on effective political institutions led many analysts to fear that the deinstitutionalization of the Congress party in the 1970s was an ominous portent of, as one title put it, “India’s Growing Crisis of Governability.”

But to state the issue in this way is to invite more questions: if the institutionalized relationship between political leaders and their mass base was consequent to decisions made by Congress leaders in the 1920s, why did the Muslim League, the political organization that spearheaded the creation of Pakistan, not make a similar transformation? Why are well-articulated party structures so rare? And if they are so rare, why did they emerge in India? These questions take us from functional to genetic analysis, and so will be addressed below.

Cross-Class Coalitions and Middle-Class Farmers. The Congress party did not recruit its mass base indiscriminately; rather, its recruitment strategy was carefully targeted to a key social class: middle to rich farmers occupying an intermediary position between large landholders—zamindars and jagirdars who controlled a revenue stream produced by land but did not directly control land at the point of production—and landless tenants and laborers. It was this class that Gandhi championed and on whose behalf the Congress party of independent India largely abolished the zamindar and other forms of control over revenue detached from direct cultivation.

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13 page 33.
14 Varshney, 39.
15 Kohli, Democracy and Discontent.
16 On the zamindar abolition, see Frankel and Rao, Merrilat accurately captures the intent of the reforms characterizing them as a “middle class revolution.” See his Land and the Constitution in India (Columbia
That urban-rural coalitions can stabilize politics in developing countries is a proposition associated with the work of Samuel Huntington’s 1968 volume, *Political Order in Changing Societies*. The argument had, in fact, been made almost a decade earlier in the Rudolph’s discussion of political stability in democratic India. The shift from elite to popular nationalism, in their analysis, was accomplished by Gandhi who knitted together the concerns of urban elites and rural cultivators by championing the cause of the middle-level peasantry against the interests of the landed magnates who dominated the countryside until independence. At the level of agrarian structure, the result of Gandhi’s coalitional strategy was that richer peasants--what the Rudolphs would late call “bullock capitalists”--became the dominant class in the Indian countryside. Politically, this alliance with rich peasants, furthered by agricultural legislation in the 1950s, contributed heavily to Congress’ electoral successes in both the pre- and the post-independence periods. And in contrast to the political instability introduced into politics by alliance with landed magnates, “this class of peasant farmers, by its background and environment, is more likely to be loyal to the system that benefited it than are the more fickle “advanced” classes caught up in a stream of accelerating change.”

Subsequent authors have also focused on rural incorporation as a source of political stability, although they have assigned stabilizing functions to it that differ from the emphasis the Rudolph’s place on political loyalty. Weiner echoes the theme of mass nationalism based on appeals to the peasantry, and then picks up the story in the post-independence period, noting that the spread of capitalist agriculture in India in the wake of the Green Revolution has only consolidated the position of this class of richer farmers. Far from leading to growing class conflict and political antagonisms, he notes that the political fallout has been for richer farmers to work *within* the system to demand higher procurement prices and lower input prices, actions in which they may be joined by smaller farmers and tenants. Capitalist agriculture, in other words, has increased the commitment to democracy of the “more modern and mobile sectors of Indian


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society” without aggravating class tensions, a development that surely contributes to the “conflict-managing role of the Congress Party” and helps explain why “While modern mass movements have sought to overthrow governments, they have rarely attempted to overthrow democratic institutions.” For this reason, he concludes, “the vitality of India’s capitalist agriculture is closely linked to the persistence of its democratic system.”

Others have noted how the rural incorporation created a “heterogeneous” dominant coalition composed, after 1920, of the urban professionals and merchants who were early supporters of Congress party and richer peasants in the countryside. The result, many scholars argue, is a characteristic accommodationist style of politics, where many groups receive rewards without overwhelmingly crushing the interests of other proprietary classes, an event which we might expect would destabilize politics, but also without saddling the state without an intolerably high level of demands from popular classes which might also destabilize politics. The heterogeneity of dominant classes, Bardhan argues, acts as a conflict-reducing mechanism; it created a politics of accommodation, Frankel argues, which has weathered the storm of the challenge posed by the entry into politics of less-privilegd groups; and it tempered the value-orientation of political elites, Varshney argues, who might otherwise have pursued reckless policies of economic transformation, predisposing Nehru, who listened to the counsel of party leaders more sensitive to the political exigencies of rural India, to choose “democracy over development (or at least the model of development that he was initially inclined to favor).”

Arun Swamy makes this line of argument available for comparative analysis using the concept of “sandwich tactics.” India has almost uniquely contained distributive demands from below, he proposes, because its leaders have twice employed a coalitional strategy in which elite groups ally with non-adjacent strata in a social hierarchy “against an intermediate group with

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1888.
19130-32, citation from page 132.
20One of the intervening mechanisms linking wealth to stable democracy is the mdoeration of political conflict....
21Bardhan and Frankel in Kohli.
whom they have more direct antagonism.” Because this strategy of cross-class coalitions reduces the number of voices making demands on the state, it contains distributive conflicts and has a salutary effect on elite calculations of the relative costs and benefits of democracy. Once in play, moreover, the strategy can be redeployed over time as new groups become mobilized and make new demands. Swamy joins the consensus around the importance of richer peasants by dating the onset of sandwich tactics in India to the 1937 elections in which newly enfranchised middle peasants represented the bottom of the social hierarchy.

In short, despite their many other differences, these authors agree on three broad themes as key explicanda of the unusual stability of Indian democracy: its colonial legacy, the mass-mobilizing and conflict-reducing mechanism of the Congress party, and the creation of cross-class coalitions where middle peasants provide a key mass base. We have even begun to see how these three themes might be more tightly woven together: the British colonial legacy was in large part created as a response to the agitations of the nationalist movement, especially its creation of a mass base through the incorporation of middle peasants; the Congress party as an organization was created in the act of rural incorporation itself; and the cross-class coalition that resulted acts to suppress demand overload and hence helps explain how the Congress party functions as a conflict-reducing mechanism. But knowledge of these mechanisms is not equivalent to knowledge of their origins, the task to which we now turn.

The Dynamics of Rural Incorporation

All of our authors make reference to the enduring consequences for Indian democracy of features of the period of nationalist struggle against British colonialis; they pay special attention, moreover, to the transition to mass nationalism. A stylized summary of the stylized histories they provide makes the following points. For its first three decades, The Indian National Congress represented the interests of emergent urban middle classes, graduates of the educational

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22 Sandwich tactics, 2
23g.
institutions initially established to provide manpower for the British civil administration. Despite some overlap in social background, these new middle classes found themselves in conflict with older elites composed of large landed magnates and members of princely families. The Congress remained an elite affair with minimal organizational presence until 1920, when, disillusioned by the slow pace of reform, Gandhi and his lieutanants appealed to propertied, prosperous peasants to join forces with the middle class in the struggle against the British. This widened struggle took place in the context of constitutional reforms that gave Indians increased opportunity for political participation through seats on municipal and provincial councils and through elections. In response, the Congress party “took on the characteristics of a political party with provincial and district offices, dues-paying members, internal elections, and fundraising, all made necessary by the need to contest elections to legislative bodies.”

Particularly crucial to the Congress were smaller zamindar and landowers “who could support sons engaged in full-time political work out of family earnings. As the suffrage was extended in the 1930s, the landed middle class, enjoying the advantage of numbers, asserted its control over the leadership of the Indian National Congress at the provincial level.”

The great merit of this short summary is that it indicates how to tie together our three analytic themes explaining Indian political stability. We see clearly how the strategies of Indian nationalist leaders were derived from their interactions with the British and how those strategies in turn imposed organizational imperatives on the Congress party: nationalist agitation provoked constitutional reforms that opened up an electoral arena. At the same time, disillusionment with the pace of reforms provoked nationalist leaders to widen the scope of the conflict by mobilizing mass political support. Mobilizing mass support in a context of widened electoral opportunities forced leaders to organize mass participation in a structured political institution. Seen in this light, the key decision that must be explained is the decision to incorporate a mass base, for this

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24 Weiner, 85.
25 Frankel, 226.
26 The classic statement of mass mobilization as a strategy of political conflict is E.E. Schattschneider, _The SemiSovereign People_.

decision spurred greater constitutional concessions and thus created the colonial legacy; it raised
the need to build new political organizations; and it composed, by definition, the construction of a
cross-class coalition. The weakness of this historical summary is that it provides so little insight
into the causes of rural incorporation. If “disillusionment with the pace of reforms” were a
sufficient cause of rural incorporation, then the Indian case simply would not be so exceptional;
nor does this account for the deviation of the Pakistani outcome, which lacked rural
incorporation.

To move from historical description to causal analysis, then, is to ask about the causal
genesis of rural incorporation. This analytic task requires consideration of the costs of
incorporation, relative to its benefits.27 We know, retrospectively, that rural incorporation was
critical to the stability of Indian democracy; we have supporting evidence for this proposition
from numerous other cases.28 But that knowledge is only retrospective knowledge; contemporary
leaders cannot have been entirely certain of the ultimate outcome of their coalitional strategy.
They were all too aware, the evidence shows in abundance, of the potential costs of rural
incorporation. For an elite to embark on rural incorporation, after all, involves a deliberate and
conscious decision to relinquish its monopoly on political participation and thus to reduce its
capacity to control the rate and direction of political change. Newly mobilized groups might be
empowered to alter the structure of resource allocation and the distribution of valued resources.
They might make demands that conflict with developmental imperatives--the “demand overload
hypothesis--and they might demand redistribution of resources. Uncontrolled political behavior,
moreover, might incite violence and disorder. As we shall see below, the leaders of the Indian
National Congress were acutely aware of the potential threats to their interests and goals that the
shift to mass politics might produce. They were particularly concerned that mass action might

27It may be the case that Gandhi was driven to rural incorporation by a set of values framing his
identification with the countryside. At minimum, however, he had to convince other key figures in the
Congress party to assent to his strategy, figures who departed radically from Gandhi’s ethical and
ideational commitments. There is, in addition, substantial evidence that Gandhi did regularly assess the
relative costs and benefits of mobilizing the countryside.
28Add something here.
issue in inter-communal violence and that the British would respond with heightened repression.

Given these costs, we should not expect rural incorporation to be a strategy elites adopt lightly; rather we should expect them to take this step, if at all, only under relatively dire conditions. For purposes of comparative analysis, we can state the hypothesis in the form “rural incorporation will be a strategy of political conflict-resolution only subsequent to an acute elevation in the intensity of conflict, when the fate of deeply held commitments and aspirations, including membership in the elite itself, are threatened by failure to achieve a decisive victory.”

Put in the context of Indian history, our hypothesis is that rural incorporation was considered a viable strategy only after an intensification of the conflict between the nationalist movement and the British colonial authorities: the intensification of the conflict radicalized the leadership of the Congress movement and made the costs of incorporation more acceptable than they had previously been. This hypothesis is vindicated by the brief historical survey to follow. An interesting feature of that story, one that goes a long way to explaining Indian exceptionalism, is that the British colonial authorities unintentionally subsidized the costs of incorporation: the very actions that necessitated rural incorporation also reduced its costs to the Congress leadership.

The Green Uprising in India

Middle-class farmers in India carry many names: the dominant caste, rich peasants, the rural middle class, kulaks, and jotedars, are just a few of the terms used to describe smaller landholding cultivators occupying an intermediary position between larger landlords who did not control production and propertyless tenants and agricultural laborers.\(^{29}\) However, we call this group, historians agree that “It is increasingly clear...that at the core of the conflict between the Indian National Congress and the British Raj in the 1920s and 1930s, there raged a battle for their political allegiance.”\(^ {30}\) It is clear, as well, that the 1920s and the 1930s represent a clear rupture from an earlier period of the national struggle, a time when the Congress party did not reach down

\(^{29}\)For discussion of the main terms of “dominant caste” and “rich peasant,” see MacDonald...

to the village level but rather remained a limited and poorly institutionalized “organisation of a small number of persons educated in schools and colleges.”  

The burden of this section is to demonstrate that the leaders of the nationalist movement were aware of the costs of rural incorporation, but that the growing intensity of their conflict with the British altered these calculations so that the benefits of incorporation finally came to outweigh its costs. A second theme of this section is to demonstrate that nationalists’ calculations were affected by British strategies which had the unintended consequence of lowering the costs of incorporation.

The British ruled India indirectly: a relatively small corps of British officials relied heavily on the collaboration of native allies, a dependence that became particularly important following the 1857 uprising. The main group that the British relied on during their rule were princes and larger landlords, or zamindar, whose claim on the landed revenues was secured without giving them direct control over land itself or its cultivation. From the 1880s onward, the British had to deal with English educated, middle-class groups who were recruited to man the lower levels of the Indian Civil Service. These were the men whom Viceroy Lytton wrote about as “Babus, whom we have educated to write semi-seditious articles in the Native Press.” The British initially used two methods to deal with the “seditious” activities of the educated middle classes: they repressed them and they made concessions, granting participation on local advisory councils and, over time, elected legislative bodies, but always while maintaining their autocratic hands on the domains most important to imperial rule (finance and security) and retaining the constitutional right to reappropriate any authority previously granted. When, over time, these two strategies proved insufficient to put an end to nationalist agitation, the British pursued a third strategy: they sought to outflank the nationalist movement by cultivating ties to the dominant class in the countryside, wealthier peasants. It was this last strategy, however, that subsidized the costs of the nationalist movement’s efforts to cultivate the very same social pillar of support.

31 From a 1936 report by Congress President Rajendra Prasad, quoted in Low, p. 1.
The first two decades of Congress party-led agitations are conventionally referred to as the moderate phase. The party itself had no permanent structure, but rather meant no more than an annual assembly culminating in a list of political, administrative, and economic grievances. Political grievances took the form of demanding the extension of British rights to those Indians who, by virtue of their education, had become what the Congress leader Tikhale claimed in 1905 were “the natural leaders of the people.” Congress demanded political rights, he continued, “not for the whole population, but for such portion of it as has been qualified by education to discharge properly the responsibilities of such association.” Self-government, for these enlightened few, was seen as a distant goal, and the more pressing goal was administrative reforms that would hasten the “Indianization” of the civil service. Economic grievances, finally, were expressed as a critique of British economic policies that impoverished India via a trio of policies--excessive revenue demands on land, the destruction of local handicrafts, and an artificial export surplus--that together constituted a a “drain of wealth.” Rather than calling for the wholesale reconstruction of the domestic economy, however, early nationalists called only for an end to these three policies and for measures to aid Indian industrialization.33

The key tactic of Moderate nationalists was the petition, supplemented by articles and speeches, all aimed at convincing the liberal British public of the hypocrisy--of the “un-British character”--of their rule in India. Direct political action built on mobilized public support was never considered. Partly this reflects the inclination of nationalists themselves, who, as Anglicized professionals, combined some contempt with lower classes with “a dependence on the British for law and order which must have been strengthened by the revivalist frenzies and communal riots of the 1890s.”34 Partly it reflects their own social composition--many members of the early Congress party drew incomes from small-sized revenue grants--and their connnections to commercial groups; both factors would militate against a radical socioeconomic project. And

34Sarkar, 92.
partly it reflects the limited demands that they were making; the India they sought to create would have little place for more politically active lower classes, while the allegiance of the latter would have little impact on efforts to use logic and reason to persuade their audience of the rightness of their cause. Given its limited expected utility and its very real costs, rural incorporation was not and should not have been valued highly by rational actors.

In the late 19th century, the Congress Party was roughly equivalent to nationalist activity; by the turn of the century, that had changed as a larger segment of Indian political opinion were provoked by British policies to express sentiments that were “unmatched in the early years of the Congress for their vilification of British rule.” What followed was the “extremist phase,” a period whose onset can correctly be attributed to “disillusionment with the slow pace of reform,” a claim Frankel incorrectly makes about a later transition. Two elements comprise the extremist phase. First, a critique of the tactics of the moderates of Congress for their reliance on “mendicant” tactics of appealing to British public opinion. Second was the growing sense that the nationalist movement had to appeal to more than an English-educated elite alienated from the vast majority of the population. But leaders of the extremist group within the Congress were also members of the intelligentsia who derived incomes from landed revenues. Their critique of moderate nationalists did not extend to connecting the nationalist struggle to the growing economic grievances of the Indian countryside. Rather than recruiting a mass base based on class alliances, extremists initiated mass contacts though religious symbolism and communal appeals, a strategy that helped unleash inter-communal violence and thus demonstrated vividly the costs of mobilizing lower classes. The extremist phase of Indian nationalism, which ended by the onset of World War I as moderate leaders regained control of Congress, maintained a distinction between radical nationalism and social radicalism.

Intervening between the brief extremist phase and the mass nationalism of Gandhi was World War I. It is now commonplace in political analysis to observe how wars are handmaidens

36 Sarkar, 97.
37 The phrase is from Broomfield, Elite Conflict.
of political change: new forms of revenue extraction needed to pay for wars acts as the crucial intervening variable in these accounts. Wartime burdens on India were heavy, altering the character of the “drain of wealth” and catapulting economic concerns to the top of the nationalists’ agenda. British policies amounted to “a massive plunder of Indian human and material resources. The Indian army was expanded to 1.2 million, and thousands of Indians were sent off to die...The 300% increase in defence expenditure inevitably meant not only war loans (again at times semi-compulsory) but a sharp rise in taxes and in fact significant changes in the entire financial structure.”

Land revenues ceased to suffice to finance the colonial army and bureaucracy during World War I, leading to the introduction of large customs and income taxes. These measures radicalized Indian merchant communities that had already linked their fortunes to the Congress party. Indian industrialists who had first tasted large profits during the war came to detest the adverse exchange rate and other forms of imperial control; they became major financiers of the Congress, making possible its organizational and political extension from the cities to the countryside.

Urban middle classes were similarly radicalized by the war and its aftermath. The British responded to wartime terrorist activities and fears of revolutionary upheaval with a series of harsh measures, culminating in the the Marchy 1915 Defence of India Act which allowed for mass detention without trials and special, especially punitive, courts. Despite these measures, the Congress party leaders supported the British in the belief that their loyalty would be repaid with major political reforms. “Purchase war debentures,” one leader proclaimed, “but look to them as the title deeds of Home Rule.” These hopes were dashed, however, with the passage of two major postwar pieces of legislation: the Montagu-Chelmsford Act, which called for the gradual development of self-governing institutions but which was also characterized by Indian public

38 Hackneyed footnotes to the Tilly-inspired literature.
39 Sarkar, 169.
40 Customs revenues doubled their share of total taxes between 1913 and 1917. Income taxes rose even more sharply, from two percent of revenues in 1911 to almost 12% in 1919. Extraordinary taxes were levied on businesses, both before and immediately after the war. Sarkar, 170.
41 Cited in Sarkar, 150.
opinion as decidedly non-democratic and patently paternalistic; and the Rowlatt Act which extended wartime regulations against anti-seditious activities into the postwar period. Demonstrations against the act quickly led to the greatest episode of British violence, the massacre of 379 unarmed demonstrators in Amritsar in late 1919.

Wartime developments also prepared a mass base for the nationalist movement. Hard hit were the prosperous peasants who had flourished in the decades of expanding prices prior to the war. Wartime inflation took on a particularly anti-rural cast as prices of industrial goods and particularly imported manufactures shot up while the export price of Indian agricultural goods stagnated. Peasants who produced for the market and consumed manufactured goods thus found themselves suffering considerably from adverse terms of trade and also from British policies of requisitioning grains for the war effort. The wartime fall in the standard of living of more prosperous peasants would continue, of course, in the 1930s, helping to cement their allegiance to the nationalist cause.

In many instances, the multiplication of economic grievances, the lack of institutional means to redress grievances, and the example set by revolutionary movements abroad set the stage for mass insurgency. In the Indian case, they set the stage for what has been called the “vani-vakil-patidar alliance”—the alliance of businessmen, middle-class professionals, and well-off landowning peasants.42 It was this class-based alliance that would agitate for Indian independence and would make democracy sustainable in post-independence India.

Four further points need to be made, all of which bear on the question of why a similar alliance did not coalesce in support of the Muslim League, leaving independent Pakistan without a highly organized, cross-class alliance anchored in richer peasantry: the changing composition of Congress leadership; British efforts to counter growing Congress strength; the role of local conflicts and the subsequent regional specificity of the cross-class coalition, and fourth,

42Patidars were richer peasants in Gujarat benefited from the expansion of demand for tobacco and dairy products in the late 19th century; to symbolize their growing wealth, they began calling themselves Patidars instead of lower-caste Kanbis. They were the earliest and most enthusiastic rural supporters of Gandhi, who was also from Gujarat.
considerations of the cost of incorporation and the means by which the British subsidized them.

First, the Congress party that cemented the new alliance was largely led by a new generation of leaders who, unlike their predecessors, were more disposed to forging links with dominant peasant communities.\textsuperscript{43} On the whole, the new generation of Congress leaders did not hail from the major cities of British India--Calcutta and Bombay in particular--but from less cosmopolitan, provincial towns: hence Gandhi and his lieutanant Vallabhbhai Patel came from Gujarat, Rajendra Prasad from Bihar, Rajagopalachari from a Tamilnad, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan from the Northwest Frontier. These new elites did not subscribe to the view that British colonialism was hypocritically “un-British” in character. For Gandhi, to be British was in fact something to be avoided at all costs. Gandhi rejected both British material culture and its political system; he famously described parliamentacy democracy as a prostitute and decried industrial society. Gandhi also came to believe that true freedom meant not simply the independence of India from British rule, but more radically, there had to be an end to economic oppression. “Gandhi was adamant that self-government for India would be a travesty if the mass of the people were not freed from the exploitation of capitalists, landholders, and money-lenders.”\textsuperscript{44} While many of Gandhi’s key lieutanants did not share his vision of India’s future, socialism performed the same function of radicalizing their view of the conflict with British authority and lowering their resistance to lower-class mobilization.\textsuperscript{45}

Second, British authorities did not passively observe the growing radicalism of the nationalist movement in India. Their repressive measures were visible, but they expended as well considerable energy in dividing the nationalist movement and coopting its more moderate elements: repress extremists, reward moderates, was the unofficial British credo. Rewards took the form of constitutional concessions which increased the scope of political and administrative

\textsuperscript{43}See Sarkar, \textit{The Swadeshi Community in Bengal} for why this did not occur there.
\textsuperscript{44}Broomfield, Gandhi as anomaly, 189.
\textsuperscript{45}It is not necessarily the case, however, that a radical ideology preceded the turn to rural incorporation. For Nehru, it was his first exposure in 1920 to the gross exploitation and poverty of the countryside that pushed him to move beyond the “casually intellectual parlour socialism he had toyed with in Cambridge...” See J. Brown’s biography, esp. 56-61.
participation for educated Indians. By 1909, the sum total of reforms had only allowed the small number of Indians elected to local councils to discuss budgets and move resolutions. The 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, in contrast, seemed, at first glance, to be a genuine step en route to responsible self-government. As Ayesha Jalal has succinctly argued, however, the true intent of these reforms was to “provincialize” Indian politics by introducing the concept of “dyarchy.” The principle of dyarchy gave Indian ministers at the provincial level responsibility for non-essential subjects, while retaining at the center firm British control over finance, defense, and other areas central to colonial rule. These reforms were clearly designed to divert the attention of politically active Indians to provincial arenas and away from the political center and the nationalist struggle, an intent so transparently obvious that the reforms were denounced even by Congress moderates.46

Our third point is that Congress responded by “nationalizing” local conflicts. It bears emphasizing that Gandhi and his lieutanants did not mobilize previously dormant rural communities; rather, as Low has stressed, the initiative for the Congress-dominant peasant alliance “very often came from within these dominant peasant communities themselves.” That initiative, moreover, was often motivated by local conflicts: rivalry with local planters; an oppressive revenue system; new and more draconian taxes, and the hardships born of falling prices in the 1930s.47 These conflicts had long proliferated in the Indian countryside: the field of “subaltern studies” made a major historiographical statement by insisting on their inclusion on the historian’s agenda.48 Subaltern studies meets Whig history when the elites of the Congress party cultivated important political suppport from the spokespeople for peasant communities. Consequently, Gandhi’s mass-based national movement did not only have a specific class content, it also had a specific regional presence: strong in Gujarat and the Hindu-majority heartland of the middle Gangetic valley, especially in Bihar and the United Provinces, the alliance of Congress and

46Jalal and Bose, 129.
47Low, 21-22.
48Guha citation. For surveys, see Sarkar and Stokes.
prosperous peasants was far weaker, both in the south and, crucially for our story, in the two major provinces that would become Pakistan, Bengal in the east and Punjab in the west.49

Finally, we need to analyze how the Congress party calculated the costs and benefits of rural incorporation. It is quite clear that both the Congress leadership and its business allies feared that mass involvement in politics might elude their control, with deleterious political and economic consequences. Gandhi played a key role in reducing the probability of this threat. Rhetorically, while championing underclasses he never urged on them a belief in radical change but rather called for subordinates to accept their position and for superordinates to accept more willingly their custodial responsibilities. Tactically, Gandhi chose his fights carefully, intervening in local conflicts that did not involve the threat of uncontrollable class warfare. Gandhi was also acutely sensitive to the possibility of losing control of the pace of events, and his reputation for arbitrary and autocratic actions stemmed from his unilateral decision to end mass actions when spontaneous activity threatened to get out of hand. It is thus no surprise that Gandhi was described by propertied groups as “the best guarantee against communism which India possessed.”50

But this claim unfairly slights the role of the British in controlling the costs of popular participation in politics, a role that was clearly understood by Gandhi and the rest of the Congress leadership. Thus, the party did no more than quietly protest when the British removed the communist leadership of the Bombay working class, a social class which Gandhi made little effort to befriend. The British took ultimately responsibility as well for restoring law and order and thus upholding the property of Congress leaders when peasant insurgencies erupted.51

But the British played an even more direct role in the Congress’ decision to mobilize a mass base in the countryside: it was the British and not the Congress party who enfranchised well-to-do peasants. Each of the two major British reforms, of 1919 and of 1935, included measures expanding the franchise; the latter measure extended the electorate to 11.5% of the population.

50Cited in Low, 19.  
As franchise requirements were almost always payment of some form of land revenue, the new electorate was composed overwhelmingly of prosperous peasants.\(^52\) The same reforms created a stark rural bias in the distribution of seats in legislative assemblies as well.\(^53\)

By the 1930s, then, any hesitation that Congress might have had about mobilizing a rural base were swept away. Having gained control over political life in the cities, they confronted a new challenge of the British seeking to outflank them in the countryside. British officials made no effort to conceal their strategy of relying on “propertied men,” the backbone of British democracy at home, to outflank the nationalist movement. Congress *had* to mobilize the countryside or risk irrelevance. At the same time, the extension of the franchise created the opportunity for low-cost mobilization: currying support at the ballot box meant that Congress could target only propertied farmers in a way that posed minimal risk for inciting a broader uprising. From the perspective of rural cultivators, they could now demonstrate their allegiance to the Congress party in the non-threatening confines of the ballot box. British efforts to push Congress away from civil disobedience campaigns and towards constitutionally mandated, “safe” forms of political activity thus backfired. “Congressmen, now released from prison, soon became not just leaders of a political movement but cadres of a political party seeking to win elections.”\(^54\) While forays into electoral politics in the 1920s yielded meager results for congress, the enfranchisement of prosperous peasants secured Congress overwhelming victory in seven of the eleven provinces in the 1937 campaign. It was the British who provided the Congress with their most potent weapon of mass mobilization; yet far from being an isolated and ironic instance of unintended consequences, the British strategy was the logical conclusion of their strategy for dealing with dissent since the latter third of the nineteenth century: coopt moderates and propertied classes by extending political rights and provincializing politics.

In short, the intensification of conflict during and immediately after World War I helped a

\(^{52}\)Low, 29. Get data on 1919 reforms: in Sarkar?
\(^{53}\)See David Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920-1932*.
\(^{54}\)Low, 29.
new generation of Congress leaders emerge; they built on multiplying economic grievances to solidify an alliance of urban and rural propertied classes. And they used to their own advantage efforts by the British to outflank and demobilize them. An intensified conflict that increased the expected benefits of building a mass base intersected with British strategies that unintentionally subsidized the costs of incorporation to permit the Congress party to transform itself from an unorganized assembly of educated elites from a few coastal cities to a highly organized, cross-class coalition anchored in the most prosperous sectors of the countryside. The result, as we saw above, was the foundation of durable democracy in independent India.

From the Indian to the Pakistani Paradox

The story I have told solves one puzzle--how and why did the Congress party build a cross-class coalition--but poses a new one: why did India but not Pakistan greet independence enjoying the political infrastructure of durable democracy? The Indian story is one where nationalist agitation motivated the British to pursue new strategies for finding allies and blunting opposition; those new strategies, in turn, induced the Congress party to build a highly organized alliance with the countryside, a strategy whose net benefits might have been negative in the absence of British moves. Given that the territories and actors who would create Pakistan were all active participants in strategic interaction between the British and Indian political leaders, why did the Pakistan outcome differ so starkly from one produced in India?

One part of the answer is that British strategies to divide the nationalist opposition included special features to coopt Muslim populations. From the 1909 reforms on, Muslims were given special electoral considerations that altered the incentive structures of Muslim politicians and reduced the expected benefits of rural incorporation. The second part of the answer is that regional specificities matter: the supreme irony of Pakistan is that its two major territorial components--the western segment of the province of Punjab and the eastern segment of the province of Bengal--possessed features that militated against a strategy of rural incorporation. When the leaders of the Muslim League realized, following their 1937 electoral defeats at the
hands of the Indian Congress Party, that recruiting a mass base was critical to their political projects, they found themselves crippled by regional conditions that made such an alliance impossible.

The guiding force behind the formation of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, called the Punjab “the cornerstone of Pakistan,” for without gaining the support of its Muslim inhabitants, Pakistan would not have been created.\(^{55}\) Punjabis have dominated the post-independence state apparatus, and the major social, political, and economic institutions of Pakistan all carry a strong Punjabi imprint.\(^{56}\) Indeed, a major these of post-independence Pakistani politics has been the struggle for provincial autonomy, most notably, of course, in the case of East Pakistan. Jinnah’s metaphor for the political importance of the Punjab thus aptly captures the region’s analytic importance as well; central to the resolution of the Pakistani paradox is understanding how British policy in the Punjab produced a distinctive set of incentives and coalitions. In a nutshell, the Punjab is the only region in all of India where the British unambiguously succeeded at building a base among richer peasants, denying to both the Congress party and the Muslim League the social base of stable democracy. Where the British strategy of recruiting a base among wealthier peasant cultivators failed, it unintentionally produced the social infrastructure for stable democracy; where that strategy succeeded, however, it unintentionally produced the social infrastructure for dictatorship, albeit of a very unstable kind.

Punjabi particularism dates to its late incorporation into the empire in the 1840s, the last region to fall under British control and the one in which local forces fought most fiercely in resistance. The initial British response was to govern the region through a semi-military dictatorship, but the loyalty of the province during the 1857 mutiny led the Raj to place special emphasis on gaining the support of local notables. In the post-1857 reorganization of the colony’s administrative and military wings, Punjabis came to dominate the Indian army, rising from about one-third of total manpower in 1875 to some sixty percent by 1914, almost all of

\(^{55}\)Talbot, Punjab and the Raj, 3.
whom, officers and soldiers alike, were volunteers. Punjabi participation in the military was also strikingly inter-communal: of the 750,000 Punjabis who fought in World War I, Muslims represented about half and Sikhs and Hindus about a quarter each.\textsuperscript{57}

Inter-communal collaboration marked Punjabi politics as well. In the western districts which were overwhelmingly rural, the British cultivated the support of clan leaders and Muslim 
\textit{pirs}, or leaders of religious brotherhoods; both groups were the major landholders in a region marked by tremendous inequality and were thus in a position to deliver the loyalty of their dependent, non-landed tenants. Hindu and Sikh regions in the eastern part of the province, on the other hand, were characterized by far more egalitarian agrarian structures and the widespread existence of prosperous, landowing peasant cultivators--exactly the class being recruited into the Congress party. In these regions, as the British served for rural collaborators, they could not turn to local social elites. In the Hindu dominant region, Brahmins were relatively low status, probably due to the absence of large temple complexes as sources of revenue and influence. Leadership in the rural communities was exercised by rich Jat peasants, and it was to this class that the British turned to for the Hindu element (and, to a lesser extent, Sikh contingent) of their rural alliances. What this meant was that the British social base in the Punjab countryside was both cross-class (large controllers of land in the west, prosperous peasants in the east), and also inter-communal.

The British took pains to maintain this alliance, enacting measures that violated their largely non-interventionist economic policies in the rest of British India--indeed, where they contributed to the economic grievances that we have seen providing the impetus for the Congress-rich peasant alliance. Land prices in the Punjab escalated rapidly in the late 19th century, especially after large-scale irrigation works made the region the grainary of India. Although Punjabi cultivators were among the richest in India,\textsuperscript{58} they began to lose their land to urban, Hindu moneylenders. British officials were keenly aware of the threat this development posed to their political strategies. The apex of their efforts to reverse it was the 1901 Punjab

\textsuperscript{57}Ian Talbot, \textit{Punjab and the Raj}, 41-6.

\textsuperscript{58}The British did not seek to finance their colonial operations through Punjabi land revenues, so not only did output increase, but this increase was not remitted to the British.
Alienation of Land Act, which divided the population into agriculturalist and non-agriculturalist tribes, forbidding the latter--urban moneylenders--from taking possession of land.

The result of these and many other policies was that British rule was popular in the Punjabi countryside, among both Muslim notables and Hindu prosperous peasants. When in the 1920s the British sought to counter the growing influence of the Congress party in large parts of British India, they took steps to supplant their informal alliances with formal political organizations, creating the Unionist Party which dominated Punjabi politics from the early 1920s until after the 1937 elections. The party had two founders, Fazl-i-Husain representing the Muslim wing and Chhotu Ram representing the Jat Hindu peasantry. Consequently, the Congress party made absolutely no inroads into the Punjabi countryside, but rather was limited to an alliance with the urban Hindu merchant moneylenders, guaranteeing that Congress would find no support among the Muslim elites or the Jat peasantry. British colonial rule in the vital Punjab region thus remained virtually uncontested into the early 1940s.

One might ask, however, why this rural coalition was not bequeathed to independent Pakistan. The most proximate answer is that the 1947 partition separated the prosperous Jat peasantry from their erstwile allies among Muslim landholders. But that response only raises new questions: it bears emphasizing, after all, that the idea of a sovereign separate state for the Muslims of India was never the project of any major political actors or group in British India until after 1937; even after 1940, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the head of the Muslim League which claimed to represent all of India’s Muslims, was deliberately vague about his vision for Pakistan, never unambiguously declaring that he sought an independent and sovereign state; rather, he sought to establish Pakistan’s sovereignty as a basis for negotiating parity at the center of a federated India. To understand why the Muslim League did not itself recruit a rural base among the

59 The Congress party established a Punjab branch in 1885; but its total lack of support in the countryside meant that it had almost no existence at the district or primary levels. The dilemma for the Congress remained how to win rural support without alienating its wealthy urban Hindu supporters; that dilemma was never solved.

60 This is the provocative thesis of Ayesha Jalal, The Sole Spokesman... But note that to attribute to Jinnah largely utilitarian motives does not entail denying that the idea of Pakistan had cultural and normative import for his audience; indeed, it is precisely the meaning attached to the idea of Pakistan that gave the
dominant peasantry, and why it ultimately came to advocate Pakistani sovereignty, which had the unintended consequence of destroying Punjab’s rural cross-class, inter-communal coalition, we must turn to the role of British constitutional reforms and their affect on Muslim political elites.

*British Electoral Strategies and Muslim Responses*

The 1909 Morley-Minto reforms conferred upon Indian Muslims reserved seats and separate electorates for election to representative bodies. These special privileges, which were reconfirmed in the reforms of 1919 and 1935, substantially influenced Muslim political behavior and Hindu-Muslim relations. These arrangements, which seemed to speak to the preferences of a homegenous Muslim population, in fact produced very different goals and strategies within the Muslim community. In Muslim majority provinces such as Punjab and Bengal, provincial autonomy became the best guarantor of Muslim interests, and local politicians formed parties that, as we have seen, largely cooperated with the British. In Muslim minority provinces, such as the United Provinces, however, provincial autonomy would not serve Muslim interests. Rather, their main spokesman, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, “saw that the real security for Muslims, especially the Muslims in the minority provinces, lay not in the outworn device of separate electorates...but in an agreement with the Congress at the centre." Muslim politicians from the UP realized, however, that they needed to martial support from the provinces in order to negotiate with the Congress party for Muslim interests. There was thus a large gap between Muslims wishing to provincialize politics and Muslims wishing to nationalize politics. As we have seen, Gandhi succeeded at “nationalizing” local politics; that task would be much harder for Jinnah.

Jinnah was an early member of the Congress party, and fit comfortably within its moderate wing that identified strongly with the British and used constitutional measures to push for reforms. Jinnah split with Gandhi when the latter won Muslim support for his first non-

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project its utilitarian value. For confusion on this point, see Farzanah Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam*, 5-8. In stressing themes of communal exclusiveness, Shaik ignores the long history of inter-communal cooperation that, in the Punjab, persisted into the late 1930s.

61Jalal, Sole, 14.
cooperation campaign by allying with the Khilafat movement composed of Muslim ulema and religious-political activists. Jinnah denounced this fusion of religion and politics, accusing Gandhi of fostering both inter-communal and intra-communal conflicts.\textsuperscript{62} Faced with an intransigent Congress party, Jinnah spent most of the next decade in political isolation while provincial Muslim leaders in Bengal and the Punjab advanced their cause of a weak federal structure. Jinnah reprised his vital role in Indian politics only in the mid-1930s, when the Government of India Act widened the franchise, gave new opportunities for political participation, and reopened the question of the relationship between the center--the British hold on which had in no way diminished--and the provinces. Once again, Jinnah was forced to rally the entire Muslim electorate, to claim to speak for the entire community, in order to maximize his leverage vis-a-vis the Congress party; only in this way could he find ways to protect the interests of Muslims in minority provinces. But provincial politicians saw little reason to rally behind this cause, especially since Jinnah was hoping to negotiate a strong position in the center of politics that was still dominated by the British. The Muslim League thus had little to offer to provincial politicians, a weaknesses that became vividly manifest in the 1937 elections that were dominated by the Congress party. Consequently, the League won only one of 175 seats in the Punjab, and 39 of 248 seats in Bengal. Even in the United Provinces, the relative success enjoyed by the League was overshadowed by the strong performance of the Congress party.

Consequently, for the first time the leaders of the Muslim League perceived an urgent need to mobilize a mass base, which meant extending their organization into the countryside of Punjab and Bengal. It is true that Jinnah himself was a reluctant convert to this cause. An archetypical Congress moderate, he had refused in December of 1920 to participate in Gandhi’s first non-cooperation movement, stating flatly that “I part company with the Congress and Gandhi. I do not believe in working up mob hysteria. Politics is a gentleman’s game.”\textsuperscript{63} But in the aftermath of the 1937 electoral debacle, even Jinnah could see the necessity of organizing

\textsuperscript{62}Jalal, 8.
\textsuperscript{63}62
mass support.\textsuperscript{64} Ambitious plans to open party branches in Punjabi villages were announced, but never implemented, as a new round of agrarian reforms enacted by the post-elections Unionist ministry increased the party’s support among Hindu and Sikh Jats, ending any hopes either the League or the Congress party had of mobilizing the Punjabi countryside.

Two consequences followed. First, at the strategic level, Jinnah began to emphasize the demand for a sovereign Pakistan as a means of building popular support in Bengal and the Punjab. Second, at the organizational level, Jinnah sought to merge his movement with existing party organizations, as a means of low-cost and rapid organization building. Muslim League members thus became members of the Unionist party, a move which strengthened the League’s position in Indian politics, but it also allowed the head of the Punjabi Unionist party, Sikander Hayat Khan, “to assume complete control of the Punjab Muslim League, thereby not only removing a potentially dangerous rival provincial party but clearing the ground for any future attempt to challenge Jinnah’s position in national politics.”\textsuperscript{65}

Both strategies worked, but with disastrous consequences for Pakistani democracy. The failure of the Muslim League to build its own organization left the party with limited resources--indeed, with a threadbare existence--at independence. Indeed, the ultimate collapse of the Unionist party did not end the dominance of Muslim landlords; but the Muslim League was not able to fill the organizational void because its new communal stance had polarized the Punjab, ending the era of inter-communal collaboration.\textsuperscript{66} Partition then decisively split the Muslim elite-Hindu Jat coalition, leaving Punjab with quasi-feudal landlords blocking any subsequent measures to build a mass base in the countryside.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{64}Attributing the absence of incorporating strategies to Jinnah’s moderate tendencies begs the question of why, unlike in the Congress party, moderates like Jinnah were not displaced by more radicalized leaders from the provinces. The answer, of course, is that provincial politics were dominated by more conservative rural alliances, precluding the replication of the Congress strategy.

\textsuperscript{65}Talbot, Punjab and the Raj, 125.


The colonial legacy thus differed in the regions that would become India and Pakistan. In India, political elites built a loyal mass base that gave them decisive political hegemony prior to independence; with independence, no challenge to the rule of the Congress party existed. In particular, larger landlords who might have reason to prefer dictatorship to democracy were unable to find a platform to compete in Indian politics, leaving India free of the influence of a powerful social class that has elsewhere been fatal to democracy. India’s political elite thus adopted a host of British constitutional measures and anchored them in an organized mass base.

Pakistan, in contrast, inherited a powerful landlord class and the absence of any durable political organizations. Neither landlords nor the civilian and military bureaucrats who have dominated Pakistani politics have been able to cultivate widespread mass support; they have, however, been in a position to block the efforts of reformist politicians seeking to build such a mass base. The entrenched power of both landlords and bureaucrats has proved irresistible. Whereas British strategies to achieve hegemony encouraged rural incorporation, the strategies of Pakistani elites has been to block rural incorporation. Consequently, neither democracies nor dictatorships have endured long in Pakistan. Given that the British tried and failed to win the loyalty of prosperous peasants in what became India, but succeeded in the Punjab, we must conclude on the ironic note that the (unintended) consequences of the British colonial legacy were pro-democratic only where the British failed in their overall strategy of recruiting a mass base in the countryside; where they succeeded in so consolidating their rule, the colonial legacy helped to produce a country that has still not succeeded at democratic or authoritarian consolidation.

Conclusion

69 Most recently, see Diamond on the reverse wave in Pakistan.
This article makes three contributions to the resolution of the “Indian paradox.” First, it argues that there exists considerable scholarly consensus about the functional bases of enduring democracy in India. The prolonged use of the language of “paradox” obscures how much authors agree with one another. Three points of analytic convergence deserve emphasis. First, all authors agree, however, tentatively, that the British colonial legacy is of central importance: it is not a sufficient condition for Indian democracy--the case of Pakistan too easily defeats that argument--but Indian democracy emerged with a set of attitudinal and institutional endowments that facilitated democratic consolidation. An important modification of this position, however, is to recognize that the British colonial legacy was in fact produced over time in a process of strategic interaction with Indian nationalists. Nationalist agitation provoked British constitutional concessions which then influenced nationalists’ goals and strategies in the next round of interaction. Second, by the time of independence, the Congress party had long ceased to be a collection of elites, but was instead a highly institutionalized organ of political mobilization and conflict resolution that reached down to the village level across India. As an institution, the Congress party helped stabilize Indian politics and partially constrained any autocratic tendencies of Indian politicians. Finally, the Congress party succeeded at building a mass base; more specifically, the Congress party built an enduring cross-class coalition--urban professionals, merchants and the rural middle class of prosperous cultivators. The huge popularity that the Congress party enjoyed precluded any need to fear an organized opposition and helped cement pro-democratic preferences among incumbent politicians and opponents. The nature of the cross-class coalition, moreover, constrained “demand overload” and created a stable basis from which to incorporate new groups and new demands into the organized political sector.

The article’s second contribution is to distinguish between identifying the functional mechanisms of democratic survival and investigating why India possesses these mechanisms. Key to this analytic project is to ask why Indian Congress leaders engaged, beginning in 1920, to mobilize support among India’s wealthier peasants. Rural incorporation created Congress’ mass base; and it was the act of incorporation that necessitated and embodied the institutional
elaboration of the Congress party. The decision to embark on rural incorporation, moreover, was in large part a product of British strategies for domination. On the one hand, British policies during World War I radicalized broad segments of Indian society and helped propel a new generation of leaders to the head of the Congress party. On the other hand, British concessions to the nationalists subsidized the costs of incorporation, making that strategy more feasible and thus of greater expected utility than it otherwise would have been.

The concluding contribution of the article is to compare systematically the Indian experience of stable democracy to the Pakistani experience of fluctuations between military rule and competitive politics, neither of which have generated an institutional framework underpinning its own reproduction over time. Why did the political leaders who represented Indian Muslims and eventually spearheaded the move for Pakistani sovereignty also not respond to British colonial rule by institutionalizing an alliance with prosperous peasant cultivators? Provincial particularities explain this outcome. The Punjab, the demographic and institutional heartland of Pakistan, was the main recruiting ground for the British army in India. As such, the British took special pains to cultivate a loyal base there, a strategy which yielded a Punjabi version of rural incorporation: Muslim notables in the west allied with largely Hindu Jat rich peasants in the east. At the same time, British institutional concessions to Muslim political opinion produced incentives for politicians such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah to not cultivate a mass base until the late 1930s. The result, for Pakistan, was that large landlords remained a powerful social and political force in post-colonial politics, a force that was not constrained by an elaborate set of political institutions that mobilized a countervailing alliance. Pakistan was thus denied the mechanisms of democratic reproduction that India enjoyed. Ironically, then, it was the success of British colonial policy that produced the misery of Pakistani politics; and it was the failure of British policy in India, where colonial elites tried and failed to gain a base among the rural middle class, that produced Indian democracy.

There is a sense, in conclusion, that this article represents less a resolution of the Indian paradox then a rejection of that term and its meanings. The Indian paradox is typically taken to
mean that Indian democracy survives amidst socioeconomic underdevelopment, a condition that supposedly militates against democracy. But the arguments advanced above make no reference to socioeconomic conditions; the terms of the analysis are strategic decisions made by parties in conflict, decisions that produce coalitions and institutions. A combined coalitional-institutional analysis explains both outcomes—Indian democratic stability, Pakistani democratic and authoritarian instability. This analysis can be extended more broadly to the analysis of post-colonial regime dynamics. It thus remains an open question whether the causal analysis of regime dynamics need contend with statistical correlations linking democracy to wealth. In that sense, India’s democracy may remain exceptional, but it is no longer paradoxical.

70See author.