

MODERN INDIA III

The Republic of India

State-Building, Democracy, and Political Change from
1947 to the Present

Gaurav Tiwari

INDIAN HISTORY LIBRARY

The Republic of India

State-Building, Democracy, and Political Change from
1947 to the Present

Gaurav Tiwari

Indian History Library

Copyright © 2026 Gaurav Tiwari
All rights reserved.

First edition, 2026
Published by Gaurav Tiwari.

This book is an independently written educational synthesis. Historical claims and interpretations should be read with the source note and selected bibliography at the back of the book.

Dedication

For the reader who treats the republic as unfinished history
rather than settled civics.

Contents

Dedication	iv
Preface	vii
How to use this book	viii
I Founding the republic	1
1 Refugees, Integration, and Reorganization	2
2 Making the Constitution and Electoral Democracy	16
3 The Nehruvian State	33
II Democracy, development, and political change	49
4 From Shastri to the Janata Interlude	50
5 Technology, Social Justice, Reform, and Coalition Politics	68
6 NDA, UPA, and Political Change to 2019	85
7 India Since 2019	104
Source note	123
Selected bibliography	124
About the author	125

Also in the Indian History Library

126

Preface

Independence transferred power to a state already facing displacement, communal violence, territorial uncertainty, food stress, weak administrative reach, and competing visions of citizenship. The survival of constitutional democracy was not automatic. It was built through decisions whose benefits and costs did not fall evenly.

This volume follows state-building as an argument about scale. The Union integrated princely states, wrote a Constitution, held elections, planned development, reorganized linguistic states, and built institutions of science and welfare. At the same time, caste, region, religion, language, class, and unequal access to power kept reshaping the political field.

Later chapters resist the temptation to turn recent history into a scoreboard of governments. Policies matter, but so do institutional design, federal relations, social coalitions, administrative capacity, public memory, and the gap between enactment and lived implementation.

The evidence cutoff for the final chapter is 10 August 2026. That boundary keeps a changing present from pretending to be a settled past.

How to use this book

Read the main chapter before opening its companion. On the first pass, follow causation, institutions, and changes in political scale. On the second pass, close the narrative and rebuild the chronology, comparison, or map from memory. Use the answer key only after committing to an answer.

Names and dates are necessary, but they are not the book's organizing principle. Keep asking what changed, what caused it, who carried it, and what survived.

Part I

Founding the republic

Refugees, Integration, and Reorganization

The Radcliffe Award was published on 17 August 1947, two days after independence, amid mass flight and organized violence.

Partition displaced roughly 14–18 million people across the subcontinent; estimates of deaths vary widely and must be qualified.

Independence began as a crisis of state capacity

The Union government inherited the central institutions of the Raj but not a settled nation-state. Punjab and Bengal were divided; transport and irrigation networks crossed new borders; officials and soldiers chose between dominions; revenue systems and records had to be separated; and communal violence weakened local administration. Food shortages, inflation, demobilization, refugee camps, uncertain frontiers, and the Telangana armed struggle added pressure.

The government responded through an Emergency Committee, relief and rehabilitation departments, military escorts, camps, claims tribunals, property laws, and new provincial administrations. These actions extended state capacity, but coercion and unequal access accompanied relief. Independence did not remove colonial personnel or emergency habits overnight. It placed them under elected leadership confronting extraordinary

disorder.

Violence and displacement differed between west and east

Partition violence was reciprocal but not spontaneous in any simple sense. Rumour, revenge, militia organization, collapsing police neutrality, political incitement, gendered ideas of honour, and the sudden expectation of permanent borders turned local fear into expulsion. Punjab experienced a rapid, nearly complete exchange of Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Trains, roads, canals, villages, and refugee columns became sites of attack. Women suffered rape, abduction, forced conversion, confinement, and sometimes killing by members of their own families.

Migration across Bengal was slower and recurrent. Many middle-class migrants moved first; later violence, property pressure, and insecurity drove cultivators and poorer households westward. Movement continued through the 1950s and beyond rather than ending in 1947. Sindhi Hindus and Sikhs, lacking an Indian province corresponding to Sindh, dispersed across western and central India. Refugees therefore formed varied groups differentiated by region, class, caste, gender, occupation, and timing.

Rehabilitation in East Punjab used evacuee land, graded allotments, loans, temporary camps, and new townships. Urban refugees occupied or received housing and commercial premises in Delhi and other cities. Faridabad, Nilokheri, Lajpat Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, Punjabi Bagh, and Ulhasnagar became important settlement sites. In the east, scarce land, continuing inflow, political reluctance to accept permanent migration, and dispersal schemes produced longer camp residence and conflict. Dalit refugees and people without documentary proof often received weaker entitlements than propertied claimants.

The Nehru–Liaquat Pact of April 1950 promised minority security, return of property, commissions, and freedom of movement. It reduced immediate interstate tension but could not restore

confidence sufficiently to reverse most migration. Recovery programmes for abducted women treated them as citizens needing rescue yet sometimes ignored their present wishes, showing a conflict between state-defined community honour and individual agency.

Division of assets created the machinery of two states

Partition required more than drawing a line. The Partition Council, chaired by the Governor-General, used a Steering Committee led operationally by H.M. Patel for India and Muhammad Ali for Pakistan. Departments separated files, offices, equipment, and employees. Civil servants could opt for a dominion, but communal insecurity, family location, and institutional need constrained choice. Railways, postal systems, currency arrangements, irrigation, debt, stores, and diplomatic property required negotiation.

The armed forces were divided under a Joint Defence Council and a temporary Supreme Commander's headquarters. Units were allocated broadly through communal composition and dominion requirements, while individuals, weapons, factories, and stores were reassigned. The process occurred during Punjab's violence and the Kashmir war, making orderly separation harder.

Cash balances became politically explosive. An agreed total payment of Rs 75 crore was due to Pakistan; Rs 20 crore was paid initially, while India delayed the remaining Rs 55 crore during the Kashmir conflict. The Indian cabinet decided in January 1948 to release it, a step Gandhi supported as fulfillment of an obligation. The payment issue should not be simplified into the sole cause of his assassination: Nathuram Godse's ideology drew on a wider history of militant Hindu nationalism and hostility to Gandhi's politics.

Accession and merger were different stages

About 565 princely states covered roughly two-fifths of the sub-continent's territory and contained nearly one-quarter of its population. Their rulers possessed internal authority under British paramountcy but were not internationally equal sovereign states. When paramountcy lapsed, Mountbatten, Vallabhbhai Patel, and V.P. Menon pressed rulers to join the geographically appropriate dominion.

An Instrument of Accession initially transferred specified subjects, normally defence, external affairs, and communications, to the dominion. A standstill agreement continued practical arrangements such as transport and postal links. Merger agreements, covenants forming unions, administrative absorption, and the Constitution created deeper integration. Accession answered which dominion a state joined; merger answered how its government and territory entered the new constitutional order.

Patel combined reassurance and pressure. Rulers were offered privy purses, retention of titles and property arrangements, and roles such as rajpramukh in return for surrendering governing powers. Menon negotiated instruments and designed unions or absorption. Small states were merged into neighbouring provinces; others formed unions such as Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat, Saurashtra, and Patiala and East Punjab States Union; strategic territories became centrally administered. Privy purses and official recognition of rulers were later abolished by the Twenty-sixth Amendment in 1971.

Junagadh tested ruler's choice against geography and population

Junagadh was a Kathiawar state with a Muslim nawab, a predominantly Hindu population, and no land border with Pakistan. Its accession to Pakistan in September 1947 was legally defended through the ruler's authority but challenged by India on contigu-

ity, popular will, and regional security. An opposition provisional government formed outside the state; disorder spread in dependent territories; and the nawab left for Pakistan. Junagadh's administration invited India to restore order in November.

India then administered the territory and held a plebiscite in February 1948. The announced result overwhelmingly favoured India. Pakistan rejected the process as conducted under Indian control. The case established no universally applied doctrine: India invoked popular preference in Junagadh while relying on the ruler's signed accession in Kashmir, though invasion and emergency conditions made the contexts different.

Hyderabad combined negotiation, internal conflict, and force

Hyderabad was the largest princely state, landlocked within India, ruled by a Muslim Nizam over a mainly Hindu population. The Nizam sought independence rather than accession. A November 1947 standstill agreement postponed settlement, but relations deteriorated. The Majlis-e-Itehad-ul-Muslimeen and its Razakar militia, led by Qasim Razvi, used intimidation and violence. Border clashes and arms concerns increased Indian pressure.

Hyderabad also contained the communist-led Telangana rebellion, rooted in landlord domination, forced labour, debt, and autocratic rule. It was not simply an extension of the accession dispute. Peasant guerrillas fought landlords, the Nizam's forces, and Razakars; after incorporation, Indian forces suppressed the communist struggle. This overlapping conflict warns against presenting Hyderabad as a two-sided contest between the Nizam and New Delhi.

Operation Polo, described officially as a police action, began on 13 September 1948 and ended within five days. The Nizam ordered a ceasefire and accepted the new arrangement. Violence against Muslims during and after the action was later investigated by the Sunderlal Committee; its findings complicate triumphalist accounts. Hyderabad entered the republican frame-

work, and the Nizam served as rajpramukh from 1950 until reorganization in 1956.

Jammu and Kashmir requires three separate questions

First, legal accession: Maharaja Hari Singh initially sought to remain independent and proposed standstill arrangements. Pakistan accepted a standstill in principle; India requested discussion. After tribal forces from Pakistan entered on 22 October 1947 and advanced toward Srinagar, the Maharaja requested Indian military aid. He signed an Instrument of Accession on 26 October; Governor-General Mountbatten accepted it on 27 October, and Indian troops were airlifted to Srinagar. India treats this accession as final and legally equivalent to other accessions.

Second, wartime control: India and Pakistan fought through 1947–48. India referred the situation to the United Nations on 1 January 1948. UN proposals linked a ceasefire, Pakistani withdrawal of tribesmen and nationals, reduction of Indian forces, and a plebiscite. The required sequence and mutual trust were never achieved. A ceasefire took effect on 1 January 1949. The 1949 Ceasefire Line was redesignated the Line of Control after the 1972 Simla Agreement, without becoming an internationally recognized boundary.

Third, present administration and claims: as of 10 August 2026, India administers the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which has a legislature, and the Union Territory of Ladakh, without a legislature under the 2019 reorganization framework. Pakistan administers areas it calls Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. China administers Aksai Chin; Pakistan's 1963 boundary agreement with China also concerned the Trans-Karakoram tract, whose transfer India rejects. India officially claims the territory of the former princely state in full. Pakistan disputes Indian sovereignty over the region and supports a different final settlement. Actual administration does not by itself

settle competing claims, and a claim does not establish actual control.

The 2019 constitutional orders made the provisions of the Indian Constitution applicable in a changed manner, rendered the former special-status framework inoperative, and reorganized the state into two Union Territories from 31 October 2019. The Supreme Court of India upheld the constitutional action in December 2023 while directing restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest practicable time. That judicial holding describes Indian constitutional law; it does not resolve the international territorial dispute.

French and Portuguese territories followed separate paths

French India consisted of Chandernagore, Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam. A 1949 referendum supported Chandernagore's merger; *de facto* transfer occurred in 1950, *de jure* transfer in 1952, and it joined West Bengal. Representatives of the other settlements voted for merger at Kizhoor in October 1954. Their *de facto* transfer occurred on 1 November 1954, while treaty ratification completed *de jure* transfer on 16 August 1962. Puducherry later became a Union Territory.

Portugal rejected negotiated transfer of Goa, Daman, and Diu and treated them as overseas provinces. Nationalists used *satyagraha* and underground action; India applied diplomatic and economic pressure. Dadra and Nagar Haveli passed out of Portuguese control in 1954 and joined India in 1961. In December 1961, Indian armed forces conducted Operation Vijay; Portuguese forces surrendered, and Goa, Daman, and Diu came under Indian administration. Portugal recognized Indian sovereignty after its 1974 democratic revolution. Goa became a state in 1987; Daman and Diu remained a Union Territory and were merged administratively with Dadra and Nagar Haveli in 2020.

Linguistic reorganization made unity more flexible

Language had organized provincial politics before independence, and Congress itself had reorganized provincial committees on linguistic lines in 1920. Yet Partition made leaders fear that rapid boundary change could encourage secession. The Dhar Commission in 1948 opposed language as the sole basis; the JVP Committee of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya advised postponement while allowing reconsideration where public sentiment was overwhelming.

Potti Sriramulu's death after a fast in December 1952 intensified the Telugu movement. Andhra State was formed from Madras State in October 1953. The States Reorganisation Commission under Fazl Ali, with H.N. Kunzru and K.M. Panikkar, balanced language with administrative viability, economic capacity, security, and national unity. The 1956 Act and Seventh Amendment redrew states and removed the old Part A, B, and C classification.

Reorganization did not finish linguistic claims. Maharashtra and Gujarat were separated in 1960; Punjab was reorganized in 1966; several northeastern states followed different ethnic, linguistic, and strategic logics. The success of linguistic states lay not in making every boundary uncontested but in giving regional identity a constitutional arena. Accommodation often reduced separatist pressure by allowing language and Indian citizenship to coexist.

Interpretations and debates

- V.P. Menon's administrative account emphasizes Patel's pragmatism, rapid negotiation, and the prevention of Balkanization. It is indispensable for institutional detail but reflects an integrationist official viewpoint.
- Ramachandra Guha treats refugee rehabilitation, princely integration, and linguistic reorganization as early tests that

made democratic consolidation improbable but successful. This interpretation highlights state capacity and political accommodation.

- Urvashi Butalia and Gyanendra Pandey shift attention from high diplomacy to memory, family violence, silence, and the unstable categories of victim and perpetrator. Their work shows why communal casualty totals alone cannot explain Partition.
- Joya Chatterji, Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, Ravinder Kaur, and Udit Sen emphasize differentiated migration, documentation, property, citizenship, and the unequal making of refugees. Rehabilitation created citizens and exclusions at the same time.
- Integration can be interpreted as negotiated state-building or as central coercion. Most accessions were peaceful, but Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir reveal that consent, force, popular politics, and strategic interest combined differently.
- Linguistic reorganization was once feared as disintegrative. Its longer record supports the opposite inference in many regions: recognizing language within federalism made national unity more adaptable. It did not eliminate minority claims within linguistic states.
- Kashmir remains disputed. A rigorous answer separates the Maharaja's accession, the war and UN process, later bilateral agreements, present administration, and incompatible official claims instead of using one of these as a substitute for all the others.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
3 Jun 1947	Partition plan announced	Sets the timetable for two dominions and the lapse of paramountcy.
18 Jul 1947	Indian Independence Act receives assent	Provides the legal framework for independence and division.
14–15 Aug 1947	Pakistan and India become independent	Sovereignty transfers amid violence, migration, and administrative rupture.
17 Aug 1947	Radcliffe Award published	Punjab and Bengal boundaries become public after independence.
15 Sep 1947	Pakistan accepts Junagadh's accession	Creates a dispute over contiguity, popular preference, and princely choice.
22 Oct 1947	Tribal forces invade Jammu and Kashmir	Precipitates accession and the first India–Pakistan war.
26–27 Oct 1947	Maharaja signs; India accepts Kashmir's accession	Gives India the legal basis it invokes for military assistance and sovereignty.
29 Nov 1947	India–Hyderabad standstill agreement	Temporarily preserves existing arrangements without resolving accession.
30 Jan 1948	Gandhi assassinated	Reveals the danger of militant communalism during national consolidation.
Feb 1948	Junagadh plebiscite	Produces an overwhelming recorded vote for India under Indian administration.

Date	Event	Why it matters
13–17 Sep 1948	Operation Polo	Ends the Nizam’s effective independence and integrates Hyderabad.
1 Jan 1949	Kashmir ceasefire takes effect	Freezes a territorial division that becomes the basis of later control lines.
20 Jun 1949	Chandernagore referendum	Supports merger with India.
26 Jan 1950	Constitution classifies territorial units	Recasts provinces and former princely areas within a republican structure.
8 Apr 1950	Nehru–Liaquat Pact	Attempts to protect minorities and stabilize migration in India and Pakistan.
1 Oct 1953	Andhra State formed	Demonstrates the political force of linguistic statehood.
1 Nov 1954	French settlements transfer de facto	Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam pass to Indian administration.
1 Nov 1956	States Reorganisation Act takes effect	Redraws much of India through linguistic and administrative criteria.
19 Dec 1961	Portuguese rule ends in Goa, Daman, and Diu	Completes Indian takeover after failed diplomacy and armed action.
16 Aug 1962	French transfer becomes de jure	Treaty ratification completes the legal transfer of French possessions.

High-confusion comparisons

Issue	Legal or formal step	Political or administrative reality	Exam trap
Accession	Ruler signs Instrument of Accession; dominion accepts	Usually limited initially to three subjects	Do not equate accession with immediate full merger.
Merger	Ruler transfers governing authority or states form unions	Administration and constitution become more uniform	Do not date all integration to 15 August 1947.
Junagadh	Ruler accedes to Pakistan	India assumes administration; plebiscite favours India	Population principle was not uniformly applied everywhere.
Hyderabad	Nizam seeks independence; standstill signed	Indian military action ends resistance in September 1948	Telangana rebellion was a distinct social conflict.
Jammu and Kashmir	Maharaja accedes to India	Territory divided by war and later control lines	Claim, legal position, and de facto control are different.
French transfer	Negotiated local votes and treaty	De facto transfer can precede de jure transfer	Puducherry's two dates are 1954 and 1962.
Portuguese transfer	Portugal refuses negotiation	India uses force in 1961	Portuguese recognition came only in 1974.
Linguistic state	Boundary recognizes a major language	Economic, minority, security, and administrative questions remain	Language was major, never the only criterion.

Self-test

1. Why did independence immediately produce a crisis of state capacity?

2. How did refugee movement in Punjab differ from migration across Bengal?
3. What institutions managed the division of civil and military assets?
4. Distinguish an Instrument of Accession, a standstill agreement, and a merger agreement.
5. Why was Junagadh disputed, and how was it incorporated into India?
6. Why must the Telangana rebellion be distinguished from the Hyderabad accession dispute?
7. What sequence connected invasion, accession, and war in Jammu and Kashmir in October 1947?
8. Distinguish official claim, legal argument, and de facto administration in Kashmir as of 10 August 2026.
9. How did French territorial transfer differ from the incorporation of Goa, Daman, and Diu?
10. What positions did the Dhar Commission and JVP Committee take on linguistic states?
11. Why was the formation of Andhra State a turning point?
12. Give a balanced assessment of princely-state and territorial integration.

Answer key

1. Partition divided territory, personnel, records, transport, armed forces, and finances while violence, mass migration, shortages, uncertain borders, and regional conflicts overwhelmed local administration.
2. Punjab saw a rapid and near-total communal exchange in 1947; Bengal experienced recurring, socially differentiated migration extending through the 1950s and later.
3. The Partition Council and its Steering Committee managed civil division; the Joint Defence Council and temporary Supreme Commander's organization managed armed-force division.
4. Accession transferred specified sovereign subjects; standstill continued existing practical arrangements; merger transferred internal governing authority or absorbed a state into a

larger constitutional unit.

5. Its ruler chose Pakistan despite non-contiguity and a mainly Hindu population; India assumed administration amid disorder and held a February 1948 plebiscite that overwhelmingly recorded support for India.
6. Telangana was a communist-led agrarian struggle against landlords, forced labour, and autocracy; it overlapped with but was not reducible to the Nizam–India sovereignty contest.
7. Tribal forces entered on 22 October; Hari Singh requested aid and signed accession on 26 October; India accepted on 27 October and airlifted troops to Srinagar.
8. India claims the entire former princely state; India, Pakistan, and China administer different areas; competing legal and political claims remain unresolved by present control alone.
9. French settlements transferred through referendums, representative votes, and treaty stages in 1950–62; Portuguese refusal led India to use force in Goa, Daman, and Diu in 1961.
10. Dhar opposed language as the sole criterion; JVP prioritized unity and security but allowed reconsideration where popular demand was overwhelming.
11. Andhra's creation in 1953 proved that strong linguistic mobilization could compel statehood and triggered systematic all-India review by the States Reorganisation Commission.
12. Integration prevented fragmentation and usually relied on negotiation, guarantees, and administrative redesign, but exceptional coercion, contested consent, and unresolved Kashmir claims qualify a purely celebratory account.

Closing perspective

Independence and Partition simultaneously created sovereignty and an administrative-humanitarian emergency. Refugee experience varied by region, class, caste, gender, occupation, and timing; Punjab's rapid exchange differed from Bengal's prolonged migration.

Making the Constitution and Electoral Democracy

The Cabinet Mission Plan fixed an original Constituent Assembly strength of 389: 292 from governors' provinces, 4 from chief commissioners' provinces, and 93 from princely states.

Provincial members were indirectly elected by provincial legislatures through proportional representation with the single transferable vote; princely representatives were nominated.

The demand emerged from the national movement

Indian constitutional thought did not begin in 1946. The 1895 Constitution of India Bill proposed civil liberties; the 1925 Commonwealth of India Bill sought dominion equality; and the 1928 Nehru Report outlined responsible parliamentary government, fundamental rights, federalism, and joint electorates. M.N. Roy advanced the idea of a Constituent Assembly, and Congress adopted the demand in 1934, insisting that Indians frame their own Constitution without external imposition.

British policy conceded the mechanism gradually. The August Offer of 1940 recognized that Indians would frame a new constitution after the war. The Cripps proposals of 1942 envisaged a constitution-making body but allowed provinces to stand outside the Union. The Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 finally created the Assembly through provincial legislatures and princely-

state nomination. The arrangement therefore combined nationalist achievement with colonial constraints.

Composition gave representation without universal election

The planned Assembly had 389 members. British Indian provinces received 292 seats, chief commissioners' provinces four, and princely states 93. Provincial seats were apportioned roughly by population and distributed among General, Muslim, and Sikh categories. Members of each category in provincial legislatures elected their representatives by proportional representation using the single transferable vote. Rulers were to nominate princely-state members through negotiated procedures.

This was not an election by universal adult franchise. Provincial legislatures themselves rested on the restricted electorate of the Government of India Act, 1935, which excluded most adults through property, tax, and educational qualifications. Congress won 208 of the 296 British Indian seats; the Muslim League won 73, including most Muslim seats. The League boycotted the opening and later participated in Pakistan's separate Assembly. Princely representation arrived slowly.

Partition reduced the intended Indian Assembly to 299 members: 229 from provinces and 70 from princely states. Congress dominance became greater, but "Congress" contained liberals, democratic socialists, conservatives, Gandhians, administrators, lawyers, trade unionists, and social reformers. Non-Congress figures such as B.R. Ambedkar and Syama Prasad Mookerjee held important roles. Women numbered only about fifteen at different stages, and direct peasant and worker representation was limited. The Assembly was socially elite and indirectly chosen, yet it included religious minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Parsis, Anglo-Indians, and varied regions.

The legitimacy question therefore requires a balanced answer. The Assembly did not meet the earlier demand for election on adult franchise. Nevertheless, it drew authority from the long nationalist struggle, broad committee work, public discussion, provincial politics, princely accession, and its decision to give the electorate far wider rights than those through which it had been formed.

Leadership and procedure distributed the work

Sachchidananda Sinha served as temporary chairman at the first meeting. Rajendra Prasad became president; H.C. Mookherjee became vice-president; B.N. Rau served as Constitutional Adviser; and S.N. Mukherjee was a crucial draftsman. Rau studied comparative constitutions, advised committees, and prepared an initial integrated draft. Ambedkar defended, revised, and steered the Draft Constitution through detailed debate.

Major committees divided the constitutional problem:

Committee	Chair	Main work
Union Powers Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru	Subjects and powers of the Union.
Union Constitution Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru	Structure of the central government.
Provincial Constitution Committee	Vallabhbhai Patel	Provincial institutions and responsibility.
Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, Tribal and Excluded Areas	Vallabhbhai Patel	Rights, minority safeguards, and protected areas.
Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee	J.B. Kripalani	Detailed rights proposals.
Minorities Sub-Committee	H.C. Mookherjee	Representation and safeguards.

Committee	Chair	Main work
North-East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee	Gopinath Bordoloi	Arrangements for northeastern tribal areas.
Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee	A.V. Thakkar	Safeguards outside Assam.
Drafting Committee	B.R. Ambedkar	Legal text, consistency, amendments, and final drafting.
Steering Committee	Rajendra Prasad	Coordination of Assembly business.

The Assembly worked for 2 years, 11 months, and 18 days across eleven sessions. Thousands of amendments were proposed and about 2,500 were moved or discussed. Committee reports, Rau's draft, public comments, provincial experience, comparative constitutional models, and floor debate altered the result. The process was neither one person's design nor an unstructured collection of foreign provisions.

The Objectives Resolution stated the constitutional destination

Nehru's Objectives Resolution declared India an independent sovereign republic; placed authority in the people; envisaged autonomous units within a Union; promised social, economic, and political justice; equality of status and opportunity; freedoms of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association, and action; minority and tribal safeguards; and commitment to world peace. Adopted on 22 January 1947, it became the philosophical basis of the Preamble.

After Partition, "autonomous units" had to coexist with anxiety about secession, communal violence, princely integration, and administrative weakness. The final design consequently strengthened the Union beyond many earlier federal proposals.

The change was not merely ideological centralism; it was also a response to the experience of Partition and the need to integrate territories. Critics nevertheless warned that emergency provisions and centrally appointed governors could weaken federal autonomy.

Consensus was negotiated, not unanimous harmony

Granville Austin describes consensus as decision by unanimity or near-unanimity after efforts to reconcile positions. Informal Congress forums, committee bargaining, leadership meetings, and Assembly debate narrowed disagreement before final votes. Congress's majority made agreement easier, but members often criticized official drafts and moved amendments across factional lines.

Consensus did not mean absence of deep conflict. Members debated whether India should have a presidential or parliamentary executive; how strong the Union should be; whether villages or individuals should be the basic democratic unit; how to protect minorities without perpetuating communal electorates; what limits could be placed on liberty; whether property should be a fundamental right; which language should be official; and how far courts could review legislation.

Separate electorates were rejected as divisive after Partition. Temporary legislative reservation was retained for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, while Anglo-Indian nomination was provided for a period. Religious minorities received cultural and educational rights rather than separate political electorates. Ambedkar argued that political democracy required social democracy and constitutional methods; he also warned against hero-worship and the contradiction between political equality and social-economic inequality.

Drafting moved through distinct stages

Committee recommendations first defined institutional choices.

B.N. Rau then prepared a draft of 243 articles and 13 schedules in October 1947. The seven-member Drafting Committee, appointed on 29 August, revised the material. Its original members were Ambedkar, Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, K.M. Munshi, Mohammad Saadulla, B.L. Mitter, and D.P. Khaitan; N. Madhava Rau and T.T. Krishnamachari later filled vacancies.

The Draft Constitution published in February 1948 contained 315 articles and eight schedules. Comments from governments, courts, organizations, and individuals prompted revision. Ambedkar introduced the draft on 4 November 1948. First reading addressed general principles; second reading examined clauses and amendments; third reading considered the completed instrument. The final Constitution originally contained 395 articles and eight schedules.

Three dates must not be conflated:

- **Adopted, 26 November 1949:** the Assembly passed the Constitution. Article 394 brought specified provisions into force immediately, including citizenship-related articles, elections, definitions, and transitional provisions.
- **Signed, 24 January 1950:** 284 members authenticated handwritten copies in English and Hindi. The Assembly also adopted “Jana Gana Mana” as the national anthem and recognized “Vande Mataram” with an honoured place.
- **Commenced, 26 January 1950:** the remaining Constitution took effect and India became a republic. The date honoured the 1930 Purna Swaraj declaration.

Rights and Directive Principles pursue different routes

Fundamental Rights in Part III limit public power and are enforceable through courts. They include equality, freedoms, protection

in criminal law and life and personal liberty, freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights, and constitutional remedies. Article 32 empowered the Supreme Court to issue writs; Ambedkar called it the Constitution's heart and soul. Rights were not absolute: the text permits specified restrictions, and preventive detention remained constitutionally possible, reflecting security concerns that troubled civil libertarians.

The abolition of untouchability under Article 17 transformed an anti-caste principle into a direct constitutional command. Equality provisions allowed special measures for disadvantaged groups, while reservations sought substantive representation. Yet constitutional prohibition could not by itself dismantle caste power, land inequality, or social exclusion.

Directive Principles in Part IV are non-justiciable: courts cannot directly compel their implementation. They direct the state toward welfare, livelihood, equal pay, public health, education, legal justice, village panchayats, protection of weaker sections, and a social order informed by justice. Fundamental Rights protect freedom and legal equality; Directive Principles set goals for social transformation. Later political and judicial conflict often concerned how to harmonize them rather than which should destroy the other.

Federalism was designed with a strong Union

The Constitution distributes legislative authority through Union, State, and Concurrent Lists. Residuary powers belong to Parliament. States have elected governments and constitutionally assigned fields, yet the Union controls defence, foreign affairs, currency, interstate communications, and other nationwide subjects. Parliament can alter state boundaries after a prescribed consultative process; governors are appointed by the President; All India Services connect administrative cadres; and emergency provisions can increase central power.

India was called a “Union of States” to reject a right of unilateral secession. Single citizenship and an integrated judiciary distinguished the system from some classical federations. The Supreme Court could protect rights, decide Union–state disputes, and review constitutionality. High Courts retained major writ jurisdiction.

The system is federal because powers and governments derive from the Constitution, not from ordinary Union delegation. It is strongly centralized because the historical setting favoured cohesion, socioeconomic planning, territorial integration, and crisis management. Describing it only as federal or only as unitary misses its variable operation.

Parliamentary government joined responsibility to continuity

The President is constitutional head; the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister exercises executive authority while remaining collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. This parliamentary design drew on Indian legislative experience and British conventions, but written provisions, judicial review, federalism, and universal suffrage transformed it.

The Rajya Sabha represents states and supplies continuity; it is not equal to the Lok Sabha in money bills or government formation. The Lok Sabha controls the political survival of the ministry. An independent judiciary, Comptroller and Auditor General, Public Service Commissions, and Election Commission were intended to restrain partisan or executive misuse. The Constitution combined elected government with professional institutions, producing continuing debate over democratic control and bureaucratic autonomy.

Citizenship addressed Partition without closing the future

Articles 5–11 established citizenship at commencement through domicile, birth, parentage, residence, and rules concerning migration between India and Pakistan. The provisions had to distinguish people who moved before and after 19 July 1948, returnees with permits, and persons of Indian origin abroad. These rules responded to mass displacement but could not settle every family's status or property claim.

The Constitution created single Indian citizenship rather than separate state citizenship. Article 11 empowered Parliament to regulate acquisition and termination, leading to the Citizenship Act, 1955. Citizenship at commencement, later statutory citizenship, refugee rehabilitation, and evacuee-property rights are related but legally distinct. A person's migration history could affect all four without making them interchangeable.

Universal adult suffrage was a revolutionary institutional choice

The Assembly chose adult suffrage without waiting for mass literacy, high income, or gradual local preparation. At commencement the voting age was 21; the Sixty-first Amendment later reduced it to 18. The choice immediately converted subjects differentiated by property and education into equal electors. Women received the vote on the same terms as men, without a separate suffrage struggle after independence.

The decision was both ethical and strategic. Nationalist mobilization had already involved peasants, workers, women, oppressed castes, and regional communities. Denying them a vote after independence would have contradicted popular sovereignty. Elections could also integrate a vast territory by making national and state power answerable through a common procedure.

The Election Commission converted a principle into a roll

Article 324 vested the superintendence, direction, and control of elections in the Election Commission. Established on 25 January 1950, it was initially a single-member body led by Sukumar Sen. Parliament enacted the Representation of the People Act, 1950 for seat allocation, constituencies, and electoral rolls, and the 1951 Act for qualifications, disputes, and conduct.

Administrators had to identify every adult citizen, create constituencies, print rolls, train officials, design symbols, manufacture ballot boxes, and reach mountains, forests, islands, and villages. The electorate exceeded 173 million, and most voters could not read. Separate ballot boxes bearing candidate symbols enabled choice; indelible ink helped prevent repeat voting. Around 224,000 polling stations and roughly two million boxes were prepared.

Women's enrollment exposed the collision between equal citizenship and patriarchal custom. About 2.8 million women were initially omitted after they registered only as someone's wife or mother rather than under their own names. Sen required individual names, sacrificing immediate inclusion for a standardized individual electoral identity. Later revision could restore them, but the episode shows that administrative rules can both assert equality and exclude.

The first election normalized competition

Polling ran in phases from 25 October 1951 to 21 February 1952, adjusted to monsoon, winter, harvest, transport, and local conditions. Elections filled 489 Lok Sabha seats from 401 constituencies; multi-member constituencies included reserved representation. About 45.7 per cent of electors voted. Invalid voting remained limited, rebutting claims that poverty and illiteracy made democracy impossible.

Congress contested 472 seats and won 364 with roughly 45

per cent of votes. First-past-the-post converted a plurality into a commanding seat majority. The Communist Party won 16 seats and became the largest opposition party by seats; Socialists, the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Scheduled Castes Federation, regional groups, and independents also competed. Ambedkar lost in Bombay North Central, while several future national leaders entered Parliament.

Congress dominance did not make the election meaningless. Voters defeated ministers and prominent candidates, opposition governments or strong blocs emerged in some regions, and parties gained lawful routes to organize. The first Lok Sabha was constituted on 2 April 1952. Regular electoral succession, not the inaugural result alone, made the experiment democratic.

Interpretations and debates

- Granville Austin interprets the Constitution as a “seamless web” joining national unity, democracy, and social revolution. The formulation explains why rights, federalism, and Directive Principles must be read together.
- Austin also emphasizes consensus and the influence of Nehru, Patel, Prasad, and Azad. Leadership was decisive, but describing it as an oligarchy should not erase committees, dissents, public comments, and provincial experience.
- Critics call the Assembly unrepresentative because it was indirectly elected under limited franchise and dominated by Congress. A balanced reply accepts the democratic deficit while noting diversity, open debate, nationalist legitimacy, and the immediate grant of universal suffrage.
- Madhav Khosla argues that detailed constitutional codification helped teach democratic rules and made political power intelligible in a society without entrenched democratic institutions. Detail was therefore pedagogic as well as legal.
- Uday Mehta highlights tensions within Indian liberalism, including reliance on a powerful state to reform society. Preventive detention, emergency power, and administrative con-

tinuity support this caution.

- Rohit De shows that ordinary citizens quickly used constitutional language and courts, challenging any view that the Constitution remained only an elite project after 1950.
- Election historians emphasize the first poll as an act of institutional faith. Its stronger significance is practical: administrative design, symbols, rolls, phased polling, and acceptance of defeat made formal equality operational.
- Congress’s seat landslide reflected genuine organizational reach and the amplifying effect of first-past-the-post. It was neither unanimous national consent nor an empty administrative victory.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1934	Congress formally demands a Constituent Assembly	Links constitutional legitimacy to Indian authorship.
May 1946	Cabinet Mission Plan announced	Provides the Assembly’s composition and indirect electoral method.
Jul–Aug 1946	Provincial seats elected	Congress wins 208; Muslim League wins 73, mainly Muslim seats.
9 Dec 1946	Constituent Assembly first meets	Begins constitution-making without League participation.

Date	Event	Why it matters
11 Dec 1946	Rajendra Prasad elected president	Establishes permanent leadership of proceedings.
13 Dec 1946	Objectives Resolution moved	Nehru presents sovereignty, justice, equality, and safeguards.
22 Jan 1947	Objectives Resolution adopted	Supplies the normative basis later reflected in the Preamble.
15 Aug 1947	Assembly becomes sovereign and legislative	It now frames the Constitution and passes ordinary law.
29 Aug 1947	Drafting Committee appointed	Ambedkar leads legal formulation and revision.
Oct 1947	B.N. Rau's draft completed	Converts committee recommendations into a constitutional scheme.
21 Feb 1948	Draft Constitution published	Opens detailed public and institutional scrutiny.
4 Nov 1948	Ambedkar introduces Draft Constitution	Begins general and clause-by-clause Assembly debate.
26 Nov 1949	Constitution adopted	The constitution-making decision is completed; selected provisions begin immediately.
24 Jan 1950	284 members sign Constitution	Authenticates the Hindi and English calligraphed copies.
25 Jan 1950	Election Commission established	Creates the permanent constitutional election authority.
26 Jan 1950	Constitution commences; India becomes a republic	Replaces dominion constitutional authority with the republican framework.

Date	Event	Why it matters
21 Mar 1950	Sukumar Sen assumes office as first CEC	Operational leadership of the first election begins.
1950 and 1951	Representation of the People Acts enacted	Establish electoral rolls, constituencies, qualifications, and poll procedure.
25 Oct 1951–21 Feb 1952	First general election polling	Universal adult suffrage is implemented across difficult terrain and seasons.
2 Apr 1952	First Lok Sabha constituted	Ends the provisional legislature's transitional role.

High-confusion comparisons

Pair	First element	Second element	Exam trap
Original vs post-Partition Assembly	389 intended members	299 intended for India	Do not use both totals for the same date.
Indirect election vs adult franchise	Assembly chosen by limited-franchise provincial legislatures	First general election based on adult citizenship	The constitution-makers were not directly elected by all adults.
Adopted vs signed vs commenced	26 Nov 1949	24 Jan and 26 Jan 1950	Three dates mark different legal acts.
Fundamental Rights vs Directive Principles	Justiciable limits and entitlements	Non-justiciable governance goals	Non-justiciable does not mean politically irrelevant.
Federal vs unitary	Constitutionally divided powers and state governments	Strong Union and emergency centralization	India combines federal structure with centralizing features.

Pair	First element	Second element	Exam trap
President vs Prime Minister	Constitutional head	Head of Council exercising political executive power	Parliamentary, not presidential, government.
Reservation vs separate electorates	Reserved candidates in a common electorate	Community voters elect separate community representatives	Constitution rejected communal separate electorates.
Vote share vs seat share, 1951–52	Congress about 45 per cent votes	364 of 489 seats	First-past-the-post magnified the plurality.

Self-test

1. How was the original 389-member Constituent Assembly composed and elected?
2. Why did the intended Indian membership fall to 299 after Partition?
3. What were the main democratic limitations and strengths of the Assembly's composition?
4. What did the Objectives Resolution contribute to the final Constitution?
5. Distinguish the roles of B.N. Rau and the Drafting Committee.
6. Name four major Assembly committees and their chairs.
7. What does consensus mean in the Assembly context, and what does it not mean?
8. Distinguish adoption, signature, and commencement of the Constitution.
9. How do Fundamental Rights differ from Directive Principles?
10. Why is India described as federal with a strong Union?
11. What problems did the Election Commission confront before the 1951–52 election?
12. Why was the first general election historically significant despite Congress dominance?

Answer key

1. Provinces elected 292 and chief commissioners' provinces four through limited-franchise legislatures using community categories and proportional representation; rulers nominated 93 princely representatives.
2. Seats belonging to territories that formed Pakistan left the Indian body, producing an intended 229 provincial and 70 princely members.
3. It was indirectly elected, socially elite, Congress-dominated, and weak in women's and mass representation; it was also regionally and ideologically varied, publicly deliberative, and committed to universal suffrage.
4. It declared popular sovereignty, republicanism, justice, equality, freedoms, minority and tribal safeguards, and international peace, forming the normative foundation of the Preamble.
5. Rau advised committees and prepared the initial integrated draft; Ambedkar's Drafting Committee revised, legally formulated, and defended the text through debate.
6. Union Powers and Union Constitution: Nehru; Provincial Constitution and Advisory: Patel; Drafting: Ambedkar; Steering: Rajendra Prasad. Any four with chairs earn full credit.
7. It means deliberate efforts to reach unanimity or near-unanimity through negotiation; it does not mean that conflict, dissent, voting, or leadership pressure disappeared.
8. The Assembly adopted the text on 26 November 1949; 284 members signed it on 24 January 1950; most provisions commenced and the republic began on 26 January 1950.
9. Rights are judicially enforceable restraints and entitlements; Directive Principles are non-justiciable instructions guiding social and economic governance.
10. States and the Union derive divided powers from the Constitution, but residuary powers, emergency provisions, all-India institutions, boundary power, and major national subjects strengthen the Union.
11. It had to enroll over 173 million people, establish individual

identity, reach difficult terrain, manage illiteracy through symbols, train staff, delimit constituencies, and supply stations and ballot boxes.

12. It operationalized equal citizenship on an unprecedented scale, enabled real opposition and candidate defeat, and established competitive elections as the legitimate path to governmental power.

Closing perspective

Constitution-making grew from nationalist constitutional thought but used a Cabinet Mission mechanism constrained by indirect election and limited franchise. The Assembly's original strength was 389; after Partition the intended Indian total was 299.

The Nehruvian State

Nehru served as prime minister from 15 August 1947 until his death on 27 May 1964 and repeatedly secured electoral mandates.

The Planning Commission was created in March 1950; Five-Year Plans allocated public investment without abolishing markets or private property.

Democratic politics and Congress dominance

India sustained universal adult franchise, regular elections, parliamentary opposition, an independent judiciary and a politically subordinate military despite poverty and Partition. Congress dominated because it inherited the national movement's legitimacy, contained diverse ideological factions and possessed unmatched local organisation. Dominance was competitive rather than a legal one-party system.

Nehru was powerful but operated through cabinet, party, Parliament, chief ministers and courts. He defended civil liberties and electoral competition, yet preventive detention, colonial police practices and central interventions remained. The dismissal of Kerala's elected ministry in 1959 revealed how Article 356 could turn political conflict into central displacement of a state government.

The era preserved administrative continuity for stability. The Indian Administrative Service replaced the ICS as an all-

India cadre; planning enlarged bureaucracy. Continuity enabled coordination but also retained hierarchy, procedural delay and distance from citizens.

Why planning and a mixed economy?

At independence, India had low income, weak infrastructure, scarce capital, food insecurity and a narrow industrial base. Private capital could not quickly finance steel, power, machine-building and large irrigation. Colonial dependence also made self-reliance a political goal.

Planning did not mean a Soviet command economy. Agriculture, small production, trade and much consumer industry remained private. The state allocated investment, licensed capacity, controlled foreign exchange and built basic industries. This **mixed economy** combined:

- public ownership in infrastructure and strategic heavy industry;
- regulated private enterprise in many manufacturing and commercial sectors;
- cooperatives and small-scale reservations;
- deficit finance, taxation and external assistance;
- democratic legislation rather than collectivisation.

First and Second Plans

The First Plan responded to refugee rehabilitation, food shortages and inflation. It invested in irrigation, power, agriculture, transport and community development. Good harvests helped performance, so success cannot be credited to policy alone.

The Second Plan, associated with statistician P.C. Mahalanobis, prioritised capital-goods industries. Steel plants at Bhilai, Rourkela and Durgapur, machine-building and power projects would enlarge future productive capacity. The logic

was intertemporal: sacrifice some immediate consumption to reduce dependence on imported machinery.

This achieved a diversified industrial base and engineering capacity. It also produced costs:

- agriculture received relatively less attention before food constraints returned;
- capital-intensive industry created fewer jobs than labour-intensive alternatives might have;
- licensing encouraged delay, rent-seeking and protection from competition;
- public enterprises varied widely in efficiency;
- foreign exchange shortages remained chronic.

The Third Plan (1961–66) sought self-sustaining growth, agriculture and defence, but the China war, later Pakistan war, drought and inflation disrupted it beyond Nehru's lifetime.

Dams, displacement and the development state

Bhakra-Nangal, Hirakud, Damodar Valley and other multipurpose projects promised irrigation, electricity, flood control and industrial power. Nehru called large dams temples of modern India, expressing faith in collective engineering.

Benefits were substantial but uneven. Reservoirs displaced villagers, often Adivasis, while compensation and rehabilitation were weak. Command areas received water unequally, ecological effects were undercounted and central expertise frequently overrode local knowledge. A balanced answer recognises infrastructure creation and distributive cost together.

Land reform: major legal change, incomplete agrarian transformation

Land reform had three principal components:

1. abolition of zamindars and other intermediaries;
2. tenancy regulation, rent control and security;
3. ceilings and redistribution of surplus holdings.

Intermediary abolition was the clearest achievement. Millions of tenants came into direct relationship with the state, compensation reduced litigation conflict and politically powerful zamindari rights disappeared. Courts upheld reform after constitutional amendments protected agrarian legislation.

Tenancy and ceiling results varied. Landowners evicted tenants before laws, recorded cultivation as personal, divided holdings among relatives or used exemptions. Weak records and landlord influence over local officials undermined implementation. Kerala and parts of Kashmir later achieved deeper restructuring; many northern and eastern regions did not.

Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement from 1951 sought voluntary land gifts. It mobilised a moral critique and obtained pledges, but much land was poor, disputed or never distributed. Voluntary donation could not substitute for enforceable reform.

Community development and Panchayati Raj

The Community Development Programme launched in 1952 sought coordinated agriculture, roads, health, education and local initiative through development blocks. It expanded rural administration but became official-driven; better-connected villagers often captured benefits.

The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee recommended democratic decentralisation through village panchayat, block-level panchayat samiti and district zila parishad. Rajasthan inaugurated Panchayati Raj in 1959, followed by other states. Elections and powers were uneven, finances weak and state bureaucracy dominant. The programme established a model later strengthened constitutionally, but did not yet guarantee autonomous local government.

Science, technology and higher education

Nehru treated scientific temper as a civic and developmental value. Homi J. Bhabha led atomic-energy development; Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar helped build CSIR laboratories. The Atomic Energy Commission, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, IITs, AIIMS, University Grants Commission and agricultural research institutions created long-term capacity.

The Scientific Policy Resolution of 1958 committed government to cultivating science and technical personnel. Space research began institutionally near the end of the era under Vikram Sarabhai. Investments later supported nuclear energy, pharmaceuticals, engineering, the Green Revolution and space capability.

The bias towards elite higher institutions was also clear. Primary education remained underfunded, dropout and gender gaps high, and mass literacy progressed slowly. Excellence at the apex coexisted with weak universal foundations.

Social reform, caste and gender

The Constitution outlawed untouchability, enabled affirmative action and protected equality. Reservations in legislatures, education and public employment for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes sought substantive access, though discrimination and violence persisted.

The Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, and Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1955–56 reformed marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption. They expanded women's legal capacity but retained inequalities, applied to legally defined Hindu communities rather than all citizens, and did not overcome patriarchal practice. The original comprehensive Hindu Code Bill had been weakened after conservative opposition and Ambedkar's resignation from the cabinet in 1951.

Nehru resisted immediate imposition of a uniform civil code, balancing reform with minority confidence. Social transformation remained gradualist. Laws provided tools, but land, education, caste power and household dependence shaped actual freedom.

Language and federal accommodation

The Constitution made Hindi the Union's official language with continued English for a transition, while protecting regional languages. Nehru rejected coercive Hindi imposition and later assured non-Hindi regions that English would continue as long as needed. The Official Languages Act of 1963 provided continuing use, though conflict persisted.

Congress had earlier organised provincial committees linguistically but delayed linguistic states after Partition, fearing fragmentation. Potti Sriramulu's death after a fast for a Telugu state produced mass unrest; Andhra State was formed in 1953. The Fazl Ali Commission considered language, administrative viability, economy and national unity. The 1956 Act reorganised state boundaries extensively.

Bombay's bilingual state was divided into Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960 after mass movements. Nagaland became a state in 1963 amid insurgency and negotiation. Linguistic federalism did not Balkanise India; it gave regional identities constitutional territory and reduced the incentive to seek sovereignty. Borders and minorities within linguistic states still generated conflict.

Opposition and federal limits

Communists, Socialists, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Swatantra Party and regional parties challenged Congress from different directions. The Communist victory in Kerala in 1957 demonstrated that opposition could gain office electorally. Land and education reforms provoked organised resistance; the "Liberation Strug-

gle” combined church, Nair, Congress and other interests. Central dismissal in 1959 was constitutionally authorised but politically partisan, weakening Nehru’s democratic record.

In Kashmir, special autonomy under Article 370 coexisted with increasing central intervention. Sheikh Abdullah’s dismissal and arrest in 1953 deepened alienation. Integration and democracy did not always reinforce one another.

Non-alignment: autonomy, not passivity

The Cold War divided much of the world into US- and Soviet-led military blocs. India needed aid from both, opposed colonialism and wished to avoid military dependence. Non-alignment meant judging issues independently and resisting bloc discipline. It was distinct from wartime neutrality and did not require equal criticism of both powers in every crisis.

Its principles included:

- sovereign equality and non-interference;
- opposition to colonialism, apartheid and racial domination;
- peaceful coexistence and negotiated disarmament;
- support for decolonising Asian and African states;
- freedom to receive economic and technical assistance from several partners.

India helped convene the Asian Relations Conference, mediated in Korea and Indochina, participated at Bandung in 1955 and joined Nasser, Tito, Nkrumah and Sukarno in developing non-aligned cooperation. The first summit met at Belgrade in 1961.

Non-alignment was active diplomacy, but moral language did not remove national interest. India criticised the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt in 1956 more sharply than the Soviet suppression of Hungary, attracting charges of inconsistency. Dependence on Soviet diplomatic and military support grew after Western alliances with Pakistan and the China war, yet India did not become a treaty ally.

Panchsheel and China

India recognised the People's Republic of China early and supported its UN representation. The 1954 agreement on trade with the Tibet region stated five principles: mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

But the border had never been jointly demarcated. India treated the McMahon Line in the east and its claim to Aksai Chin in the west as settled; China disputed them and built a road through Aksai Chin connecting Xinjiang and Tibet. The 1959 Tibetan uprising and India's asylum to the Dalai Lama intensified suspicion. Border clashes occurred at Longju and Kongka Pass.

Negotiations between Nehru and Zhou Enlai failed. India's "Forward Policy" established posts in disputed areas, sometimes beyond sustainable supply, while intelligence underestimated China's response. In October 1962, Chinese forces attacked in Ladakh and across the eastern frontier, overran Indian positions and declared a unilateral ceasefire in November.

The defeat resulted from unresolved boundaries, competing Tibet policies, failed diplomacy, poor civil-military coordination, inadequate equipment and logistics, and erroneous assumptions about Chinese intentions. It should not be explained by "betrayal" alone. China withdrew behind the McMahon Line in the east but retained control of Aksai Chin.

Pakistan, Kashmir and pragmatic cooperation

The first Kashmir war ended with a UN-backed ceasefire from 1 January 1949, leaving the region divided. India insisted accession was legally complete and increasingly resisted external mediation; Pakistan emphasised self-determination and the promised plebiscite. Militarisation and incompatible state-building projects hardened positions.

The Liaquat-Nehru Pact of 1950 sought minority protection

amid migration and violence. Pakistan entered US-led security arrangements, which India saw as importing Cold War arms into the subcontinent. Yet the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, brokered by the World Bank, allocated the eastern rivers mainly to India and western rivers mainly to Pakistan with transition and financing. Its survival demonstrates that functional cooperation remained possible within rivalry.

Achievements and limits

The Nehru era embedded elections, civilian rule, federal accommodation, planning and scientific institutions. It diversified industry, expanded irrigation and higher education, dismantled many landlord intermediaries and protected diplomatic autonomy.

Growth was real but insufficient for rapid poverty removal. Population growth, low productivity, unequal assets, weak schools and public health limited welfare. Bureaucratic licensing acquired rigidities; land reform stopped short of broad redistribution; caste and gender hierarchy endured. Centralisation sat uneasily with federal and local democracy.

The fairest verdict is institutional rather than heroic or dismissive. Nehru did not create every institution personally, and outcomes depended on colleagues, states, civil servants, scientists and social movements. The era built capabilities and democratic conventions that survived major shocks, while leaving agrarian, educational and administrative deficits for successors.

Interpretations and debates

Nehruvian consensus or contested settlement?

Democracy, secularism, development and sovereignty had broad legitimacy, but their meanings were disputed by Gandhian, socialist, capitalist, caste, regional and religious forces. "Consen-

sus” describes institutional acceptance better than agreement over policy or distribution.

Planning: foundation or constraint?

The public sector created steel, power, research and engineering where private capital was inadequate. Licensing and protection later encouraged inefficiency and rent-seeking. Both arose from the same capacity-building strategy; later rigidities should not erase the initial scarcity problem, nor should initial need excuse permanent control.

Land reform: success or failure?

Intermediary abolition was transformative legal change. Redistribution, tenant protection and ceiling enforcement were much weaker and regionally varied. A binary verdict misses the distinction among components.

Non-alignment: idealism or realism?

Peace and decolonisation were genuine principles, while strategic autonomy, aid diversification and security were practical interests. Non-alignment worked because moral and realist purposes reinforced each other, though inconsistent responses exposed selective judgement.

China war and policy responsibility

Chinese force caused the immediate war, but Indian intelligence, logistics, Forward Policy posts and diplomatic assumptions contributed to defeat. Tibet, maps and competing security perceptions mattered. A nuanced account rejects both total exoneration and a single “betrayal” narrative.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
1948	Industrial Policy Resolution; Atomic Energy Commission	Defines mixed-economy direction and scientific state capacity.
1949	Kashmir ceasefire line established	Stops first India-Pakistan war without resolving sovereignty.
1950	Planning Commission; Liaquat-Nehru Pact	Institutionalises planning and seeks minority security across borders.
1951–52	First general election	Establishes universal adult franchise as practical democratic rule.
1951–56	First Five-Year Plan	Concentrates on agriculture, irrigation, refugees and stability.
1951	IIT Kharagpur established	Begins a network for advanced technical education.
1952	Community Development Programme	Attempts integrated rural development through administration and participation.
Oct–Dec 1952	Potti Sriramulu fasts and dies	Mass agitation forces reconsideration of linguistic statehood.
Oct 1953	Andhra State formed	First major linguistic state after independence.

Date	Event	Why it matters
1953–55	States Reorganisation Commission	Fazl Ali Commission balances language with administrative and national considerations.
Apr 1954	India-China agreement states Panchsheel	Formalises principles of peaceful coexistence over Tibet-related trade.
1955	Bandung Conference; Hindu Marriage Act	Connects Afro-Asian diplomacy to domestic social reform.
1956	States Reorganisation Act; Industrial Policy Resolution; AIIMS	Federal, economic and scientific institutions deepen simultaneously.
1956–61	Second Five-Year Plan	Mahalanobis strategy prioritises capital goods and heavy industry.
1957	Communist government elected in Kerala	Demonstrates electoral alternation within the constitutional system.
1957	Balwant Rai Mehta Committee reports	Recommends three-tier Panchayati Raj for democratic decentralisation.
1958	Scientific Policy Resolution	Commits the state to science and trained personnel for development.
1959	Dalai Lama enters India; Kerala ministry dismissed	China relations deteriorate while Article 356 controversy grows.
1960	Bombay State divided; Indus Waters Treaty	Linguistic accommodation and pragmatic India-Pakistan cooperation.

Date	Event	Why it matters
Dec 1961	Goa liberated by Indian military action	Ends Portuguese colonial rule after failed negotiation.
Sep 1961	First Non-Aligned summit at Belgrade	Gives strategic autonomy a multilateral platform.
Oct–Nov 1962	Sino-Indian War	Exposes intelligence, diplomatic and military failures; damages Nehru's authority.
1963	Nagaland becomes a state	Federal accommodation responds to a distinct insurgent and ethnic history.
27 May 1964	Nehru dies	Ends the republic's formative prime-ministerial era.

High-confusion comparisons

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Planning vs command economy	Public allocation and licensing vs abolition of markets/private ownership	India retained a mixed economy.
First vs Second Plan	Agriculture and stability vs capital goods and heavy industry	Recovery then structural industry.
Zamindari abolition vs ceiling reform	Remove intermediaries vs redistribute large holdings	First more successful.
Community development vs Panchayati Raj	Administrative rural programme vs elected decentralisation	Bureaucracy versus representative tier.
Hindi official language vs national language	Constitutional Union language vs exclusive national identity	Constitution did not declare one national language.

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Linguistic state vs linguistic nation	Federal administrative unit vs sovereign claim	Reorganisation integrated diversity.
Non-alignment vs neutrality	Independent active judgement vs abstention in war	Policy autonomy, not silence.
Panchsheel vs border settlement	Conduct principles vs agreed boundary	Norms did not demarcate territory.
Aksai Chin vs NEFA	Western sector held by China vs eastern sector largely returned after war	Two distinct theatres.
Democracy vs Congress dominance	Competitive constitutional system vs repeated victory by one broad party	Dominance was not legal monopoly.

Self-test

1. Why did India adopt planning without abolishing private enterprise?
2. Compare the priorities and limitations of the First and Second Plans.
3. Distinguish the three major components of land reform.
4. Why did Community Development lead to demands for Panchayati Raj?
5. Name five major science or education institutions/policies and one limitation.
6. What did the Hindu law reforms change, and what did they leave unresolved?
7. Explain how linguistic reorganisation strengthened rather than dissolved India.
8. Why is Kerala's 1959 dismissal a democratic controversy?
9. Define non-alignment and distinguish it from neutrality.
10. Give one success and one failure in relations with each Pakistan and China.
11. Name five causes of India's 1962 military defeat.

12. Give a balanced assessment of the Nehru era.

Answer key

1. Scarce private capital required state investment in infrastructure and heavy industry, while democratic politics and existing enterprise favoured a mixed economy.
2. First: agriculture/stability, aided by harvests. Second: heavy industry/capital goods, but strained jobs, agriculture and foreign exchange.
3. Abolition of intermediaries, tenancy/rent protection, and ceilings with redistribution; their outcomes differed sharply.
4. Official-driven programmes lacked participation, so elected village, block and district bodies were proposed for accountability and local initiative.
5. IITs, UGC, AIIMS, Atomic Energy Commission, CSIR laboratories, TIFR or Scientific Policy Resolution; elite growth outpaced universal education.
6. Marriage, divorce, succession, adoption and guardianship changed; patriarchal practice, unequal personal laws and the uniform-code question remained.
7. Language received state-level recognition inside the Union, reducing the pressure to convert cultural identity into sovereign separation.
8. Article 356 was used against an elected opposition ministry amid partisan mobilisation, weakening federal restraint.
9. Independent, issue-based policy outside military blocs; neutrality means abstention in a particular war rather than continuing strategic autonomy.
10. Pakistan: Indus treaty success, Kashmir failure. China: early cooperation/Panchsheel, border war failure.
11. Unresolved border, Tibet crisis, intelligence error, weak logistics/equipment, civil-military dysfunction, Forward Policy exposure or Chinese preparation; any five.
12. It consolidated democracy, industry, science, federalism and autonomy, but poverty, unequal land/education outcomes and centralised bureaucracy persisted.

Closing perspective

The point of *The Nehruvian State* is not a date list. It is an explanation of how institutions, interests, and political choices changed the field for what followed.

Part II

Democracy, development, and political change

From Shastri to the Janata Interlude

Lal Bahadur Shastri became prime minister in June 1964 after a consensual Congress succession managed by K. Kamaraj.

His “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan” slogan connected military defence to food self-reliance during simultaneous war and drought.

Shastri's succession and governing style

Nehru left no designated successor. K. Kamaraj and senior Congress leaders built consensus around Shastri over Morarji Desai. Shastri had ministerial experience, a reputation for integrity and fewer factional enemies. His selection shows the power of the Congress organisation before prime-ministerial centralisation.

Shastri used a smaller profile than Nehru but asserted authority gradually. Food shortage, language agitation and war tested a government initially seen as transitional. He supported both agricultural productivity and defence, condensed in “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan.”

Food crisis and the Green Revolution context

Back-to-back droughts in 1965–66, population growth and stagnant yields forced large grain imports under US PL-480 arrange-

ments. Dependence exposed India to diplomatic leverage and made self-sufficiency urgent.

The new agricultural strategy did not consist of seed alone. It combined:

- high-yielding wheat and rice varieties;
- reliable irrigation and groundwater pumping;
- chemical fertiliser and pesticides;
- institutional credit and rural electrification;
- minimum support prices and public procurement;
- agricultural extension and research.

Food Corporation of India procurement and the Agricultural Prices Commission's support-price recommendations reduced market risk. Agriculture minister C. Subramaniam, scientist M.S. Swaminathan, international research and innovative farmers all contributed; attributing the transformation to one leader is misleading.

The first gains were strongest in irrigated Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh and among farmers able to purchase inputs. Foodgrain security improved and dependence fell, but regional disparity, tenant exclusion, mechanisation effects, fertiliser dependence, groundwater depletion and monoculture emerged. The Green Revolution was a productivity achievement with distributive and ecological costs.

The 1965 war

After fighting in the Rann of Kutch, Pakistan launched **Operation Gibraltar** in August to infiltrate forces into Jammu and Kashmir and stimulate an uprising. The expected popular revolt did not occur. India crossed the ceasefire line; Pakistan launched **Operation Grand Slam** near Akhnoor; India then crossed the international border towards Lahore and Sialkot.

The war involved major armour battles and heavy casualties but produced no decisive territorial settlement. China issued warnings but did not intervene directly. A UN-backed ceasefire

took effect on 23 September.

At Tashkent, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin mediated between Shastri and Ayub Khan. Both agreed to withdraw to prewar positions and restore relations. Indian critics asked why battle-field gains were returned; Pakistani critics saw failure to secure Kashmir. Shastri died hours later from a reported heart attack. Tashkent ended fighting, not the underlying dispute.

Indira's initial vulnerability, 1966--67

Senior Congress figures, often called the Syndicate, supported Indira Gandhi over Morarji Desai partly because they expected a manageable prime minister. Her first years were constrained by drought, grain imports, inflation, foreign-exchange shortage and unrest.

The 1966 devaluation of the rupee accompanied attempts to obtain external assistance and liberalise trade. Expected aid was inadequate and export response slow; prices and nationalist criticism made it politically damaging. The episode reinforced her desire for autonomous political authority and more visibly redistributive measures.

In 1967 Congress retained a reduced Lok Sabha majority but lost power in multiple states. Defections and unstable **Samyukta Vidhayak Dal** coalitions marked the end of seamless Congress dominance. Social change, regional parties, peasant castes, opposition alliances and dissatisfaction all mattered; it was not merely a personal defeat.

Congress split and populist reorientation

Conflict with the Syndicate combined ideology and power. Indira supported bank nationalisation in July 1969, arguing that credit should serve agriculture, small industry and social priorities rather than concentrated business interests. Nationalisation

widened branch expansion and later priority lending, though political direction also created inefficiency and bad loans.

During the presidential election after Zakir Husain's death, the organisation nominated N. Sanjiva Reddy. Indira encouraged a "conscience vote" and V.V. Giri won. Congress expelled her; the party divided into Congress (Organisation) and Congress (Requisitionists), later Congress (R).

The split changed political structure. Indira appealed over party intermediaries directly to voters through "Garibi Hatao." Left support helped her minority government. The abolition of princely privy purses, completed through the Twenty-Sixth Amendment in 1971 after an earlier parliamentary and judicial contest, reinforced the egalitarian image.

Populism widened welfare language but centralised candidate selection and authority around the prime minister. State leaders and internal party elections lost autonomy. Ideological radicalism and organisational concentration advanced together.

1971 election and Bangladesh crisis

Congress (R) called an early election in 1971 and won a large majority on poverty removal, while the opposition "Grand Alliance" focused on removing Indira. The mandate strengthened the prime minister before the East Pakistan crisis.

In Pakistan's 1970 election, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League won a parliamentary majority based in East Pakistan. The military regime and West Pakistani leadership failed to transfer power. On 25 March 1971, the army launched **Operation Searchlight**, killing civilians, targeting intellectuals and minorities and producing mass displacement. Approximately ten million refugees entered India, imposing humanitarian and fiscal pressure.

India supported the Mukti Bahini, campaigned diplomatically and signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union in August. This was not abandonment of non-alignment as a formal military alliance; it was a strategic

response to US-China-Pakistan alignment and risk of Chinese pressure.

Pakistan attacked Indian airfields in the west on 3 December. India formally entered war on both fronts. Indian and Bangladeshi forces advanced rapidly in the east; Lieutenant-General A.A.K. Niazi surrendered at Dhaka on 16 December. Geography, Bengali resistance, Pakistani political failure and India's military planning jointly explain victory.

The war created Bangladesh and transformed South Asian power. It did not permanently settle Kashmir or India-Pakistan rivalry. In the west, India did not seek indefinite occupation of large Pakistani territory.

Simla and postwar authority

The Simla Agreement of July 1972 committed Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to bilateral resolution, converted the ceasefire line into the Line of Control and provided for withdrawal. Critics argue India failed to exchange its strong position and prisoners of war for a final Kashmir settlement. Defenders note Bhutto's fragile authority, the value of bilateral rules and uncertainty that imposed terms would endure.

Victory gave Indira exceptional prestige. The same concentration that enabled decisive command weakened cabinet, party and federal checks. Political legitimacy became increasingly personal.

Economic crisis and protest, 1973--75

The 1973 oil shock, inflation, food stress, unemployment and corruption eroded the postwar mandate. Drought and global prices combined with domestic fiscal pressure. Industrial conflict grew.

The 1974 all-India railway strike led by George Fernandes involved a huge workforce and demands over pay and conditions.

Government arrested leaders, dismissed workers and used coercion. In Gujarat, the Nav Nirman movement attacked price rise and corruption, leading to dissolution of the assembly. In Bihar, students invited Jayaprakash Narayan to lead a broader movement.

JP called for **Sampoorna Kranti** or Total Revolution: non-violent transformation of politics, economy, education and social relations. Opposition parties joined, while Congress accused the movement of bypassing elections. At a 1975 rally, JP asked police and armed forces not to obey illegal orders; Indira treated this as incitement, whereas supporters framed it as constitutional conscience.

Legal crisis and proclamation of Emergency

On 12 June 1975, the Allahabad High Court found Indira guilty of electoral malpractice involving government officials in her 1971 campaign, invalidated her election and barred her temporarily. It did not convict her of general corruption. On 24 June, the Supreme Court granted a conditional stay allowing her to remain prime minister but limiting parliamentary participation pending appeal.

On the night of 25–26 June, President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed proclaimed Emergency under Article 352 on the ground of “internal disturbance,” acting on cabinet advice formalised within an executive process dominated by Indira. Opposition leaders were arrested, electricity to newspaper offices cut and censorship imposed.

The proclamation drew on real unrest but was not an unavoidable response. Its immediate timing protected political authority from legal and popular challenge. India already had an external Emergency continuing from 1971; the new internal Emergency transformed domestic politics.

How Emergency rule worked

Emergency suspended the practical protection of fundamental freedoms. The Maintenance of Internal Security Act enabled detention without ordinary trial. Congress organisations, bureaucracy and police became more subordinate to the prime minister's office; state governments were reshaped; strikes and public dissent were suppressed.

The Supreme Court's **ADM Jabalpur** judgement in 1976 held by majority that courts could not enforce habeas corpus during the suspension, a severe judicial failure later repudiated. The Thirty-Eighth, Thirty-Ninth and Forty-Second Amendments insulated executive action, protected the prime minister's election, extended legislative terms and reduced judicial constraints. The Forty-Second also inserted "socialist," "secular" and "integrity" into the Preamble and Fundamental Duties, showing that durable constitutional language could coexist with authoritarian purpose.

Government promoted a Twenty-Point Programme of prices, land, debt relief and production. Administrative speed and strike reduction impressed some observers, but fear distorted reporting and accountability. Sanjay Gandhi, holding no elected office, developed a Five-Point Programme and exercised informal influence.

The most abusive campaigns were:

- coercive sterilisation, especially in 1976–77, driven by quotas, police pressure and denial of services;
- slum clearance and demolition, including Turkman Gate in Delhi;
- censorship and compelled praise;
- detention, torture and harassment of opponents.

Coercion varied by state and official. Northern India experienced especially intense sterilisation pressure. The Emergency should not be reduced to one individual, but Sanjay's network and weakened institutions magnified it.

Why Emergency ended and the 1977 verdict

Indira unexpectedly announced elections in January 1977, released many leaders and relaxed censorship. Possible motives include belief in favourable reports, desire for legitimacy, international criticism and confidence that opposition remained divided.

Opposition groups formed the Janata Party, bringing together Congress (O), Bharatiya Lok Dal, Socialists and Bharatiya Jana Sangh; Jagjivan Ram's Congress for Democracy joined the anti-Emergency coalition. North India voted heavily against Congress, influenced by detention and sterilisation. Congress performed better in the south, where coercion had often been less intense.

The defeat was a democratic landmark. Institutions had been damaged, but voters removed the incumbent peacefully. The result demonstrates both the fragility and resilience of Indian democracy.

Janata government: restoration and fragmentation

Morarji Desai became prime minister in March 1977. The government released prisoners, ended censorship, appointed the Shah Commission to investigate abuses and restored federal and civil liberties. It also dismissed Congress state governments and called elections, repeating a centralising practice it criticised.

The Forty-Fourth Amendment made Emergency harder to proclaim:

- “internal disturbance” was replaced by “armed rebellion”;
- written cabinet advice became necessary;
- parliamentary approval and periodic renewal were tightened;
- Articles 20 and 21 could not be suspended;

- Lok Sabha gained a revocation mechanism.

Janata was a coalition of anti-Congress forces without a settled common programme. Conflict among Desai, Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram, the Jana Sangh “dual membership” issue involving RSS association, economic difficulties and factional ambition broke unity. Desai resigned in July 1979. Charan Singh became prime minister with promised Congress support, but Indira withdrew it before he faced Parliament. Elections followed.

Janata failed as a stable government but disproved the permanence of Congress rule and repaired constitutional safeguards. Government instability is not equivalent to democratic failure.

Indira's return, 1980--84

Congress (I) won decisively in January 1980 by presenting Janata as chaotic. Sanjay Gandhi died in an aircraft crash in June; Rajiv Gandhi then entered politics. The second administration remained highly centralised, with frequent changes of chief ministers and weakened state party organisations.

Economic policy mixed public-sector continuity with selective liberalisation, technology imports and support for business growth. The 1982 Asian Games showcased infrastructure and state capacity. The 1974 Pokhran test had already established a nuclear option, officially described as a peaceful nuclear explosion; strategic ambiguity continued.

Regional movements in Assam, Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere challenged central authority. The Assam agitation over migration and electoral rolls involved mass mobilisation and horrific violence, including the Nellie massacre of 1983. Centralised responses often alternated negotiation, delay and coercion.

Punjab crisis: layered causation

Punjab's crisis cannot be explained by religion alone or by one leader. Important elements included:

- disputes over Chandigarh, river waters and federal power;
- the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973 and Akali demands for greater autonomy;
- changes in agrarian society after Green Revolution growth;
- competition between Congress and Akali Dal;
- radical preaching and armed networks;
- police violence, criminality and Pakistan-linked assistance;
- central tactics that weakened moderate negotiation.

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale gained prominence through the Damdami Taksal and Sikh religious politics. Congress figures initially saw his rise as useful against Akali leadership, though the degree of deliberate "creation" is debated. Violence escalated after the 1978 Sikh-Nirankari clash, the 1981 killing of editor Lala Jagat Narain and subsequent confrontations.

The Akali Dal launched the Dharam Yudh Morcha in 1982 around autonomy and other demands. Militants occupied and fortified positions in the Golden Temple complex; assassinations, intimidation and communal attacks expanded. Negotiations repeatedly failed amid mistrust and political calculation.

Operation Blue Star and assassination

In early June 1984, the army entered the Golden Temple complex to remove Bhindranwale, former Major-General Shabeg Singh and armed followers. Fighting damaged the Akal Takht and killed militants, soldiers and civilians. Official and independent casualty estimates differ; the timing near a major Sikh observance increased civilian presence and lasting trauma.

The state faced a real armed challenge in a sacred complex, but questions remain over delayed negotiation, earlier political manipulation, intelligence, timing and use of heavy force. Blue

Star weakened militant infrastructure immediately while deepening Sikh alienation worldwide.

On 31 October 1984, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by bodyguards Beant Singh and Satwant Singh in retaliation. Organised anti-Sikh violence followed in Delhi and other cities; political complicity and police failure made it more than spontaneous grief. Although succession belongs to the next phase, the violence is essential to assessing the human cost of centralised crisis management.

Interpretations and debates

Green Revolution: success or inequality?

It ended chronic dependence and raised yields, but required land, water, credit and procurement access. Regional and class concentration were built into early adoption. Productivity success and distributive-ecological criticism are both valid.

1971: Indira's war or Bangladesh's liberation?

Indian military and diplomatic action was decisive, but Bengali electoral victory, Pakistani repression, refugee crisis and Mukti Bahini resistance created the conflict. A leader-centred account erases Bangladesh's agency.

Was Emergency caused by disorder or personal survival?

Inflation, strikes and mass opposition were real. Constitutional government retained legal tools, elections and judicial process. The timing after the court judgement and immediate arrests show personal and regime survival were central. Structural unrest explains context, not necessity.

Did Emergency strengthen the state?

Decision speed and selected economic indicators improved, but censorship corrupted information, fear weakened accountability and coercion harmed citizens. Administrative obedience is not the same as institutional capacity.

Was Janata a failure?

It failed to maintain coalition government and repeated some partisan practices. It restored liberty, investigated abuse, amended the Constitution and proved alternation possible. Governmental instability coexisted with democratic achievement.

Punjab: separatism or federal crisis?

Militant separatism became real, but Akali federal demands, agrarian change, party competition, policing and central strategy preceded and interacted with it. Treating all Sikh or Akali politics as separatist is inaccurate; ignoring armed coercion is equally misleading.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
9 Jun 1964	Shastri becomes prime minister	Demonstrates managed succession after Nehru.
Apr–Jun 1965	Rann of Kutch clashes	Precedes the larger India-Pakistan war.

Date	Event	Why it matters
Aug–Sep 1965	India-Pakistan War	Pakistan's infiltration strategy fails to trigger a Kashmir uprising; conflict expands internationally.
1965	FCI and Agricultural Prices Commission created	Build procurement and minimum-price framework for food strategy.
10–11 Jan 1966	Tashkent Declaration; Shastri dies	Restores positions and abruptly creates another succession.
24 Jan 1966	Indira Gandhi becomes prime minister	Congress bosses expect influence but soon lose organisational control.
Jun 1966	Rupee devalued	Intended to address external imbalance; politically associated with foreign pressure and price distress.
1966–67	New agricultural strategy expands	HYV wheat, irrigation and input packages accelerate output in selected regions.
Feb–Mar 1967	Fourth general election	Congress majority shrinks; state-level one-party dominance breaks.
19 Jul 1969	Fourteen major commercial banks nationalised	Gives Indira a popular left initiative and state leverage over credit.
Aug 1969	V.V. Giri wins presidential election	Defeat of official Congress candidate formalises conflict with the Syndicate.
Nov 1969	Congress splits	Congress (R) under Indira separates from Congress (O).

Date	Event	Why it matters
Mar 1971	Congress (R) wins general election	“Garibi Hatao” creates a direct leader-electorate mandate.
Mar–Dec 1971	East Pakistan crisis and refugee influx	Pakistani repression creates humanitarian and strategic emergency.
9 Aug 1971	Indo-Soviet Treaty signed	Provides strategic reassurance before war.
3–16 Dec 1971	India-Pakistan War; Bangladesh created	Pakistani eastern command surrenders at Dhaka.
2 Jul 1972	Simla Agreement	Creates Line of Control and bilateral framework.
May 1974	Railway strike; Pokhran nuclear test	Labour confrontation and strategic assertion occur in same month.
12 Jun 1975	Allahabad High Court invalidates Indira’s 1971 election	Creates immediate legal-political crisis.
25–26 Jun 1975	Emergency proclaimed	Fundamental freedoms, opposition and press are sharply restricted.
1976	Forty-Second Amendment enacted	Expands central and parliamentary power and curtails institutional checks.
Jan–Mar 1977	Election announced; Congress defeated	Voters peacefully remove an authoritarian incumbent.
24 Mar 1977	Morarji Desai becomes prime minister	First non-Congress Union government takes office.
1978	Forty-Fourth Amendment	Reverses major Emergency provisions and replaces “internal disturbance” with “armed rebellion.”

Date	Event	Why it matters
Jul 1979	Morarji government falls	Factional conflict breaks Janata coalition.
Jul–Aug 1979	Charan Singh becomes prime minister, resigns without facing Lok Sabha	Congress support is withdrawn before confidence vote.
Jan 1980	Indira Gandhi returns	Janata fragmentation restores Congress (I).
1982	Dharam Yudh Morcha begins in Punjab	Akali demands and militant violence increasingly overlap in a crisis of authority.
1–8 Jun 1984	Operation Blue Star	Army clears militants from Golden Temple complex at severe human and political cost.
31 Oct 1984	Indira Gandhi assassinated	Killing by two Sikh bodyguards is followed by anti-Sikh mass violence.

High-confusion comparisons

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Operation Gibraltar vs Grand Slam	Infiltration into Kashmir vs attack towards Akhnoor	Pakistan's two 1965 operations.
Food policy vs Green Revolution	Procurement/prices/stockpiles vs technological-input package	Subsidies made seed effective.
Congress (O) vs Congress (R)	Syndicate organisation vs Indira-led requisition faction	Split of 1969.
1971 election vs 1971 war	Domestic populist mandate vs Bangladesh conflict	March versus December.

Pair	Core distinction	Memory test
Internal Emergency vs wartime Emergency	“Internal disturbance” proclamation vs external threat	June 1975 added domestic authoritarian rule.
Twenty-Point vs Five-Point Programme	Official economic agenda vs Sanjay’s informal campaign	Reform claims versus coercive implementation.
Forty-Second vs Forty-Fourth Amendment	Emergency centralisation vs post-Emergency safeguards	Restrict checks versus restore them.
Janata coalition vs later single party	Merger of diverse anti-Congress groups vs coherent ideology	Unity of opposition, not programme.
Anandpur Sahib Resolution vs Khalistan	Federal-autonomy platform vs separatist sovereign demand	Do not collapse them.
Operation Blue Star vs assassination	Army action in June vs retaliation in October 1984	State assault and personal killing.

Self-test

1. How did Shastri become prime minister, and what defined his brief tenure?
2. Explain why the Green Revolution was an institutional package, not simply new seed.
3. What caused and ended the 1965 war?
4. Why did Congress weaken in 1967?
5. How did bank nationalisation and the presidential election produce the 1969 split?
6. Name five causes of the Bangladesh crisis and India’s victory.
7. What did the Simla Agreement achieve and leave unresolved?
8. Identify four background causes and the immediate trigger of Emergency.
9. Name five instruments or abuses of Emergency rule.
10. Give two achievements and three causes of Janata’s collapse.
11. Why must the Anandpur Sahib Resolution be distinguished from Khalistan?

12. Give a balanced causal account of Operation Blue Star and its consequences.

Answer key

1. Kamaraj and Congress leaders built consensus; food crisis, Green Revolution institutions, 1965 war, Tashkent and sudden death defined it.
2. HYV seed required irrigation, fertiliser, credit, electricity, research, minimum prices and public procurement to reduce farmer risk.
3. Gibraltar infiltration, Kashmir escalation and attacks across the border caused war; UN ceasefire and Tashkent restored prewar positions.
4. Inflation, drought, faction, regional/caste mobilisation, opposition alliances and dissatisfaction with Congress government combined.
5. Indira used nationalisation as an independent popular initiative, backed Giri against the official candidate and defeated Syndicate authority.
6. Awami electoral victory, denial of power, Searchlight repression, refugees, Mukti Bahini, Indian support, Soviet treaty and rapid military planning; any five.
7. It created the LoC and bilateral framework, but did not settle Kashmir or permanently normalise relations.
8. Inflation, corruption, strikes, Gujarat/Bihar movements and centralisation; the Allahabad judgement was the immediate trigger.
9. Preventive detention, censorship, constitutional amendments, habeas corpus denial, sterilisation, demolitions, strike bans or informal Sanjay power; any five.
10. Liberty restoration and Forty-Fourth Amendment; leadership rivalry, ideological heterogeneity, dual membership, economic trouble and Congress manoeuvre caused collapse.
11. It primarily articulated federal, religious and socioeconomic demands; later armed separatism was related but not identical.

12. Militants fortified a sacred complex amid failed negotiation and party manipulation; army action removed them but caused deaths, damage, alienation, assassination and later pogrom.

Closing perspective

The point of From Shastri to the Janata Interlude is not a date list. It is an explanation of how institutions, interests, and political choices changed the field for what followed.

Technology, Social Justice, Reform, and Coalition Politics

31 October 1984: Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister after Indira Gandhi's assassination; organized anti-Sikh violence immediately shadowed the transition.

December 1984 election: Congress won 404 Lok Sabha seats, the largest single-party majority in Indian electoral history.

Rajiv's mandate combined grief, youth and expectation

Rajiv Gandhi entered office after his mother's assassination by Sikh bodyguards. In Delhi and other cities, Congress politicians, local networks and mobs participated in organized attacks on Sikhs while police often failed to intervene. Thousands were killed, with Delhi the principal centre. Delayed justice and allegations against Congress figures remained a lasting democratic failure. Rajiv's statement that the earth shakes when a large tree falls was widely interpreted as rationalizing the violence.

The December election occurred amid grief, insecurity and a desire for stability. Congress won 404 of 514 seats then contested. Rajiv, aged forty, presented himself as an outsider to old patronage networks and promised to remove "power brokers."

His majority made reform possible, but it also concentrated responsibility for failure.

Technology policy changed the state's developmental vocabulary

Rajiv treated computers and telecommunications as tools of productivity rather than threats to employment. The Centre for Development of Telematics, established in 1984 under Sam Pitroda's influence, developed exchanges suited to Indian conditions. Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited began in 1986 for Delhi and Mumbai; digital switching, subscriber trunk dialling and public call offices expanded gradually. Computer import and software rules were eased, and rail reservation computerization made technology visible to ordinary users.

Technology missions targeted telecommunications, literacy, immunization, drinking water, oilseeds and dairy development. The National Policy on Education of 1986 expanded access, emphasized science and technology and supported Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas. These initiatives did not instantly create universal connectivity. Rural tele-density remained low, public systems varied in quality and liberalization of telecom accelerated only in the 1990s. Their long-term importance was institutional: computing and communications became legitimate public-development priorities.

Rajiv also initiated partial economic deregulation. Imports of capital goods and technology became easier, tax rates were rationalized and selected industries escaped licensing. Growth accelerated in the 1980s, but so did fiscal deficits, external borrowing and import dependence. Later reform did not begin from zero in 1991; the 1980s provided both experimentation and macroeconomic vulnerability.

Accords used federal accommodation against insurgency

The Punjab Accord of July 1985 between Rajiv and Harchand Singh Longowal addressed Chandigarh's transfer, territorial claims, river waters, compensation and normal political life. Longowal was assassinated weeks later; key provisions stalled and militancy worsened before declining in the early 1990s.

The Assam Accord of 15 August 1985 set 24 March 1971 as the citizenship cut-off for detecting and removing later undocumented entrants and promised constitutional-cultural safeguards. The Asom Gana Parishad subsequently formed a state government. Detection and implementation remained contentious for decades.

The 1986 Mizoram Accord with Laldenga's Mizo National Front proved more durable. The MNF abandoned armed struggle, weapons were surrendered, political prisoners released and Mizoram became a state in 1987. Its success reflected negotiated dignity, credible autonomy and willingness of insurgents to enter electoral politics.

These settlements demonstrate that Indian federalism could absorb conflict, but an accord's signature did not guarantee implementation. Punjab, Assam and Mizoram followed different trajectories.

Administrative reforms had promise and limits

The Fifty-second Amendment of 1985 disqualified legislators for defection under specified conditions. It aimed to curb opportunistic government changes, but strengthened party leaders by limiting legislative dissent; later loopholes and presiding-officer delay remained.

The Sixty-first Amendment, enacted in 1988, lowered the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen. Rajiv's government tried to constitutionalize panchayats and municipalities, includ-

ing representation for women and Scheduled Castes, but the rural bill failed in the Rajya Sabha in 1989. The successful local-government amendments came under Rao.

The administration continued to face corruption, delay and centralized party decision-making. Rajiv's language of efficiency could not by itself reform institutions rooted in patronage and weak accountability.

Shah Bano and Ayodhya produced competitive communal signaling

In Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum (1985), the Supreme Court upheld maintenance for a divorced Muslim woman under the secular Code of Criminal Procedure. Conservative Muslim organizations argued that the judgment intruded on Muslim personal law. The government used its majority to enact the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986. Although later interpretation protected substantial maintenance, the immediate retreat was widely criticized by women's groups and secularists.

In February 1986, a district court ordered the locks opened at the disputed Ayodhya structure, enabling Hindu worship; the government was accused of facilitating the decision. In 1989 it permitted a *shilanyas* near the disputed site. The sequence created a damaging perception: concession to Muslim conservatives was balanced by concession to Hindu mobilization. BJP and Vishwa Hindu Parishad could present Congress as both "minority appeasing" and cynically Hinduizing.

The analytical point is not that Shah Bano mechanically caused Ayodhya. State choices helped convert distinct legal and religious disputes into competitive national symbols.

Bofors and Sri Lanka ended the modernization honeymoon

Swedish radio reported in April 1987 that secret payments had accompanied the Bofors howitzer contract. The allegation centred on intermediaries and possible political protection. No court ultimately convicted Rajiv Gandhi, but secrecy, shifting explanations and the departure of associate Ottavio Quattrocchi destroyed the prime minister's anti-corruption credibility. V.P. Singh, removed after serving as finance and defence minister, built a national campaign around probity.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987 sought devolution for Tamils and an end to conflict. India deployed the Indian Peace Keeping Force, which soon fought the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. More than a thousand Indian soldiers died, Tamil civilians suffered, and neither Sinhalese nationalists nor the LTTE accepted India's role. The IPKF withdrew by March 1990. The intervention exposed the risks of combining regional power, peace enforcement and unclear consent.

Operation Cactus in the Maldives in 1988, by contrast, rapidly defeated an attempted coup and demonstrated effective regional intervention. Rajiv's foreign-policy record was therefore mixed rather than uniformly unsuccessful.

The 1989 election ended one-party predominance at the centre

Congress remained the largest party with 197 seats but lost its majority. Janata Dal led the National Front, supported from outside by both the BJP and the Left Front. V.P. Singh became prime minister on 2 December 1989. The arrangement united forces opposed to Congress, not a coherent policy coalition.

The BJP had risen from two seats in 1984 to eighty-five in 1989 through organizational growth and Ayodhya mobilization. Regional parties had become indispensable, while the Left sought to block both Congress dominance and Hindu nationalism. Coali-

tion dependence now constrained the prime minister more directly than Parliament had constrained Rajiv.

Mandal made social representation a central national issue

The Second Backward Classes Commission under B.P. Mandal submitted its report in 1980. It estimated Other Backward Classes at 52 per cent of the population and recommended 27 per cent reservation in central services, keeping total reservation near 50 per cent. On 7 August 1990, V.P. Singh announced implementation for socially and educationally backward classes.

The decision addressed the underrepresentation of intermediate and lower castes in central administration and acknowledged caste as a continuing structure of opportunity. It also served V.P. Singh's political need to consolidate a social coalition independent of rivals within Janata Dal.

Upper-caste student protests, especially in northern cities, included self-immolation attempts and intense media coverage. Supporters mobilized around dignity and a share in state power. In *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992), the Supreme Court upheld OBC reservation, excluded the "creamy layer," rejected reservation in promotions under that order and generally capped quotas at 50 per cent.

Mandal shifted power toward OBC-led parties in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and deepened an earlier democratic process in southern India. It cannot be reduced to vote-bank politics: it changed who could claim administrative and political leadership. It also left unresolved inequality within OBC categories, education quality and private-sector employment.

Mandir converted religious mobilization into government collapse

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and BJP demanded construction of a Ram temple at the site of the Babri Masjid. L.K. Advani began a Rath Yatra from Somnath on 25 September 1990 toward Ayodhya. The journey combined religious symbolism, party organization and local procession politics, producing communal tension and violence.

Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav arrested Advani at Samastipur on 23 October. The BJP withdrew support from V.P. Singh. His government lost a confidence vote on 7 November. The “Mandal versus Mandir” formulation captures competing mobilizations of caste representation and Hindu unity, but the two also interacted: Hindu nationalism sought to aggregate caste groups, while OBC politics divided any assumed Hindu bloc.

Chandra Shekhar governed a shrinking state amid crisis

Chandra Shekhar broke from Janata Dal with a small group and became prime minister in November 1990 with external Congress support. His government lacked a durable parliamentary base. Congress withdrew support in March 1991 after alleging surveillance of Rajiv Gandhi; Chandra Shekhar remained caretaker through the election.

The economy was deteriorating. High fiscal deficits, commercial borrowing, the Gulf War’s oil shock, reduced remittances and political instability depleted foreign-exchange reserves to levels sufficient for only weeks of imports. India pledged gold abroad to obtain liquidity. The crisis was cumulative, not the creation of one short-lived government.

During the staggered 1991 election, an LTTE suicide bomber assassinated Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumbudur on 21 May. The killing was connected to hostility toward the IPKF intervention.

Congress won 232 seats and formed a minority government under P.V. Narasimha Rao.

Rao and Manmohan Singh combined stabilization with structural reform

Rao appointed economist Manmohan Singh finance minister. Immediate stabilization included rupee devaluation, import compression, fiscal measures and IMF-linked external financing. Structural reforms then changed the policy regime:

- the New Industrial Policy of 24 July 1991 abolished licensing for most industries;
- public-sector reservation was reduced and disinvestment began;
- restrictions based on the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act's asset threshold were removed;
- foreign investment and technology agreements were liberalized;
- import licensing and high tariffs were gradually reduced;
- exchange-rate reform led toward current-account convertibility;
- capital-market regulation, private banking entry and tax reform advanced;
- India joined the World Trade Organization in 1995.

The reforms did not create laissez-faire. The state retained major enterprises, regulated finance, funded welfare and infrastructure and negotiated the pace sector by sector. Earlier 1980s deregulation, the global decline of Soviet-style planning and the immediate crisis all mattered.

Growth and foreign-exchange stability improved, competition expanded and services gained momentum. Costs included industrial adjustment, uneven regional investment, agricultural concern, job insecurity and greater exposure to global volatility. Poverty ratios later fell, but causation involved growth, social programmes and measurement choices. A balanced answer

avoids both “1991 saved India alone” and “1991 merely imposed foreign control.”

Political reform coexisted with communal and corruption crises

The Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendments, passed in 1992 and effective in 1993, constitutionalized panchayats and municipalities, required regular elections and reserved at least one-third of seats for women, along with Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe representation. Actual devolution of funds, functions and staff remained dependent on states.

India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992 and expanded a “Look East” policy toward Southeast Asia. It weathered the initial post-Soviet foreign-policy transition.

On 6 December 1992, kar sevaks demolished the Babri Masjid despite assurances to the Supreme Court and Union government. Rao’s failure to prevent demolition remains a central controversy. Riots followed across India, especially Mumbai in December 1992 and January 1993; coordinated bombings in Mumbai in March 1993 killed hundreds. The sequence entrenched communal polarization.

The 1992 securities scam exposed banking and market weaknesses. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha bribery case and other allegations damaged Rao’s government, though he completed a full five-year term and secured enough parliamentary support for reform.

Coalition politics federalized national power

The 1996 election left BJP largest with 161 seats. Vajpayee resigned after thirteen days because he could not prove a majority. A United Front of Janata Dal and regional parties then governed with outside Congress support. H.D. Deve Gowda served

until Congress withdrew support in 1997; I.K. Gujral followed until the Jain Commission controversy over DMK links to the LTTE prompted another Congress withdrawal.

The Gujral Doctrine offered unilateral accommodation to smaller South Asian neighbours without insisting on strict reciprocity, while preserving security interests. Coalition governments continued economic opening, telecom reform, disinvestment and fiscal adjustment, though decision-making could be slow.

In 1998, BJP won 182 seats and Vajpayee formed a coalition. AIADMK's withdrawal caused defeat by one vote in April 1999. The election after the Kargil conflict returned a BJP-led National Democratic Alliance with a workable majority in October.

Regional parties were not evidence of national disintegration. They carried state interests into Union bargaining, made coalition agreements necessary and broadened elite recruitment. Instability between 1996 and 1999 was real, but the later NDA demonstrated that a pre-electoral coalition with a common programme could complete a term.

The period's core transformation had three connected dimensions

First, social bases of power widened through OBC, Dalit and regional parties. Second, Hindu nationalism became a central national competitor rather than a marginal current. Third, market-oriented reform survived changes of government. These were not separate stories: parties used caste and religion to build coalitions while states competed for investment and fiscal resources.

By 1999, Congress dominance had yielded to a multi-party system, but constitutional transfers of power remained routine. India combined political fragmentation with policy continuity, a distinctive outcome of federal parliamentary democracy.

Interpretations and debates

From Congress system to coalition system. Political scientists describe 1989 as the end of Congress's routine central predominance. Zoya Hasan emphasizes the role of regional parties and federalized bargaining. Coalitions created instability in the 1990s, but also made state interests and diverse social groups harder to exclude.

Democratic upsurge. Yogendra Yadav identifies a "second democratic upsurge" in the increased participation and representation of lower castes and poorer groups. Christophe Jaffrelot calls OBC political advance a "silent revolution." Mandal was therefore more than an administrative quota: it altered the social composition and language of power. Unequal gains within backward categories qualify, but do not cancel, that shift.

Mandal and Mandir. One interpretation sees Ayodhya mobilization as an upper-caste reaction designed to subsume caste conflict into Hindu unity. Another notes that BJP growth also recruited OBC leaders and voters. The two processes competed and combined; neither caste nor religion remained a fixed electoral bloc.

Reform by stealth. Rob Jenkins argues that the political sustainability of reform often depended on incremental, technically framed change rather than a declared ideological revolution. Rao's minority government compensated losers selectively and dispersed decisions across institutions. This helps explain why coalition successors preserved reform.

Crisis or prior strategy? A crisis-centred account treats 1991 as a forced IMF turn. Atul Kohli and other political-economy scholars locate pro-business change partly in the 1980s. The best account distinguishes earlier business-friendly deregulation from the broader, rules-based external opening and industrial policy break of 1991.

Liberalization's balance sheet. Supporters emphasize higher growth, reserves, productivity, consumer choice and later poverty reduction. Critics emphasize inequality, weak employment growth, agrarian stress, privatized opportunity and reduced pol-

icy space. Effects varied by region, class, gender and sector; no single national average resolves distribution.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
31 Oct. 1984	Indira Gandhi assassinated; Rajiv Gandhi sworn in	Sudden dynastic succession occurs amid anti-Sikh violence.
Dec. 1984	Congress wins 404 Lok Sabha seats	Gives Rajiv exceptional parliamentary power and public expectations.
July 1985	Rajiv–Longowal Accord	Attempts a negotiated settlement in Punjab; implementation remains incomplete.
Aug. 1985	Assam Accord	Ends the main Assam agitation through citizenship cut-off and safeguards.
1985	Fifty-second Amendment	Creates the anti-defection framework.
Apr. 1985–May 1986	Shah Bano judgment and Muslim Women Act	Women’s maintenance rights become entangled with personal law and electoral competition.
June 1986	Mizoram Accord	Insurgency ends through disarmament, statehood and democratic accommodation.

Date	Event	Why it matters
1986	New Education Policy; MTNL established	Education and communications become modernization priorities.
1987	Bofors allegations emerge; Indo-Sri Lanka Accord signed	Corruption claims and the IPKF intervention weaken Rajiv's authority.
1988	Voting age lowered to eighteen	Expands the electorate before the 1989 election.
Nov. 1989	Congress loses majority	National Front forms government with outside support from ideologically opposed parties.
7 Aug. 1990	V.P. Singh announces Mandal implementation	OBC reservation restructures national political competition.
Sept.–Oct. 1990	Advani Rath Yatra	Ayodhya mobilization links Hindu nationalism to electoral expansion.
7 Nov. 1990	V.P. Singh government falls	BJP withdraws support after Advani's arrest.
Nov. 1990–June 1991	Chandra Shekhar government	Small breakaway bloc governs through outside Congress support amid economic crisis.
21 May 1991	Rajiv Gandhi assassinated	LTTE suicide bombing transforms the election and Congress leadership.
June–July 1991	Rao government; stabilization and New Industrial Policy	Minority government begins structural economic reform.
6 Dec. 1992	Babri Masjid demolished	Constitutional failure and communal violence reshape party politics.

Date	Event	Why it matters
1992–93	Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendments	Give constitutional status to rural and urban local government.
May 1996	Vajpayee's first government lasts thirteen days	BJP emerges as largest party but lacks coalition support.
June 1996–Apr. 1997	H.D. Deve Gowda leads United Front	Regional-party coalition governs with Congress support.
Apr. 1997–Mar. 1998	I.K. Gujral leads United Front	Coalition continues until Congress withdraws support.
Mar. 1998–Apr. 1999	Vajpayee heads BJP-led coalition	Government loses confidence vote by one vote after AIADMK withdrawal.
Oct. 1999	NDA wins a workable majority	Marks transition from unstable coalitions to a full-term coalition framework.

High-confusion comparisons

Dimension	Rajiv reforms, 1984–89	Rao reforms, 1991–96
Main frame	Technology, efficiency and selective deregulation	Stabilization plus structural liberalization
Industrial policy	Easier imports and selective delicensing	Licensing abolished for most sectors; FDI and competition widened
External sector	Borrowing and import-led modernization	Exchange-rate, tariff and trade reform
Political setting	Record parliamentary majority	Minority government

Dimension	Rajiv reforms, 1984–89	Rao reforms, 1991–96
Macroeconomic effect	Faster growth with rising deficits and debt	Reserve recovery with adjustment costs
Long-term role	Prepared capacity and exposed imbalances	Established a durable new policy regime

Often confused	Correct distinction
Mandal Commission vs implementation	Report submitted in 1980; implementation announced in 1990.
OBC reservation vs total reservation	Mandal added 27 per cent; existing SC/ST quotas brought the ordinary total to 49.5 per cent.
Liberalization vs withdrawal of state	Controls fell, but public enterprise, regulation, welfare and planning functions continued.
Minority government vs coalition	Rao led a Congress minority cabinet; United Front included multiple governing parties.
1996 vs 1998 Vajpayee governments	The first lasted thirteen days; the second about thirteen months.
Seat fragmentation vs democratic collapse	Governments changed frequently, but elections, confidence votes and constitutional transfers continued.

Self-test

1. Why was Rajiv Gandhi's 1984 mandate both powerful and morally shadowed?
2. What were the principal technology and education initiatives of the Rajiv period?
3. Why did the Mizoram Accord prove more durable than the Punjab settlement?
4. How did Shah Bano and Ayodhya become connected in national politics?

5. What made Bofors politically damaging despite the absence of a conviction of Rajiv Gandhi?
6. How did the 1989 election change the party system?
7. What did Mandal implementation provide, and why was it transformative?
8. How did the Rath Yatra lead to V.P. Singh's fall?
9. What caused the 1991 balance-of-payments crisis?
10. List five principal components of the 1991 reform programme.
11. What were the significance and limitation of the Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendments?
12. Why did coalition politics after 1996 produce both instability and deeper federalization?

Answer key

1. Congress held a record 404-seat majority, but the mandate followed Indira Gandhi's assassination and organized anti-Sikh violence involving state failure and Congress figures.
2. C-DOT digital exchanges, MTNL, computerization, technology missions, the 1986 education policy and Navodaya schools made technology a public-development priority.
3. Mizoram combined credible autonomy, statehood, disarmament and insurgent entry into elections; Punjab's core territorial and river provisions stalled while militants attacked its signatory.
4. The government reversed Shah Bano under conservative Muslim pressure and soon facilitated Hindu access at Ayodhya, creating perceptions of competitive concession and strengthening communal mobilizers.
5. Secrecy and allegations of intermediaries contradicted Rajiv's clean image, enabling V.P. Singh to organize anti-corruption opposition even though Rajiv was not judicially convicted.
6. Congress lost its majority, National Front depended on BJP and Left support, regional parties gained leverage and BJP became a major national competitor.
7. It provided 27 per cent central-service reservation for OBCs; it recognized caste inequality and shifted leadership and state

access toward backward-caste groups.

8. Advani's arrest led BJP to withdraw outside support; V.P. Singh then lost a confidence vote on 7 November 1990.
9. Persistent fiscal deficits, external commercial debt, import dependence, the Gulf oil shock, reduced remittances and political instability depleted reserves.
10. Industrial delicensing, rupee adjustment, trade and tariff liberalization, easier FDI, public-sector disinvestment, tax reform and financial-market reform.
11. They constitutionalized elected rural and urban bodies and reservations, especially for women, but states retained control over actual funds, functions and staff.
12. Fragmented mandates caused short-lived governments, yet regional parties brought state interests and new social groups into Union bargaining while successive cabinets preserved economic reform.

Closing perspective

Rajiv Gandhi normalized technology and telecom as developmental tools but did not overcome institutional corruption or communal politics. Punjab, Assam and Mizoram prove that federal accords require separate evaluation by implementation and local consent.

NDA, UPA, and Political Change to 2019

May 1998: Five Pokhran-II tests declared India a nuclear-weapon state in practice and triggered international sanctions.

February–July 1999: Lahore diplomacy was followed by the Kargil intrusion and war, showing that nuclearization did not prevent limited conflict.

Vajpayee converted BJP leadership into coalition government

The BJP won 182 seats in 1998 and 1999 but required allies. The National Democratic Alliance set aside divisive core demands, including immediate pursuit of a uniform civil code and Ayodhya temple legislation. Vajpayee's moderation and willingness to share portfolios made the coalition credible.

The 1998 government fell in April 1999 after AIADMK withdrew support and Vajpayee lost a confidence vote by one. The Kargil conflict occurred under the caretaker government. In the subsequent election, NDA won a workable majority, and the second Vajpayee government served until 2004. Coalition management, not BJP majority, produced stability.

Regional allies limited ideological centralization but gained influence over Union policy and resources. The NDA demonstrated that coalition government could combine a national anchor party with state-based partners and complete a term.

Pokhran-II changed nuclear status and diplomatic strategy

India conducted three underground nuclear tests on 11 May and two on 13 May 1998. The government cited a deteriorating security environment, including nuclear China and Pakistan. The tests ended deliberate ambiguity about weapon capability. Pakistan conducted tests later that month, formalizing a nuclear dyad in South Asia.

The United States, Japan and others imposed sanctions.

India then entered sustained talks led by Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbott. Sanctions gradually eased, and India's status shifted from isolated challenger toward de facto accommodation.

The 2003 official doctrine emphasized credible minimum deterrence, civilian control and no first use, with a chemical-biological exception. Critics questioned whether "massive retaliation" remained compatible with minimum deterrence. The doctrine must be dated rather than projected unchanged across later decades.

Lahore and Kargil exposed the stability--instability paradox

Vajpayee travelled by bus to Lahore in February 1999. The Lahore Declaration committed India and Pakistan to dialogue and nuclear confidence-building. Within months, Pakistani soldiers and irregulars occupied positions across the Line of Control in the Kargil sector. India launched Operation Vijay; the air force operated on the Indian side of the Line of Control, and intense high-altitude combat restored most positions.

Nawaz Sharif met US President Bill Clinton on 4 July; international pressure reinforced withdrawal. India stayed on its side of the Line of Control, gaining diplomatic support but raising military costs. More than 500 Indian service personnel died.

Kargil showed that nuclear deterrence might prevent unlimited war while encouraging belief that limited incursions could remain below the nuclear threshold. Civil–military conflict in Pakistan culminated in Pervez Musharraf’s October 1999 coup.

Security crises mixed restraint, coercion and negotiation

In December 1999, hijackers diverted flight IC-814 to Kandahar. India released three imprisoned militants to secure hostages, a decision later criticized for strengthening militancy.

After the December 2001 Parliament attack, Operation Parakram mobilized forces along the Pakistan border but cost lives and money without a clear coercive outcome. A 2003 Line of Control ceasefire enabled renewed dialogue.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 expanded police powers and special procedures. Supporters cited extraordinary threats; critics documented selective and political misuse, especially against minorities. UPA repealed it in 2004 while retaining other security provisions.

Gujarat 2002 became a test of state accountability

On 27 February 2002, fifty-nine people, mainly kar sevaks, died when a coach of the Sabarmati Express burned at Godhra. Retaliatory anti-Muslim violence spread across Gujarat, alongside some attacks on Hindus. Official counts recorded over one thousand deaths, with Muslims the large majority; independent estimates were higher. Sexual violence, destruction of homes and religious sites, and long displacement were extensive.

The Gujarat government under Chief Minister Narendra Modi was accused of failing to prevent violence and of partisan administration. Modi denied complicity. A Supreme Court-monitored investigation later reported insufficient prosecutable evidence

against him, while courts convicted perpetrators in cases. Legal non-prosecution does not end debate over administrative responsibility.

Ashutosh Varshney's work on civic networks helps explain why some mixed cities resist riots while others descend into organized violence. Gujarat also demonstrates that electoral victory after violence cannot itself resolve accountability.

NDA I joined market reform to physical connectivity

The National Telecom Policy of 1999 shifted private operators from unsustainable fixed licence fees to revenue sharing, helping rapid mobile expansion. The Information Technology Act of 2000 created a framework for electronic commerce and cyber offences. Competition, declining tariffs and an expanding software sector connected liberalization to daily communication.

The Golden Quadrilateral upgraded highways among four major metros; Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana financed rural roads. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan expanded elementary education and Antyodaya subsidized grain for the poorest. Later governments implemented much of this work, so launch and outcome must be distinguished.

The government pursued public-enterprise disinvestment, sometimes through strategic sales, and created a dedicated ministry. The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act of 2003 set deficit targets. The 2002 SARFAESI Act strengthened secured-credit recovery.

Growth accelerated late in the term after drought and global slowdown. The "India Shining" campaign highlighted infrastructure, foreign-exchange confidence and urban consumption but underestimated rural distress, unemployment and uneven gains. In 2004 BJP won 138 seats and Congress 145; alliance losses, especially in southern states, also mattered. The result was not a referendum against all reform.

UPA I built a coalition around inclusion and legal entitlements

Congress formed the United Progressive Alliance in May 2004 with Manmohan Singh as prime minister and Sonia Gandhi as UPA chairperson. Left parties supported the government from outside. The National Common Minimum Programme promised reform “with a human face.” The National Advisory Council connected activists and policy specialists to entitlement legislation, though critics questioned an unelected body’s influence.

UPA I’s principal initiatives included:

- **Right to Information Act, 2005:** enabled citizens to demand government records, subject to exemptions, and created information commissions;
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005:** guaranteed up to one hundred days of demand-based wage employment per rural household and required social audit;
- **National Rural Health Mission and Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** strengthened primary health and civil protection remedies;
- **Forest Rights Act, 2006:** recognized individual and community claims of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers;
- **Bharat Nirman, JNNURM and the 2008 farm-loan waiver:** expanded infrastructure and formal-bank debt relief.

Implementation varied. RTI commissions developed backlogs. MGNREGA raised rural bargaining power, while delayed wages and local capture weakened it. Forest-right recognition proceeded slowly.

High growth and the nuclear deal strengthened UPA I

India grew rapidly from 2004 to 2008 amid global expansion, high investment, services growth and earlier reforms. Tax revenue rose, allowing welfare expansion. Growth remained regionally uneven and job creation lagged output, but the combination of growth and entitlements gave UPA a broad claim to inclusive development.

In July 2005, Manmohan Singh and US President George W. Bush announced a civil nuclear understanding. India separated civilian and military facilities, accepted safeguards on the civilian list, and gained access to nuclear commerce without joining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear state. The process concluded in 2008.

Supporters argued that the agreement recognized India's exceptional status, eased fuel and technology access and deepened strategic partnership. Critics feared constraints on independent foreign policy and nuclear testing. Left parties withdrew support in 2008; the government survived a confidence vote amid allegations of inducements. The agreement's diplomatic effect was larger than the immediate contribution of nuclear power to electricity generation.

The November 2008 Mumbai attacks killed 166 people. India blamed Lashkar-e-Taiba and pursued international pressure rather than immediate military retaliation. The government created the National Investigation Agency, strengthened coastal security and expanded counter-terror coordination.

UPA II added entitlements but lost political authority

Congress rose to 206 seats in 2009. UPA II enacted education, food-security, land-acquisition and Lokpal laws. UIDAI began Aadhaar enrolment in 2010, building infrastructure later used for direct benefit transfer.

The global financial crisis initially met fiscal and monetary stimulus. Growth recovered, then slowed after 2011 amid inflation, stalled infrastructure, bank exposure, global weakness and delayed approvals. “Policy paralysis” captured business frustration, though environmental review, court intervention, coalition bargaining and overleveraged private investment all contributed.

Corruption controversies became politically decisive:

- the CAG criticized 2008 telecom allocation and estimated a large presumptive loss; a special court acquitted all accused in 2017, showing that audit valuation and criminal proof differed;
- Commonwealth Games projects faced documented irregularities;
- coal-block allocation prompted an audit estimate and Supreme Court cancellation of most allocations in 2014;
- lobbying controversies reinforced perceptions of corporate access.

The issue was not that every headline allegation became a proven theft. Opaque allocation, delayed response and a fragmented executive created a credible narrative of compromised governance.

Anti-corruption protest reorganized opposition politics

In 2011, Anna Hazare’s fasts for a strong Jan Lokpal drew large urban crowds, television coverage and online participation. India Against Corruption united activists with different later trajectories, including Arvind Kejriwal, who formed the Aam Aadmi Party in 2012. Parliament eventually enacted a Lokpal law in 2013.

The movement framed corruption as a system problem but often simplified constitutional negotiation into virtuous civil society versus politicians. Its durable effect was political: it weakened Congress’s moral authority, expanded issue-based urban mobilization and created a new party in Delhi.

The December 2012 gang rape and murder of a young woman in Delhi produced another nationwide movement. The Justice Verma Committee recommended broad reforms; the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 expanded sexual-offence definitions and penalties. The law did not resolve policing, trial delay or everyday gender inequality.

UPA also enacted the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act in 2014, creating Telangana. The decision answered a long regional movement but left disputes over Hyderabad, water, revenue and institutions.

The 2014 election created a new majority-party system

BJP won 282 Lok Sabha seats and NDA 336; Congress fell to forty-four. Narendra Modi's campaign combined a record of Gujarat growth, promises of jobs and clean administration, criticism of UPA corruption, welfare aspiration, Hindu-nationalist organization and unprecedented social-media and rally management. Amit Shah's electoral organization built new caste alliances, especially in Uttar Pradesh.

The result joined anti-incumbency, fragmented opposition and a positive leadership mandate. BJP converted geographic concentration and first-past-the-post competition into a seat majority. It ended three decades of coalition dependence, though NDA allies remained in government.

Modi I combined centralized execution with digital welfare

The government combined Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar and mobiles into a "JAM" delivery architecture. Direct transfer reduced some duplicate beneficiaries, while authentication failures, exclusion and privacy concerns persisted. Supreme Court judgments recognized privacy and limited some Aadhaar uses.

Swachh Bharat expanded toilets, though use, water and verification gaps remained. Ujjwala subsidized LPG connections, with refill affordability a limit. Saubhagya targeted household electricity beyond the older village definition. Housing, LED and insurance schemes widened the portfolio.

Digital India, Startup India, Skill India and Make in India sought formalization, entrepreneurship and manufacturing. Outcomes were mixed by 2019: digital payments and business formation grew, but manufacturing's employment transformation fell short of ambition.

Insolvency, demonetization and GST had different mechanisms

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 created time-bound corporate resolution and shifted bargaining power toward creditors. Early large cases recovered assets and recognized bad loans, but litigation, capacity constraints and delays weakened the statutory timetable. Bank recapitalization and recognition of non-performing assets addressed problems accumulated partly during the UPA investment boom.

On 8 November 2016, the government invalidated old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes, then about 86 per cent of currency by value. It aimed to attack undeclared cash, counterfeit currency and terror finance and later emphasized formalization and digital payment. Cash-dependent households, agriculture and informal firms faced queues, lost work and disrupted trade. By 2018, the Reserve Bank reported that about 99.3 per cent of the notes had returned, undermining the expectation that large illegal cash holdings would be extinguished. Bank deposits and digital transactions rose, but demonetization was a costly method for goals better separated analytically.

The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016 created the Goods and Services Tax Council; GST began on 1 July 2017. It replaced many Union and state indirect taxes, reduced interstate barriers and established cooperative federal

rate-setting. Multiple rates, filing changes, refund delays and technology problems burdened small enterprises. GST was a negotiated multi-government reform whose initial implementation costs do not erase its tax-unification significance.

Infrastructure and macroeconomic claims require dated qualification

Road, rail, renewable-energy, port, airport and electrification investment expanded during 2014–19. Completion varied and many projects built on earlier schemes. The 2015 Bangladesh boundary agreement likewise showed policy continuity.

Official GDP growth was generally high but decelerated by 2018–19. Revised statistical methods produced debate over comparability with earlier series. The 2017–18 Periodic Labour Force Survey reported unemployment at 6.1 per cent, the highest in its comparable series over several decades, while labour-force participation and job quality complicated a single rate. Farm distress generated protests and state loan waivers.

The balanced record is neither an uninterrupted “economic miracle” nor simple collapse: inflation moderated, infrastructure and formalization advanced, but investment, employment and informal activity remained weak points.

Security and foreign policy became more publicly assertive

After militants attacked an army camp at Uri in September 2016, India announced “surgical strikes” across the Line of Control. In 2017, Indian and Chinese troops faced each other at Doklam before disengagement. A suicide bombing at Pulwama on 14 February 2019 killed forty Central Reserve Police Force personnel; Jaish-e-Mohammed claimed responsibility. India struck near Balakot in Pakistan on 26 February, and the next day’s air confrontation led to an Indian pilot’s capture and return.

These events publicized cross-border force. Supporters saw deterrence; critics questioned strategic metrics and electoral use. India expanded US and Japanese ties, revived Quad consultations, joined the Paris agreement and co-founded the International Solar Alliance. Pakistan relations deteriorated; China combined engagement with competition.

Social cohesion and institutional centralization became major debates

Cow vigilantism, attacks on Muslims and Dalits and polarizing speech raised concern about majoritarian permission. The government condemned some lynchings; critics argued that inconsistent response emboldened perpetrators.

Decision-making became more concentrated in the Prime Minister's Office, and messaging relied heavily on the prime minister. Supporters viewed centralization as coordination after UPA diffusion; critics saw reduced cabinet autonomy, pressure on institutions and narrowed dissent. Debates over universities, media, civil society and investigative agencies intensified.

Christophe Jaffrelot interprets the period as movement toward an “ethnic democracy” in which formal elections coexist with majority-community primacy. Other analysts emphasize welfare-based cross-caste support and development aspiration. Both dimensions can operate together: economic beneficiaries need not share one ideological motive, and electoral popularity does not settle minority-rights questions.

The 2019 verdict consolidated BJP dominance

BJP won 303 seats and NDA about 353; Congress improved only to fifty-two. Modi's leadership, welfare delivery, party organization, opposition fragmentation, nationalism after Pulwama–Balakot and a broad social coalition reinforced one another. The

result made BJP the first non-Congress party to win consecutive single-party Lok Sabha majorities.

The second Modi government took office on 30 May 2019. On 5–6 August it used a presidential order and parliamentary legislation to make Article 370's special-status framework inoperative in its previous form and to reorganize the state into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, effective 31 October. The constitutional method, security restrictions and later consequences belong to the post-2019 phase. Here the action functions only as the handoff beyond the first term.

Interpretations and debates

Coalition moderation. Scholars of coalition politics, including Zoya Hasan, emphasize that regional allies moderated BJP's programme and deepened federal bargaining under Vajpayee. Stability came not from erasing difference but from a common agenda and credible power-sharing.

Rights revolution. Sanjay Ruparelia describes UPA-era measures as a "rights-based revolution" that made information, work, education and food increasingly justiciable or legally claimable. Jean Drèze and Reetika Khera stress social-policy gains while documenting delivery gaps. Rights altered citizen leverage even where implementation failed.

Growth model. Atul Kohli's political-economy work emphasizes a state increasingly supportive of corporate growth from the 1980s onward across party changes. UPA welfare did not reverse market reform; Modi's first term intensified formalization and business reform while retaining mass welfare. Continuity co-existed with different political branding.

Corruption and institutions. Audit estimates, administrative irregularity and criminal liability are different evidentiary categories. The 2G acquittals caution against treating presumptive revenue loss as proven personal theft, while opaque allocation and political interference remain legitimate governance criticism.

Welfare and electoral change. Louise Tillin and other federalism scholars show that welfare delivery depends on Union design, state capacity and local implementation. BJP's 2019 support cannot be attributed to one scheme; visible benefits, beneficiary databases, leadership and organization interacted.

Majoritarian transformation. Christophe Jaffrelot emphasizes institutional and social movement toward Hindu-majority primacy under Modi. Milan Vaishnav's work on BJP expansion also highlights organizational penetration and cross-caste coalition-building. Electoral breadth and majoritarian ideology are not mutually exclusive explanations.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
11 and 13 May 1998	Pokhran-II nuclear tests	Establish overt nuclear capability and trigger sanctions.
Feb. 1999	Vajpayee visits Lahore	Lahore Declaration attempts nuclear-risk reduction and dialogue.
May–July 1999	Kargil conflict	India evicts infiltrating forces while containing war across the Line of Control.
Oct. 1999	NDA government takes office	Pre-electoral coalition begins a full five-year term.
Dec. 1999	IC-814 hijacking	Hostage crisis ends with release of three imprisoned militants.

Date	Event	Why it matters
Dec. 2001	Parliament attacked	India begins a prolonged military mobilization against Pakistan.
Feb.–Mar. 2002	Godhra burning and Gujarat violence	Mass communal killing creates a lasting debate over state protection and accountability.
2003	Official nuclear doctrine and India–Pakistan ceasefire	Defines credible minimum deterrence and supports renewed diplomacy.
May 2004	UPA I formed	Congress returns with Left support and a Common Minimum Programme.
2005	RTI, MGNREGA, Domestic Violence Act and National Rural Health Mission	Marks institutional expansion of transparency, livelihood and social policy.
2006	Forest Rights Act	Recognizes individual and community rights of forest dwellers after historical exclusion.
July 2005–Oct. 2008	India–US civil nuclear agreement process	Ends nuclear commerce isolation after domestic and international negotiation.
Nov. 2008	Mumbai terrorist attacks	Ten attackers kill 166 people, transforming security institutions and India–Pakistan relations.
May 2009	UPA II formed	Congress rises to 206 seats and depends less on allies.
2009–10	UIDAI created; Right to Education enacted	Digital identity and educational entitlement become major state projects.

Date	Event	Why it matters
2010–12	2G, CWG and coal controversies intensify	Audit reports and investigations drive anti-corruption politics.
Apr.–Aug. 2011	Anna Hazare mobilizations	Lokpal demand creates a mass urban anti-corruption movement.
Dec. 2012–2013	Delhi gang rape protests and Criminal Law amendment	Gender violence produces nationwide protest and legal change.
2013	Food Security, land-acquisition and Lokpal laws	UPA II closes with major welfare and accountability legislation.
May 2014	BJP wins 282 seats	Modi forms first single-party majority government in thirty years.
2014–16	Jan Dhan, Swachh Bharat, Digital India, Ujjwala and insolvency reforms	Combines welfare delivery, sanitation, digitization and business reform.
8 Nov. 2016	Demonetization announced	Withdraws old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes, then about 86 per cent of currency value.
1 July 2017	GST launched	Replaces many indirect taxes with a federal council-based system.
Sept. 2016–Feb. 2019	Surgical-strike claim, Pulwama attack and Balakot airstrike	Cross-border retaliation becomes central to security politics.
May 2019	BJP wins 303 seats	Confirms a second consecutive majority and a new dominant-party phase.

Date	Event	Why it matters
5–6 Aug. 2019	Article 370 changes initiated	Constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir is altered after the 2019 handoff.

High-confusion comparisons

Dimension	NDA I, 1998–2004	UPA, 2004–14	Modi I, 2014–19
Parliamentary form	Coalition dependent on regional allies	Congress-led coalition; Left then regional support	BJP single-party majority within NDA
Economic emphasis	Telecom, roads, disinvestment, fiscal rules	High growth, infrastructure and rights-based inclusion	Formalization, insolvency, GST, digital delivery and infrastructure
Welfare style	Targeted food, roads and elementary education	Statutory entitlements and missions	Centrally branded household benefits using JAM architecture
Security signature	Nuclear tests, Kargil, Parliament attack	Civil nuclear deal, Mumbai response	Publicized cross-border retaliation and Indo-Pacific partnerships
Principal criticism	Gujarat violence, rural exclusion, POTA misuse	Corruption perception, inflation, slowing investment	Demonetization, employment, centralization and majoritarian concern
Electoral end	Defeated in 2004	Defeated decisively in 2014	Returned with larger majority in 2019

Often confused	Correct distinction
Pokhran tests vs nuclear doctrine	Tests occurred in 1998; official doctrine was announced in 2003.
MGNREGA launch vs later implementation	Enacted under UPA in 2005; later governments continued and modified it.
Audit loss vs theft conviction	A presumptive-loss estimate is not proof that the entire sum was stolen or that every accused was criminally liable.
Village electrification vs household connection	The older village definition required infrastructure and limited coverage; Saubhagya targeted households.
Demonetization vs GST	Demonetization was a sudden currency withdrawal; GST was a negotiated constitutional tax reform.
2019 election vs Article 370 action	Voting concluded in May; the constitutional action began in August under the second Modi government.

Self-test

1. How did the NDA make BJP-led coalition government stable after 1999?
2. What changed with Pokhran-II, and what were the main elements of the 2003 nuclear doctrine?
3. Why is Kargil described as limited war under nuclear conditions?
4. Name four major development or governance measures of NDA I and one limitation of its record.
5. What made UPA I's welfare approach "rights-based"?
6. What did the India-US civil nuclear agreement achieve, and why was it controversial?
7. Why did UPA II lose political authority despite passing major social legislation?

8. How did the 2011 anti-corruption movement alter party politics?
9. What factors produced BJP's 2014 majority?
10. Compare the mechanisms and effects of demonetization and GST.
11. What were the principal achievements and limits of Modi I's welfare and infrastructure strategy by 2019?
12. Why should Article 370 be treated as a post-election handoff rather than part of Modi's first-term verdict?

Answer key

1. A pre-electoral alliance, common programme, regional power-sharing and Vajpayee's moderate leadership set aside divisive issues and created a workable parliamentary majority.
2. The tests made weapon capability overt; the doctrine emphasized civilian control, credible minimum deterrence, no first use and massive retaliation, with a chemical-biological exception.
3. India confined most operations to its side of the Line of Control while nuclear deterrence discouraged wider escalation, yet did not prevent Pakistan's limited intrusion.
4. Telecom revenue sharing, Golden Quadrilateral, PMGSY, Sarva Shiksha, Antyodaya, disinvestment and fiscal rules were major measures; Gujarat violence or uneven rural gains were central limits.
5. RTI, MGNREGA, Forest Rights and later education and food laws gave citizens legal claims rather than only discretionary programme benefits.
6. It opened civilian nuclear commerce and recognized India's exceptional status; critics feared strategic dependence and testing constraints, while Left opposition nearly brought down the government.
7. Inflation, slowing investment, opaque resource allocation and repeated scandals combined with coalition diffusion and poor communication, overwhelming later food, land and Lokpal laws.

8. It created mass urban pressure for Lokpal, weakened Congress legitimacy and generated a new political organization that became the Aam Aadmi Party.
9. Leadership appeal, anti-corruption sentiment, aspiration, Hindu-nationalist organization, social media, new caste alliances, opposition fragmentation and UPA fatigue interacted.
10. Demonetization suddenly invalidated cash and disrupted the informal economy while most notes returned; GST constitutionally pooled Union–state tax authority and unified indirect taxes but imposed early compliance costs.
11. Bank accounts, toilets, LPG, electricity access, roads, airports and digital transfers scaled visibly; refill cost, service quality, authentication exclusion, job weakness and incomplete project outcomes limited gains.
12. BJP's 2019 mandate was secured before the August action, which was initiated by the second Modi government and belongs analytically to the period after the first-term election verdict.

Closing perspective

Vajpayee's full term proved that a BJP-led coalition could moderate its programme and govern stably. Pokhran established overt deterrence; Kargil showed nuclear weapons could coexist with limited conventional war.

India Since 2019

The Bharatiya Janata Party won 303 Lok Sabha seats in 2019, enabling a second Narendra Modi ministry with a single-party majority.

Presidential orders of 5 and 6 August 2019 changed the application of Article 370; Parliament enacted territorial reorganization separately.

The 2019 mandate accelerated central policy change

The 2019 election returned the BJP with 303 seats, larger than its 2014 majority. The mandate reinforced a party system centered on Narendra Modi, national security, welfare delivery, Hindu-nationalist mobilization, and a disciplined national organization. The opposition remained fragmented, while the BJP could legislate without depending on allies in the Lok Sabha.

This capacity produced rapid decisions on Jammu and Kashmir, citizenship, personal law, institutional symbols, and later criminal-law replacement. Yet Lok Sabha strength did not remove federalism, judicial review, social protest, Rajya Sabha politics, or implementation problems. The period repeatedly showed that enactment is only one stage. A policy could pass Parliament and still face rules, litigation, state resistance, street mobilization, administrative delay, or repeal.

Article 370 change and territorial reorganization were distinct acts

On 5 August 2019, Constitution Order 272 applied constitutional provisions to Jammu and Kashmir and used an altered reading of Article 367 to treat the state Constituent Assembly as the Legislative Assembly. Because the state was under President's Rule, Parliament acted in place of that legislature. A declaration on 6 August made most of Article 370 inoperative. These constitutional steps changed how the Indian Constitution applied to Jammu and Kashmir.

The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act was a separate statute. From 31 October 2019 it divided the former state into the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, designed with a legislature, and Ladakh, without one. Reorganization changed territory and governmental form; the presidential orders changed the constitutional-special-status mechanism. Preventive detentions, communications restrictions, and limits on political activity accompanied the transition. Government justification emphasized integration, equal laws, security, and development; critics emphasized federal consent, civil liberties, representative absence, and downgrading a state without its elected legislature.

On 11 December 2023, the Supreme Court upheld the operative constitutional outcome. It treated Article 370 as temporary and accepted the President's authority to declare it inoperative after the state Constituent Assembly had ceased to exist. The Court, however, held that changing Article 367 to alter the meaning of Article 370 through that route was invalid. The majority did not finally decide whether Parliament could permanently convert a state into Union Territories because the Union had assured restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood; it directed Assembly elections by 30 September 2024 and restoration of statehood at the earliest.

Assembly elections were subsequently held and an elected territorial government formed, but statehood had not been restored by 10 August 2026. Thus four propositions must remain separate: special-status provisions were changed; the state was

territorially reorganized; the Supreme Court upheld the practical constitutional result; and the statehood question remained open at the cutoff. None of these domestic steps resolves the international dispute over territories administered separately by India, Pakistan, and China.

CAA changed naturalization rules but was not an NRC

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 inserted Section 6B and related changes into the Citizenship Act, 1955. It covers Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Pakistan who entered India on or before 31 December 2014 and had received specified exemptions from treatment as illegal migrants. For eligible applicants it reduced the naturalization residence requirement from eleven years to five.

The law excludes areas protected by the Sixth Schedule and the Inner Line system. These territorial exceptions reflect northeastern concerns about migration and Indigenous land, language, and political control. The amendment does not itself strip an existing Indian citizen of citizenship. It also does not create a nationwide citizen register.

Opposition arose because the route classifies by religion and excludes similarly placed Muslims, including persecuted sects, and because public discussion linked the CAA with a possible nationwide National Register of Citizens. Protesters feared that a document-based register combined with a religion-specific relief route could expose poor or marginalized people unevenly. The government defended the law as limited protection for persecuted minorities in three neighboring Islamic republics and denied that Indian Muslims would lose citizenship under it.

Protests began in Assam with an emphasis on protection from migration regardless of religion, and expanded through universities, cities, and women-led occupations such as Shaheen Bagh with an emphasis on equality and secular citizenship. Police action at universities, arrests, road blockades, and communal vio-

lence in northeast Delhi revealed multiple conflicts rather than one uniform movement. Rules notified on 11 March 2024 made the application process operational, more than four years after enactment. Enactment in 2019 and administrative operation in 2024 therefore require separate dates.

Ayodhya judgment and temple consecration were legally different events

On 9 November 2019, a unanimous Supreme Court bench awarded the disputed land for construction of a temple through a central-government trust and directed that five acres at a prominent site in Ayodhya be allotted to the Sunni Central Waqf Board for a mosque. The judgment treated title through legal evidence and possession, while holding that the placing of idols in 1949 and demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 violated the rule of law.

The consecration of the Ram temple on 22 January 2024 was a religious and political event following construction under the trust arrangement. It was not another judicial ruling and should not be used retrospectively as proof of title. Supporters treated the ceremony as cultural restitution and civilizational fulfillment; critics questioned executive identification with a majoritarian religious event and the effects on secular equality. A historical answer should separate the title holding, the remedy, the condemnation of illegal acts, later construction, and political symbolism.

The pandemic tested coercive and welfare capacity

India imposed a nationwide lockdown from 25 March 2020 under disaster-management and epidemic-control powers. The initial notice was short, passenger transport stopped, workplaces closed, and most movement was prohibited. The mea-

sure sought to slow transmission and create preparation time, but it transferred severe costs to informal workers, street vendors, domestic workers, small firms, and migrants living far from social support.

With jobs and cash disappearing, large numbers of migrant workers attempted to walk or cycle home. Borders, police enforcement, quarantine, and delayed special trains turned labour mobility into a humanitarian crisis. Because food rations and welfare records were often tied to place, portable access became crucial. Relief expanded through free grain, cash support, rural employment, credit guarantees, and later ration portability, but coverage and timeliness varied.

The first wave was followed by a far more destructive second wave in April–May 2021. Oxygen scarcity, hospital overload, medicine shortages, and overwhelmed cremation and burial systems exposed underinvestment and fragmented coordination. Health is mainly administered by states, while the Union controlled major fiscal, procurement, regulatory, and interstate powers. The crisis therefore tested cooperative federalism: centralized decisions could mobilize scale, but local variation required state capacity and transparent information.

Vaccination began on 16 January 2021 and expanded from priority groups to the adult population and later younger groups and precaution doses. The CoWIN platform supported registration, scheduling, certification, and stock visibility; walk-in and assisted routes became necessary where smartphones, connectivity, literacy, or identity matching created barriers. Ministry of Health records reported more than 220.68 crore doses by 5 February 2025. That dated dose count indicates operational reach, not by itself equal access, prevention of every death, or a complete judgment on pandemic management.

The pandemic's economic shock interrupted production, schooling, transport, and household income. Recovery was uneven across formal and informal sectors, large and small firms, salaried and casual workers, and digitally connected and excluded students. The central lesson is dual: India could mobilize nationwide restrictions, food support, digital certification, vaccines,

and later infrastructure, yet sudden design and thin local health and social-protection systems magnified inequality.

Farm laws moved from enactment to protest to repeal

Parliament enacted three farm measures in September 2020.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Act permitted trade outside state-regulated market yards; the Farmers Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act created a framework for contract farming; and the Essential Commodities amendment narrowed circumstances for stock controls. Government argued that choice, competition, investment, and national markets would improve farmer returns.

Opponents feared weakening of Agricultural Produce Market Committee mandis, corporate bargaining power, inadequate dispute protection, and an indirect threat to minimum support price procurement. Agricultural conditions differ greatly by crop, irrigation, tenancy, market access, and state. Punjab and Haryana farmers had especially strong links to regulated mandis and public procurement, helping explain the movement's regional core without reducing it to one class or state.

From late November 2020, unions established large encampments at Delhi's borders. The movement used marches, kitchens, media networks, negotiations, and sustained occupation. The Supreme Court stayed implementation in January 2021 and appointed a committee, but political settlement remained elusive. Violence during the 26 January tractor rally did not end the broader mobilization.

Prime Minister Modi announced withdrawal in November 2021. Parliament enacted and enforced the Farm Laws Repeal Act on 30 November, repealing Acts 20, 21, and 22 of 2020. Repeal demonstrated that a government with a parliamentary majority could reverse law under sustained social and electoral pressure. It did not settle all demands about minimum support prices, debt, income security, crop diversification, or ecological stress.

Security crises required disciplined attribution

Indian and Chinese troops clashed in the Galwan Valley on 15 June 2020 amid a wider confrontation along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh. Soldiers died on both sides, and the absence of firearms did not prevent lethal close combat. Subsequent talks produced disengagement at some points, while deployments and competing perceptions of the line persisted. “Disengagement,” “de-escalation,” and “restoration of the pre-crisis position” are not synonyms; official announcements must be tied to the specific sector and date.

On 22 April 2025, attackers killed civilians near Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir. India attributed responsibility and support across the border; Pakistan rejected Indian allegations of state involvement. On 7 May, India launched Operation Sindoor. The Government of India stated that its forces struck nine sites associated with militant infrastructure. Pakistan disputed important elements of India’s description and made its own military claims. The existence of strikes and subsequent exchanges is established; target character, damage, interceptions, and battlefield success require attribution to the belligerent making the claim unless independently confirmed.

The Indian official account records that the Directors General of Military Operations agreed to stop firing and military action from 17:00 IST on 10 May 2025. “Agreed halt” is more precise than an undefined claim of decisive victory or a permanent settlement. The episode demonstrated rapid escalation between nuclear-armed neighbors, the connection between terrorism and interstate force, and the importance of separating verifiable chronology from operational narratives.

Institutional redesign mixed representation, symbolism, and centralization

The new Parliament building was inaugurated in May 2023 and hosted its first legislative proceedings during the September special session. It added capacity and new technology, while its symbolism became part of a wider effort to recast national institutions. A building does not change constitutional power by itself; the more important questions remain deliberation, committee scrutiny, opposition participation, and executive accountability.

The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act received presidential assent on 28 September 2023. It provides reservation of roughly one-third of directly elected seats for women in the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and the Delhi Assembly, including one-third of seats already reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Article 334A links operation to delimitation after publication of the relevant figures from the first census conducted after commencement of the amendment. Consequently, the reservation did not operate in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Enactment created the constitutional commitment; census, publication, delimitation, commencement notification, and electoral use are later implementation stages.

On 15 February 2024, the Supreme Court invalidated the Electoral Bonds Scheme and related statutory changes. It held that non-disclosure of political contributions violated voters' Article 19(1)(a) right to information and that removing limits on corporate contributions was arbitrary. The judgment required the State Bank of India and Election Commission to enable disclosure. The holding did not prohibit all private political donations; it struck down the anonymous scheme and enabling changes.

New criminal codes changed labels and procedure, not every practice overnight

Parliament enacted the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam in December 2023. They replaced the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Indian Evidence Act frameworks from 1 July 2024, subject to notified commencement details and transitional rules for earlier cases.

The BNS reorganized offences, added provisions including organized crime and terrorism, changed the sedition framework to an offence concerning acts endangering sovereignty, unity, and integrity, and introduced community service for specified offences. The BNSS expanded timelines and electronic processes, forensic investigation requirements for serious offences, and provisions concerning custody and trial in absence. The BSA updated treatment of electronic and digital records.

Government presented the measures as decolonization, modernization, victim orientation, and technology-enabled justice. Critics pointed to rushed parliamentary passage during opposition suspensions, broad security offences, police-power concerns, implementation burdens, and continuity beneath new terminology. Enactment and commencement do not guarantee trained police, prosecutors, forensic laboratories, judges, interoperable systems, or consistent safeguards. Operational effect must therefore be assessed over time.

Science, digital platforms, welfare, and infrastructure expanded state reach

Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander achieved a soft landing on 23 August 2023 and deployed the Pragyan rover. The mission made India the fourth country to soft-land on the Moon and the first to land in the high southern-latitude region. Its significance lay in accumulated institutional capability, cost-conscious engineer-

ing, navigation, propulsion, and scientific experimentation, not merely national prestige.

Digital public systems linked identity, bank accounts, mobile access, payments, certificates, tax administration, vaccination, and welfare transfer. They reduced some transaction costs, enabled rapid scale, and made benefits more traceable. Direct delivery and interoperable payment rails also supported a larger formal digital economy. Yet authentication failure, data mismatch, weak grievance mechanisms, fraud, surveillance risk, privacy, connectivity, and dependence on centralized infrastructure could exclude the people most in need.

Economic policy after the pandemic emphasized recovery, manufacturing incentives, public capital expenditure, highways, freight and passenger rail modernization, airports, logistics, renewable energy, and digital connectivity. Welfare combined food support, housing, sanitation, cooking fuel, health insurance, rural employment, credit, and targeted transfers. Outcomes varied by state and household; an announced allocation, physical asset, account opened, service used, and durable welfare gain are different measures.

The broad economy recovered from the pandemic contraction, but employment quality, rural demand, small-enterprise resilience, food prices, regional gaps, and wealth concentration remained central disputes. Infrastructure can raise productive capacity and political visibility, while its distributional result depends on land acquisition, environmental safeguards, maintenance, complementary jobs, and access. A balanced assessment pairs capacity with incidence: who received what, when, with which exclusion, and at what fiscal or ecological cost?

The 2024 election restored coalition dependence

The Election Commission recorded 97.98 crore electors, 8,360 contestants, and polling across 543 constituencies. Final atlas turnout was 66.10 per cent, excluding the uncontested Surat

seat, compared with 67.40 per cent in 2019 under the atlas methodology. The BJP won 240 seats, below the 272 needed for a single-party majority; Congress won 99. Regional and alliance partners again became essential to government formation.

After receiving letters demonstrating that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance could command majority support, the President appointed Narendra Modi prime minister. He and the Council of Ministers took oath on 9 June 2024. This was his third consecutive term, but the parliamentary basis differed from 2019: government survival now depended on coalition support, especially from major allies.

The result did not erase BJP predominance in national organization, leadership, resources, and geography. It did restore bargaining within the governing alliance, strengthen the formal opposition, and show that welfare, leadership, nationalism, caste coalitions, unemployment concerns, prices, regional strategies, and constitutional messaging interacted differently across states. Vote share, alliance vote transfers, and seats under first-past-the-post must be distinguished.

Census 2027 remained an unfinished state-capacity project

The decennial census expected in 2021 was delayed during the pandemic, leaving policy and representation reliant on aging population baselines. On 4 June 2025 the government announced Census 2027 in two phases with caste enumeration. The reference date is 1 March 2027 for most of India and 1 October 2026 for specified snow-bound areas of Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

By 30 March 2026, official planning described it as India's first digital census and reported implementation of the house-listing phase during 2026. Digital self-enumeration and mobile-based collection can improve speed and processing but require cybersecurity, training, device reliability, offline capacity, language access, and protection against exclusion. Caste enumeration may

reshape evidence for representation and welfare debates, but categories, self-identification, coding, publication, and political use remain complex.

At the 10 August 2026 cutoff, field implementation did not equal completion. Population enumeration with the March 2027 reference date had not occurred, final tables had not been published, and no valid Census 2027 result could be stated. Women's-reservation implementation and future delimitation remained connected to the post-census publication sequence rather than to forecasts.

Continuity and change formed one pattern

Continuity appeared in centralized leadership, BJP ideological priorities, welfare-plus-nationalism campaigning, public investment, digital administration, and security-centered politics. Change appeared in pandemic governance, farm-law repeal, stronger judicial intervention in political finance, new legal codes, women's-reservation architecture, lunar achievement, and the return of coalition necessity after 2024.

The period also joined contrary tendencies. The state became more capable of mass digital and physical delivery yet more dependent on data and centralized platforms. Parliament enacted major changes quickly, while courts, protests, elections, federal bargaining, and implementation constraints modified outcomes. National integration language intensified, while regional parties and territorial disputes retained leverage. The most defensible judgment is institutional rather than partisan: Indian democracy remained electorally competitive and socially mobilized, but the quality of deliberation, civil liberty, federal consent, disclosure, and equal administrative access stayed contested.

Interpretations and debates

- Political scientist Suhas Palshikar’s “second dominant party system” helps explain BJP centrality after 2014. The 2024 result weakened single-party parliamentary dominance without ending the party’s wider predominance.
- Federal scholars distinguish constitutional centralization from political centralization. Jammu and Kashmir’s reorganization, pandemic orders, and national laws increased Union initiative, while state implementation and regional parties retained leverage.
- Public-law analysis divides over whether rapid major legislation represents decisive democratic mandate or weakened deliberation. Court holdings can invalidate a mechanism or protect a right without settling the entire political controversy.
- State-capacity interpretation must separate reach from quality. Vaccination, digital payments, welfare transfers, infrastructure, and census technology show scale; exclusion, privacy, local staffing, health access, and grievance repair determine substantive success.
- Social-movement analysis treats farm-law repeal as evidence that electoral majorities do not eliminate bargaining outside Parliament. Critics of blockade politics raise a counterpoint about disruption and unequal access to national visibility.
- Security narratives require attribution. Government operational statements are evidence of an official position, not neutral verification of every target, loss, or tactical outcome.
- Balanced judgement: 2019–26 combined electoral continuity with institutional contestation. Democratic resilience appeared in voting, protest, judicial review, and repeal; democratic strain appeared in civil-liberty disputes, compressed scrutiny, opaque finance, and unequal administrative burdens.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date	Event	Why it matters
23 May 2019	General-election results declared	BJP's 303 seats renew single-party majority government.
5–6 Aug 2019	Article 370 constitutional orders issued	Alter the constitutional relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and the Union.
9 Nov 2019	Supreme Court decides Ayodhya title case	Orders transfer of disputed site for a temple trust and alternate land for a mosque.
12 Dec 2019	Citizenship amendment receives presidential assent	Creates a religion- and country-specific route to citizenship; statutory commencement follows on 10 January 2020.
Dec 2019–Mar 2020	CAA protests spread	Citizenship, equality, documents, and federal policing become mass political questions.
25 Mar 2020	Nationwide COVID-19 lockdown begins	Restricts movement and economic activity at unprecedented scale.
15 Jun 2020	Galwan Valley clash	Produces the deadliest India–China border confrontation in decades.

Date	Event	Why it matters
Sep 2020	Three central farm laws enacted	Recasts agricultural marketing and contracts; triggers sustained opposition.
16 Jan 2021	National COVID-19 vaccination begins	Starts a vast public-health and digital-delivery operation.
Apr–May 2021	Severe second pandemic wave	Exposes shortages and uneven health capacity.
30 Nov 2021	Farm Laws Repeal Act enacted and enforced	Reverses the three 2020 statutes after mass protest.
28 May 2023	New Parliament building inaugurated	Marks a major institutional-symbolic infrastructure shift.
23 Aug 2023	Chandrayaan-3 soft-lands on Moon	Demonstrates scientific and engineering capacity.
28 Sep 2023	Constitution (106th Amendment) receives assent	Creates delayed-implementation women's legislative reservation.
11 Dec 2023	Supreme Court rules on Article 370 cases	Upholds operative outcome while rejecting the Article 367 amendment device.
22 Jan 2024	Ram temple consecration at Ayodhya	Religious-political event follows, but is distinct from, the 2019 title judgment.
15 Feb 2024	Electoral-bonds judgment	Invalidates anonymous funding architecture and orders disclosure.
11 Mar 2024	Citizenship-amendment rules notified	Makes the statutory application process operational after delay.

Date	Event	Why it matters
4 Jun 2024	Lok Sabha results declared	BJP loses single-party majority; NDA retains majority support.
9 Jun 2024	Third Modi ministry sworn in	Coalition support becomes necessary for government formation.
1 Jul 2024	New criminal codes commence	BNS, BNSS, and BSA replace the IPC, CrPC, and Evidence Act frameworks.
22 Apr 2025	Pahalgam attack	Killing of civilians precipitates a major India–Pakistan crisis.
7–10 May 2025	Operation Sindoor and military confrontation	India reports strikes on nine sites; DGMOs agree to halt military action on 10 May.
4 Jun 2025	Census 2027 design announced	Confirms two phases, caste enumeration, and differentiated reference dates.
2026	House-listing implementation begins	First digital census enters operational phase without producing final results.

High-confusion comparisons

Pair	First element	Second element	Exam trap
Article 370 or- ders vs Reorgan- isation Act	Change consti- tutional applica- tion	Divide state into two UTs	Constitutional status and ter- ritorial form are distinct.
CAA vs nation- wide NRC	Citizenship route for speci- fied migrants	Hypothetical all- India citizenship register	One does not legally create the other.

Pair	First element	Second element	Exam trap
Ayodhya judgment vs consecration	Title remedy, 2019	Religious-political ceremony, 2024	Ceremony is not a judicial holding.
Farm-law enactment vs repeal	Three Acts in 2020	Repeal Act in 2021	Protest did not merely suspend the laws; Parliament repealed them.
Women's-reservation enactment vs operation	Amendment assented in 2023	Census- and delimitation-linked future use	It did not apply in the 2024 election.
2019 vs 2024 government	BJP single-party majority	BJP-led NDA majority support	Same prime minister, different parliamentary dependence.
IPC/CrPC/Evidence Act vs BNS/BNSS/BSA	Earlier statutory frameworks	Replacements commenced in 2024	New names do not prove complete operational transformation.
Official military claim vs established event	Belligerent account of targets or damage	Verifiable chronology of attack, strikes, and halt	Attribute contested operational details.
Census implementation vs results	House listing and preparation in 2026	Population tables after 2027 enumeration	No Census 2027 result existed at cutoff.

Self-test

1. How did the parliamentary basis of government differ between 2019 and 2024?
2. Distinguish the Article 370 presidential orders from the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act.
3. What did the Supreme Court uphold and reject in its December 2023 Article 370 judgment?
4. Who is eligible under the CAA route, and why is it not a nationwide NRC?

5. Why must the 2019 Ayodhya judgment be separated from the 2024 temple consecration?
6. What did migrant distress reveal about the design of the 2020 lockdown?
7. What were the three farm laws intended to change, and how did their legal life end?
8. Why did the 106th Amendment not reserve Lok Sabha seats for women in 2024?
9. What were the main holdings of the electoral-bonds judgment?
10. What changed on 1 July 2024 in criminal law, and what did not change automatically?
11. How should claims about Operation Sindoor be written in an exam answer?
12. What was the implementation status of Census 2027 on 10 August 2026?

Answer key

1. BJP held 303 seats and a single-party majority after 2019; after winning 240 in 2024 it needed NDA partners' support to command a Lok Sabha majority.
2. The orders changed constitutional application and made Article 370 largely inoperative; the Act divided the former state into the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.
3. The Court upheld the operative abrogation outcome and treated Article 370 as temporary, but held invalid the use of Article 367 to alter Article 370's meaning; statehood remained unresolved.
4. It covers specified Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan entering by 31 December 2014; it creates no all-India citizen register.
5. The judgment resolved civil title, ordered a trust and alternate mosque land, and condemned illegal acts; consecration was a later religious-political ceremony.
6. Short notice, transport closure, place-tied welfare, informal

employment, and weak urban protection transferred disproportionate costs to migrant workers.

7. They changed trade outside mandis, contract-farming rules, and stock controls; the Farm Laws Repeal Act repealed all three on 30 November 2021.
8. Article 334A ties operation to delimitation after publication of figures from the first post-amendment census; those steps had not occurred before the election.
9. The Court held anonymous political-funding arrangements unconstitutional, treated non-disclosure as violating voters' Article 19(1)(a) information right, and found unlimited corporate-funding changes arbitrary.
10. BNS, BNSS, and BSA replaced the central penal, procedure, and evidence frameworks; training, capacity, safeguards, transitional cases, and consistent practice did not transform automatically.
11. State the attack, Indian strikes, exchanges, and 10 May halt chronologically; attribute target, damage, interception, and success claims to the government or belligerent asserting them.
12. Digital house-listing implementation had begun, with population reference dates set for October 2026 in specified snow-bound areas and March 2027 elsewhere; final results did not exist.

Closing perspective

The 2019 mandate enabled rapid central action, but enactment did not remove courts, protest, federalism, or implementation limits. Article 370 orders and territorial reorganization were legally distinct; the 2023 judgment upheld the practical outcome while rejecting one interpretive device.

Source note

The Modern India volumes were developed from an integrated revision project drawing on Bipan Chandra's *History of Modern India*, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay's *From Plassey to Partition and After*, and the Spectrum survey *A Brief History of Modern India*. Post-2019 coverage uses an official-source register with an evidence cutoff of 10 August 2026. The present books reorganize and independently edit that research into a continuous narrative and separate source claims from editorial synthesis.

Selected bibliography

- Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar. *From Plassey to Partition and After*. Orient Blackswan.
- Chandra, Bipan. *History of Modern India*. Orient Blackswan.
- Chandra, Bipan, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, K. N. Panikkar, and Sucheta Mahajan. *India's Struggle for Independence*. Penguin.
- Guha, Ramachandra. *India After Gandhi*. Picador.
- Metcalf, Barbara D., and Thomas R. Metcalf. *A Concise History of Modern India*. Cambridge University Press.

About the author

Gaurav Tiwari is an educator, WordPress developer, and the founder of Gatilab. His teaching work focuses on making difficult material easier to understand without flattening its debates, uncertainties, or consequences.

Also in the Indian History Library

- *Connected Worlds, Kingdoms, and the Delhi Sultanate*
- *Mughals, Deccan Powers, and an Empire in Crisis*
- *Company Rule and the Colonial State*
- *Mass Nationalism, Competing Futures, and Partition*
- *The Republic of India*
- *Modern India Reference Companion*