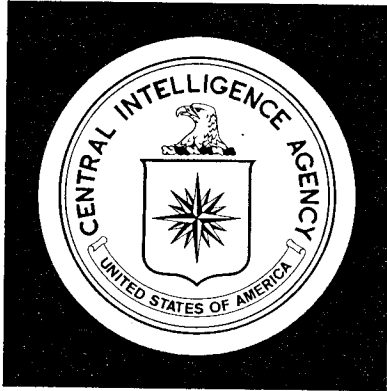


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Research Study

India: Developing Power or Developing Power Vacuum

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OPR-5
June 1974

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
OFFICE OF POLITICAL RESEARCH

June 1974

INDIA: DEVELOPING POWER OR
DEVELOPING POWER VACUUM

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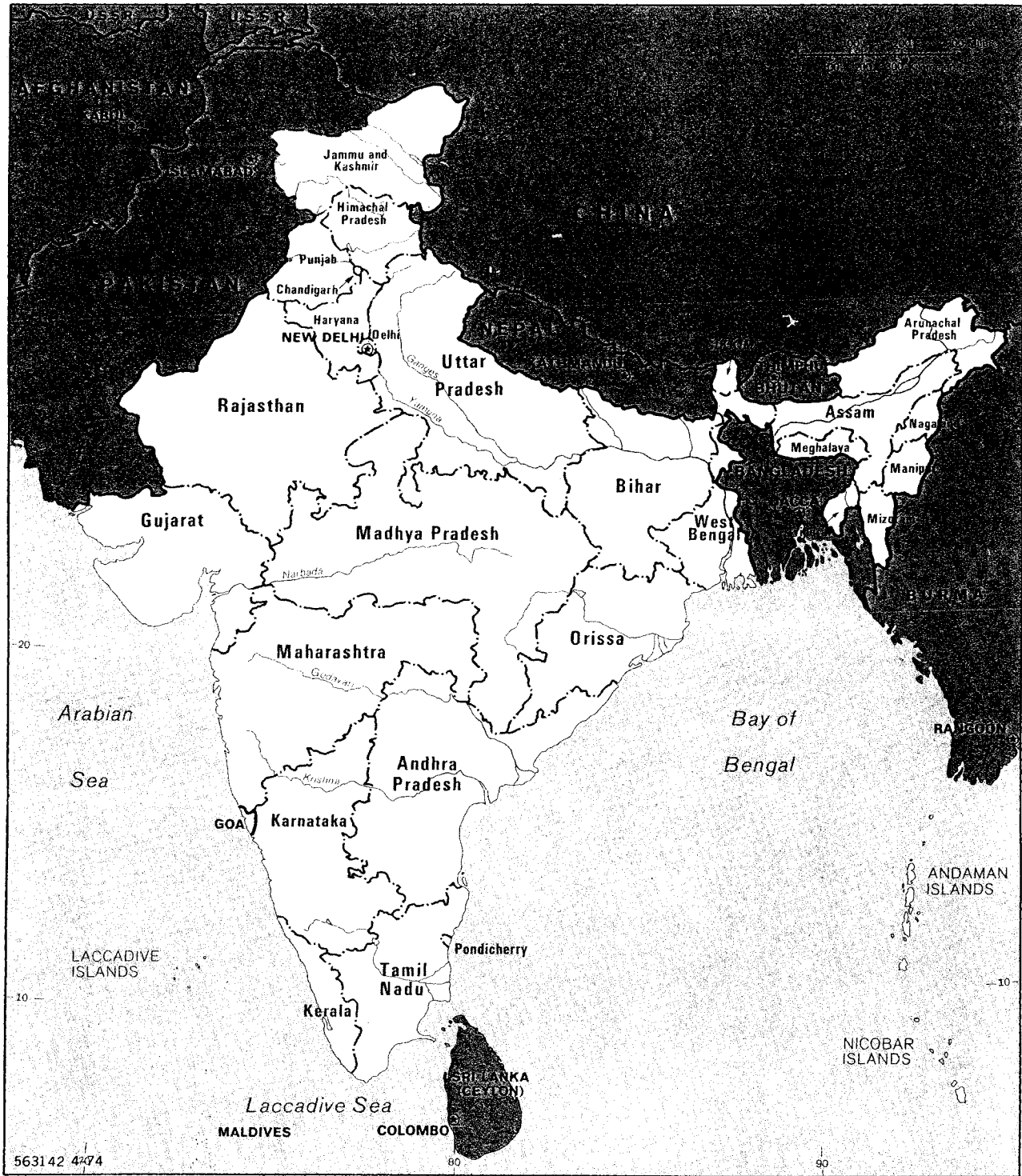
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NOTE: *The Office of Political Research consulted other components of the CIA in the preparation of this Research Study, and they are in general agreement with its judgments. Comments on the Study are welcome and should be addressed to its author,* [REDACTED]

FOREWORD

This Study presents a stark picture of India's future. Virtually all observers of the Indian scene would agree that the problems confronting the Indian government will become extremely serious over the next few years. Some would argue that the leaders in New Delhi can nonetheless find some way of muddling through. The argument here is simply that the chances of extensive trouble leading to crisis are quite high, and it is therefore only prudent to consider the international implications which could flow from a strife-torn Asian subcontinent.

India's Political Subdivisions



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INDIA: DEVELOPING POWER OR DEVELOPING POWER VACUUM

KEY JUDGMENTS

Analyses of India, even by experts, are too often colored by the news of the moment. And the current news from that nation of nearly 600 million people is mostly bad. "This country is in trouble" cabled the US Ambassador from New Delhi in March 1974.¹ In the same month, economists for the World Bank presented a report predicting huge and urgent Indian needs for economic and food aid over the next few years and warning of a "famine of grave proportions" in the event of a monsoon failure.² Well reported developments in India are in line with these assessments. Food is quite scarce despite a supposedly good harvest; prices are rising rapidly; the energy crisis threatens body blows to the economy; public unrest is spreading.

It is the thesis of this Research Study that India is likely to see comparable but more serious troubles over the longer term. The problems now facing the Indian government are harbingers of the future, although they may be ameliorated in the short run. In any event, the following is not primarily concerned with developments in India over the next several months or even the next few years. Its pessimistic prognoses are not rooted in recent gloomy news or in projections of hypothetical calamities.³ This study attempts, after considering political, social, cultural, and economic determinants of change and stability, to assay likely trends in that large and complex country over the next decade or so.

After weighing the pros and cons it judges that:

—The present Indian government, or any foreseeable successor, is unlikely to bring about dramatic economic

¹New Delhi 3236, 7 March 1974. Confidential.

²*New York Times*, 11 March 1974, page 10.

³For example, this study does not consider the hypothesis of some climatologists that changing weather patterns will mean that many areas of the world, India included, will soon suffer from droughts (and famines) unprecedented in the 20th century. That subject will be considered in a separate study now underway in the Office of Political Research.

[REDACTED]

breakthroughs or social changes. But it will continue to achieve some modest gains and will—as it has in the past—show considerable staying power, even under adverse conditions.

—That government will probably not, over time, be able to cope with the food/population problem. With the number of people continuing to grow and the availability of food becoming more uncertain, a Malthusian crisis with widespread political repercussions will become increasingly likely—perhaps before the end of the 1970s.

—Were such a crisis to occur, it would increase the danger of an internal crippling of authority and even of fragmentation of the Indian union and the emergence of a power vacuum in the South Asian area.

—If these judgments are correct, important questions are raised about how such prospective difficulties could have their impact on the international community. Though no definitive answer can be confidently given, the various possibilities are canvassed in Section IV below. All could have implications, in some cases major ones, for US interests.

—Any attempt to create or play out specific scenarios is outside the scope of this study. But it is clear enough that aggravated Indian turmoil would generate a mix of temptation, suspicion, competition, and reaction among the principal powers. This is where India's "negative importance" to the world would surface—an importance which can be overlooked while that country, even though a member of the nuclear club, remains fairly stable and takes a passive (or largely ineffectual) role in international affairs. But in extremis, each of the great powers and the lesser ones abutting on India would be hypersensitive to what the other parties were doing or planning to do; each would be inclined to suspect the worst and would prepare to take countermeasures. The opportunities and incentives for one or another kind of interference in the matter would be very great; the chances of action and reaction leading to confrontation—or conflict—are large enough to merit serious US contingency study now.

THE DISCUSSION

I. FACTORS FOR STABILITY; DETERMINANTS OF CHANGE

"Objectivity" is a scarce commodity among students of India. That country tends to arouse strong emotions, pro or con, particularly when the subject is whether the Indians can and will be able to deal with their own problems. Thus:

Inertia, helplessness, lack of initiative and originality, lack of staying power and sustained loyalties, sterility of enthusiasm, weakness of life-vigor itself—all are traits that truly characterize the Indian not only of today, but of long-past history. All, furthermore, will continue to characterize him, in increasing degree. . . .⁴

Modern, more sophisticated and sympathetic students of India sometimes echo bleak sentiments, even when offering hope of change for the better.

If the wellsprings of Indian development efforts seem to be drying up, the explanation must in large part be traced to the inability or unwillingness to reform the social and economic structure of the country.⁵

It is apparent, though, that even Western students of a conservative leaning, who cannot be suspected of any Communist sympathies, have begun to ask themselves whether a social revolution is not necessary in order to set the South Asian countries firmly on the road to progress.⁶

As opposed to such gloomy analysis are ones like the following:

The Indians' sense of their rich cultural heritage, their record of professional achievement in the arts and sciences of the modern world, and their faith in their ability to govern themselves, combined to give them a national maturity that allowed a reasoned approach to the creation and working of government. Equipped with the basic qualifications, attitudes, and experience for creating and working a democratic constitution, Indians did not default their trust with destiny.⁷

There is indeed no general agreement on what makes Indians do what they do. Psychological analyses of "national character" have not been particularly rewarding. All studies—including this one—of so complex a country as India are necessarily interpretive, and ample scope for disagreement continues to exist. But India was and is an open society. It has long been the object of research and analysis by Indians and non-Indians alike. From these studies a number of forces and trends can be derived.

⁴Kathleen Mayo, *Mother India*, 1927, page 161. This book is one of the earliest and most polemical of attacks on India.

⁵Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, 1968, page 279. Still perhaps the best work on the area.

⁶*Ibid.*, page 117.

⁷Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution, Cornerstone of a Nation*, 1966, page 330.

A. Political Traditions: The Limits on Authority

Within India's enormous bulk there is a paradoxical mixture of strengths and weaknesses, of centrifugal and centripetal forces, of elements working for continuity and for change. Hinduism (85 percent of Indians are Hindus and the remainder are deeply affected by its traditions) is the strongest common bond. The belief that a "Hindu way of life" leads Indians to differ from others by inculcating spiritual, self-denying values as opposed to materialistic matters is both widespread and inaccurate.⁸

But there is an Indian social system deeply rooted in history and seen in hundreds of thousands of isolated, traditionalist villages. The villages' social structure has been reinforced by the specifically Hindu caste system, and perpetuated further by the little contact villagers have had with the outside world. Traditions of toleration and a desire for consensus are rooted in the Indian past. But so too are authoritarianism, passivity, and acceptance of the status quo. However much consensus was sought within a joint family or caste, society was organized on hierarchical lines; the roles and duties of rulers and ruled were strictly laid out.

Pre-British Buddhist and Hindu India created no enduring political philosophy and established no notable political tradition. Democracy, or even something that might appear to have been a precursor, was unknown. Government was traditionally absolute and arbitrary.⁹ Nor did government authority extend very far. Geographically, the entire subcontinent was never, throughout history, under the control of a single Hindu ruler. No Hindu empire of any magnitude has existed since the sixth or seventh century A.D. Nor did such states desire, seek, or get anything approaching widespread public support or emotional allegiance from their subjects.

The Muslim conquest of a large part of the subcontinent began about A.D. 1000, and ushered in, for many of that area's Hindu inhabitants, a time of exploitation, oppression, and tragedy. Government, more than in the past, became to them a foreign, hostile, and oppressive institution.¹⁰ By the end of the 18th century the British had taken over, substituting another autocratic and foreign, though more benign, rule. The British with their own traditions of limits on authority also introduced a number of ideals and practices designed to protect the citizens from their rulers, and to ensure them a greater measure of individual liberty against the state.

⁸"It is completely contrary to scientific principles to follow the easy, speculative approach of explaining the peculiarities in attitudes, institutions, and modes of living and working by reference to broad concepts of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or to personality or cultural traits such as abstention, spiritualism, lack of materialism, and other allegedly 'Asian values.' And it is not accidental that these broad generalizations can so easily be shown to be unrealistic." Myrdal, *op. cit.*, page 112.

⁹It was also frequently benign and paternalistic. The outstanding model of the benevolent autocrat was the famous Emperor Asoka, who ruled in the third century B.C.

¹⁰Another major legacy of Islamic rule was the creation of large Muslim minorities in the subcontinent, and ultimately the separation of the area into two (now three) countries: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. This paper is principally concerned with the problems of the present Republic of India, though its two Islamic neighbors share, in differing degrees, many of its assets and liabilities.

When India became an independent country, both its citizens and its rulers had inherited deep-seated attitudes toward government and authority. Government is a suspect and outside force, latently hostile, and to be resisted. It is also a fairly remote entity for most people, and more often than not of no immediate or direct impact. This wary attitude is, in practice, shared by those in positions of authority in democratic India and by the general run of the citizens.

The central ingredient in Indian life is social indiscipline, a refusal to compel and a refusal to respond to authority. Government at all levels is reluctant to make demands on its citizens; when demands are made, they are indifferently enforced. Those that are met meet an unvoiced, unyielding resistance, rooted in a deep skepticism of the demands' legitimacy and intent.¹¹

While this "refusal to compel and refusal to respond" has played a large role in perpetuating the genuinely liberal and democratic society which India maintains, it has also made the Indian government a comparatively weak one—a "soft state"—reluctant or unable to impose its will on a resisting electorate. There are many well-known examples. Untouchability was abolished in the Indian Constitution of 1950, but continues to be observed in the nation's villages. Complex and ambitious economic plans have been carefully formulated but only incompletely implemented. This is not to say that the state is "weak" in that it cannot assure its own survival. It can, and functions well within bounds. But it is unable to command the type of total mobilization or commitment available to, say, the Japanese, Chinese, or most West European governments.

B. India's Present Rulers

These attitudes, however much conditioned by deep-seated cultural patterns and long historical experience are, of course, not unique to Hindu India; they are common throughout the underdeveloped world. But the present Indian government—probably to a greater degree than those of most Afro-Asian states—has been greatly affected by Western values as well. The impact of the British who first came to India early in the 17th century was probably the most important and enduring of any foreign invader in India.

The British unified the subcontinent for the first time in history, developed an administrative structure which still continues, and gave it a better form of government than it had known before. Economically they tied it together, and developed systems of trade and finance. Legally the British brought India a uniform code of justice and the concept of liberty under law. Also of great consequence was their educational/social/cultural impact. Not merely did the British bring India in contact with the whole range of Western thought; they created a new class of people. These people were not exactly, as Macaulay prophesied, "Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." But the impact of Western ways on them was very great. These persons, over the 19th and early 20th century, became the new Indian elite in commerce, business, industry, and eventually in the administration, government, and military services as well.

¹¹Bernard D. Nossiter, *Soft State*, 1970, page 76.

This group, Western-influenced and mostly though not entirely English-speaking, still occupies a pre-eminent place in India. It remains comparatively small (only a few million people), able, and to date not seriously challenged. Its commitment to maintaining political liberty and democratic rule remains strong. But pre-eminence is not dominance. Indeed, the Western democratic traditions by which India has been so strongly affected have reinforced deeper seated views as to the necessary limits on government and authority. It is also true, of course, that India's ruling class is not a totally cohesive, a homogeneous, or a like-minded group. The economic and social outlook of, say, businessmen, generals, government administrators, and political party leaders differ widely. Their ties with the mass of Indians vary considerably. But whatever the specific case, this small ruling elite has shown itself as far more capable of dominating the political system and of maintaining its own position than in transforming the rest of India's society and economy.

The Indian political system is strongly influenced by Western democratic political thought and is also generally accepted by rulers and ruled alike. The country functions under a written constitution. Jurisdictions are organized on federal lines. There are now 21 states and several lesser territories, mostly organized on linguistic lines. Though the Indian constitution gives the states some real power, e.g., their exclusive jurisdiction in agricultural taxation, the central government is so strong as to call into question the federal concept itself. The constitution allocates residuary power to the national government (usually referred to as the "Centre"). It permits the central parliament, by a simple majority, to form new states or redraw state boundaries without the consent of the states affected. The central government, if it so chooses, can declare an emergency and dismiss any state government and take over its administration. Its dominant position has been further reinforced by its commanding role in economic planning, commercial regulation, fiscal administration, foreign policy, defense, and communications. At the same time, the state governments have not withered away; rather they have developed extensive bureaucracies and in practice are responsible for much of the day-to-day administration (including executing the basic directives of the Centre) in the country.

India is a parliamentary democracy. Real executive authority is exercised, as in England, by the Prime Minister (in the states by the Chief Minister) who is chosen from, and responsible to, the popularly elected lower house of Parliament. (Each state has a Governor and India has a President, all of whom resemble the present British monarch in being symbolic heads of state without real power.) There is also a separate and independent judiciary, but in the last analysis the national parliament, and particularly the lower house—the *Lok Sabha*, or House of the People—is the supreme power in India. Members of parliament and of the state legislatures are chosen in free elections. All citizens 21 and older are eligible to vote. Elections to each legislative body must be held at least every five years, but can come at shorter intervals if special elections are called.

The Congress Party has been the dominant political institution within this constitutional framework. Established in the late 19th century, transformed by Gandhi into the leading force in attaining Indian independence, and then forged by Nehru into his instrument of rule, Congress remains the only major national party in India, despite its many rivals. It has deep roots and many able leaders. It continues to espouse Nehru's popular goals of pressing for a moderate democratic socialism, of seek-

ing to develop a planned economy which will put an end to the country's massive poverty, and of fostering orderly social change.

For all its strengths, Congress has long had many serious problems.¹² It has never been able to get a majority of the popular vote in any national election; the most it achieved was in 1952 and 1957, when it got 45 percent and 48 percent of the vote. It has been able to win its very large parliamentary majorities because of the divisions among its opponents. Thus in most constituencies the Congress candidate, with 30-40 percent of the vote, will win because his opposition is divided between three, four, or more rival candidates.¹³

None of the opposition parties now existing could produce a viable alternative government to the Congress. There is no nationwide opposition but rather many small factionalized groups, usually with supporters in specific areas of the country. Opposition parties with specific ideological appeals, e.g., the right-wing free-enterprise Swatantra Party, or the Socialists and Communists on the left have notably failed to develop major, nationwide constituencies. This means that India's political future lies with the Congress Party. Even when it loses its legislative majority, as has often happened in a number of states and once at the Centre, the Congress usually remains the largest group and becomes the leading force in a viable coalition. This fact has in turn reinforced Congress' long-standing propensity to maintain ambiguous stands on many important political and social issues. In one sense, this adaptability to a wide range of views enables Congress to continue as a moderate, centrist institution showing a considerable tolerance for conflicting opinions and embracing and accommodating different castes, interest groups, communities, and regions.

On the other hand, its heterogeneity and consequent indiscipline inhibit strong actions. For example, many local Congress leaders in the states and smaller jurisdictions are prosperous landowners and businessmen who are not in sympathy with the socialist and populist programs of Prime Minister Gandhi and her entourage, even though she (like her father before her) has been able to force overt, official party adoption of her policies. Peasant proprietors have effectively prevented the passage of effective land reform legislation—strongly advocated by Mrs. Gandhi—in the state legislatures. Regulations designed by Nehru to restrain monopolies and abuses of economic power by businessmen have been converted by national and state bureaucracies into restrictive and time-consuming regulations (often manipulated by unscrupulous plutocrats) that tend to throttle economic activity.¹⁴

But Mrs. Gandhi is not just a shadow ruler. Domestically, she has shown enormous talent in political survival, in the dispatch of her rivals, and in the winning of elections. In the exercise of foreign policy, where she has a comparatively free hand, Mrs. Gandhi has shown considerable force, purposiveness, and skill. But in the manage-

¹²In late 1969, the Congress split into two parties. A smaller faction, led by more conservative state party leaders, seceded after failing to oust Mrs. Gandhi. This group was almost wiped out in Mrs. Gandhi's smashing election victory in March 1971, and her faction is now de facto the ruling Congress Party.

¹³Mrs. Gandhi's wing of the Congress triumphed in 1971 with 43 percent of the vote, enough to get a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

¹⁴According to a recent study by the Indian Planning Commission, it takes nearly four years for an Indian businessman to run the gamut of regulations and start a business.

ment and administration of the government and economy, she is in the restrictive, "soft state" tradition of Indian political life, and her record is less impressive.¹⁵ While able to win a rousing mandate on the issue of "abolishing poverty," she has not in fact been able to do much toward achieving that aim. Nor is she likely to be able to exert much more of an impact on Indian society. Her control of the economy, and even of the bureaucracy, is not commanding. The resistance to the exercise of strong authority which characterizes India from the village level up to the national government itself is probably too deeply built in to national life to permit any major change.

Barring major, fundamental social and political changes, these inhibitions would apply to any successor who led another Congress government. They would apply even more if Mrs. Gandhi passed from the scene, Congress lost its parliamentary majority, and India were ruled by a coalition government.¹⁶ They would probably also be much the same were the present constitutional political system to be replaced by a "stronger" one, say a military dictatorship, whose leaders would come from the same milieu as the present civilian rulers. The institutional inhibitions in that huge and complex country make sustained and efficient central direction an improbability. This state of affairs will remain a source both of India's strength and of its weakness. The social and political system is likely to remain responsive to popular demands and resistant to tyranny. But it will perpetuate immobility and inefficiency.

C. The Economy: Political Implications

India is so big that aggregate statistics are impressive. GNP in 1973 was \$56 billion, eighth largest in the world. India produces between 6 and 7 million tons of steel a year, has large textile and food processing industries, and manufactures many other items up through and including jet aircraft. According to the 1971 census, it has nine cities with more than a million people.

For all that, India in the aggregate remains a rural, very poor country. Seventy percent of the people are engaged in agriculture. Per capita annual income is less than \$100 a year. By the Indian government's own reckoning, 40 percent of the people live below a "poverty line" which is set at the level of barest subsistence. By Western standards there is widespread unemployment and underemployment though there is no ready way of precisely measuring them.¹⁷

¹⁵There is one area where Congress' reformist achievements have been substantial, but of unexpected consequence. Educational facilities have been greatly expanded and illiteracy has dropped. While doubtless improving the quality of human resources, this program has also produced a massive new class of disaffected students and ex-students. Thus there are now 2.5 million university students in India, as compared to 300,000 in 1950. Many have no hope of finding suitable jobs; they now form the core of an alienated and effective protest force.

¹⁶Such coalitions have ruled in many states. While they have shown the same sort of transient nature as seen in Italy today and in France several years ago, they have not done a bad job overall. The bureaucracy has continued functioning, civil liberties have been respected, and law and order maintained.

¹⁷As stated in the US Embassy, New Delhi, Airgram, 25 December, 1970: "There are no reliable estimates of India's labor force—rough guesses place it as high as 210 million—nor of the total number of unemployed. Employment statistics are maintained only for the so-called 'organized sector' of the economy, which employs less than 10 percent of the total labor force and includes government employees and those working for Central and State Government enterprises and larger private firms, but excludes virtually the entire agricultural sector (which accounts for nearly 50 percent of India's GNP) as well as private firms employing less than ten workers and those who are self-employed. Except for the organized sector, there is simply no adequate measure of employment, unemployment, or underemployment in India. Estimates of unemployment vary from 10 to 50 million, and of underemployment from 100 to 170 million."

Despite the pervasiveness and depth of India's poverty, there has yet to appear anything like a major revolution of rising expectations. Most people are "have nots," but they have not rebelled against the comparatively small group of businessmen, landowners, intellectuals, and bureaucrats who form what in effect is a "ruling class," however heterogeneous it itself may be. But populist appeals including attacks on entrenched privilege, promises of land reform and redistribution, nationalization of banks, big business, and the like have indeed aroused public response. Prime Minister Gandhi, like her father, uses such appeals to great effect in seeking and maintaining mass political support, though, of course, implementation has been another matter.

Throughout history, feeding itself has been a major challenge to India, and one that has not always been met. Famines were common, even regular, occurrences up through the end of the 19th century, though the record since has been a fairly creditable one. On an average (variations occur each year) food output has increased at about 3.9 percent a year in the last two decades while the rate of population increase has been 2-2.5 percent. Even so, the country has usually not been self-sufficient in food. It is the thesis of this study (Section II) that the food/population problem will be the prime source of India's difficulties over the next decades.

Economic growth and development has long been fostered by the Indian government. While agriculture has recently received heavy attention, for years the principal concentration was on the industrialization of the country. In economic terms (the details of which are outside the scope of this study) the results have been mixed. Few of the ambitious targets have been achieved, and most new state-run enterprises are operated very inefficiently. But a considerable number of projects have been completed and there is substantial industrial production. These new industries, however, have not succeeded in absorbing the large number of people who have entered the labor market thanks to population growth and the spread of underemployment in the countryside. They have in the main benefited those comparatively small groups of people who were already members of India's elite: the bureaucrats, the members of the small middle class, the businessmen and the like. But the new industries have probably accelerated the growth of urban centers and fostered unrest in them by attracting far more potential employees and service personnel than the newly expanded cities could make use of. For all the new opportunities they have provided, the government's economic development programs have not produced an economic boom which has trickled benefits down through the society. In these circumstances neither a period of rapid industrial growth nor of recession is likely on its own to have the sharp, immediate political impact that would be seen in more advanced, industrialized countries.

Like the US, India is a large continental power with many natural resources of its own. Unlike Japan, it does not normally depend on foreign trade—which it heavily regulates—for its existence. Yet in years of severe food shortages India has had to import large quantities of food for which it could pay only on generous concessional terms. Until the recent boost in petroleum prices, India had, for a few years, been able without foreign assistance to import items needed to keep the economy going, however inefficiently. As of the summer of 1973, India's imports and exports were, in relation to GNP, comparatively small. They were also running roughly in balance, and amounted (in the year ending April 1973) to about \$2.5 billion each. Most exports were of commodities: tea, jute, cotton, iron ore, as well as textiles and a small amount of manufactured goods from its new industries. Imports included food, machinery,

and some industrial raw materials. They also included commodities India needs, including most non-ferrous metals, some fertilizer, and petroleum.

India's economic development programs have had some specific international political consequences. A large part of the development effort has been financed by foreign borrowing, and India is now one of the world's major debtors. By early 1974 India's total external debt—to the US, the World Bank, the principal non-Communist countries, the USSR, and Eastern Europe—approached \$5 billion.¹⁸ It owes the US alone over \$3 billion, the USSR over \$1 billion. These sums are beyond India's ability on its own to repay, and it must either get more aid to repay what was previously owed or seek a moratorium on debt repayments. Either course could have major consequences in so far as India's relations with its many aid donors are concerned. In India itself the whole subject of foreign aid has become a highly controversial one. Some claim such programs have done more harm than good and should be ended quickly. Others insist that India is still heavily dependent on outside assistance, and must seek it with heightened vigor.

D. The Energy Crisis

The recent surge in world oil prices could hurt India badly—a fact which has been widely publicized. During 1973, India spent \$484 million on oil imports. Following the price increases by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting countries (OPEC) in January 1974, it was expected that (without some form of relief) these costs would go up to \$1.2 billion a year, about a third of its projected export earnings. Food output would be hurt by fertilizer shortages brought on by reduced supplies of, or inordinately high prices for, petrochemical feedstocks needed in India's own fertilizer plants, as well as by the worldwide shortage of fertilizers made elsewhere from petrochemical feedstocks. It is still too early to say how much fertilizer availability will fall, and how disastrous an impact this will have. Some experts (including the US Agricultural Attache) have predicted that a combination of drought and fertilizer scarcity will lead to a drop in food output in 1974 of 10 percent below what had been expected.

Without diminishing the seriousness of the threat posed to India by the present energy crisis, its impact either in the short or the long term will not inevitably be as severe as some have predicted. Though not certain of success, New Delhi can hope to ease the import cost burden both by getting oil at reduced concessional terms from its wealthy OPEC friends in the Persian Gulf (it has already signed agreements with Iraq and Iran which could reduce its petroleum bill by \$200-300 million in 1974), and by getting additional financial aid from the World Bank and various outside powers. To date, the Soviets have been helpful in agreeing to provide further assistance in increasing output of existing fields and in discovering new ones. They have also agreed to provide one million tons of kerosene and 100,000 tons of diesel oil.

India may have the potential for self-sufficiency in energy over the longer term. It already has the refineries needed to process the oil it consumes. It now produces a third of its petroleum needs despite the fact that it has been relatively indifferent to exploration for further reserves. The Indian government, socialist and nationalist if not xenophobic, and particularly suspicious of large foreign corporations, has until recently refused to permit Western (including American) oil firms to explore for oil

¹⁸An additional \$4 billion obligation to the US, in rupees for PL-480 shipments, is not included in this total.

either onshore or offshore. Many promising areas have not been explored at all. Some new finds of petroleum have been made with Soviet assistance, but much more could be done.

Nor is petroleum India's primary source of energy. Over 40 percent of the country's needs are met (mostly in the villages) by such as cow dung and firewood. Coal provides about another 40 percent, principally to the advanced sectors of the economy. Oil meets only 10 percent of the nation's requirements, and the rest is provided by hydroelectric power and nuclear fuels.¹⁹ India has large coal reserves and now produces nearly 80 million tons a year. Doubling that figure in a few years would be feasible—provided there is proper planning, investment, and management. Over the longer term nuclear power has a considerable potential. Two nuclear power plants are under construction and two are in operation. The country has large supplies of thorium, and a lesser amount of uranium. It has the scientists and the knowhow to develop these resources.²⁰ Whether the Indians will be able to exploit their potential and achieve self-sufficiency in energy is, however, another matter. For example, the entire coal industry has recently been nationalized, and the record of state-owned industries over the years has been very unimpressive. Indeed there have already been so many shortfalls in achieving goals theoretically within reach in the energy field (and in many aspects of the economy) as to make any such judgments very cautionary.

E. India on the World Scene

India's international role reflects its paradoxical mixture of strength and weakness. With well over a half billion people, it is impossible to ignore entirely. Its army of over a million men is the third largest in the world. Though its technological base is small as compared to most industrialized countries, its development has reached the stage which permitted it to manufacture and explode a nuclear device; it can proceed to make its own nuclear weapons. Though it no longer enjoys the great prestige it had during Nehru's day, India remains one of the major leaders of the third world, non-aligned countries. It is a principal Indian Ocean power and could extend its influence to the adjacent Persian Gulf. If the size of the naval forces of the US and the USSR are increased in the area, India, with a navy of its own, will automatically figure more importantly in strategic considerations.

India is a direct neighbor of China. It has fought one war with that country, has unresolved border claims against it, and remains one of its central rivals and competitors in Asia. For this and other reasons India has become a close friend of the neighboring Soviet Union—as the recent Brezhnev visit to India showed. India figures large in the Soviet Union's strategic thinking as an element to use to counter China, as an integral part of the Asian Security Pact which the Soviets have advocated, and as a force for stability in South Asian and surrounding areas.

India's potential to make trouble in South Asia itself is considerable; its military forces are superior to any other in the subcontinent. India is involved in intense rivalries, which have brought wars in the past, with Pakistan. Through its continuing

¹⁹Petroleum consumption now runs between 400,000 and 500,000 barrels per day.

²⁰A useful review of India's energy problems is to be found in Marcus F. Franda, "India and the Energy Crunch," American Universities Field Staff, MFF-1-74. See also *Link Magazine*, 6 January 1974.

hostility toward Islamabad, India is involved with latently serious contests with Iran, a strong supporter of Pakistan and a guarantor of the latter's territorial integrity.

But there are distinct limits to India's international importance. Even were it to enjoy economic health and an effective forceful government, India's direct impact on the principal non-Communist powers would not be very great. It exports no commodity like petroleum or copper which they deem essential. It, and its South Asian neighbors, live in an area considerably isolated in a strategic sense from the US, Western Europe, and Japan. In the Indian Ocean area, New Delhi's military/strategic power will remain limited. Its fellow nonaligned powers now pay less attention to it than in Nehru's day. Even a healthy India would remain a poor one; it would not be able to take any world economic initiatives of its own. Even so, India remains: huge, potentially troubled, possibly strong, probably impossible to disregard.

II. THE FOOD/POPULATION PROBLEM

A. *The Population Explosion*

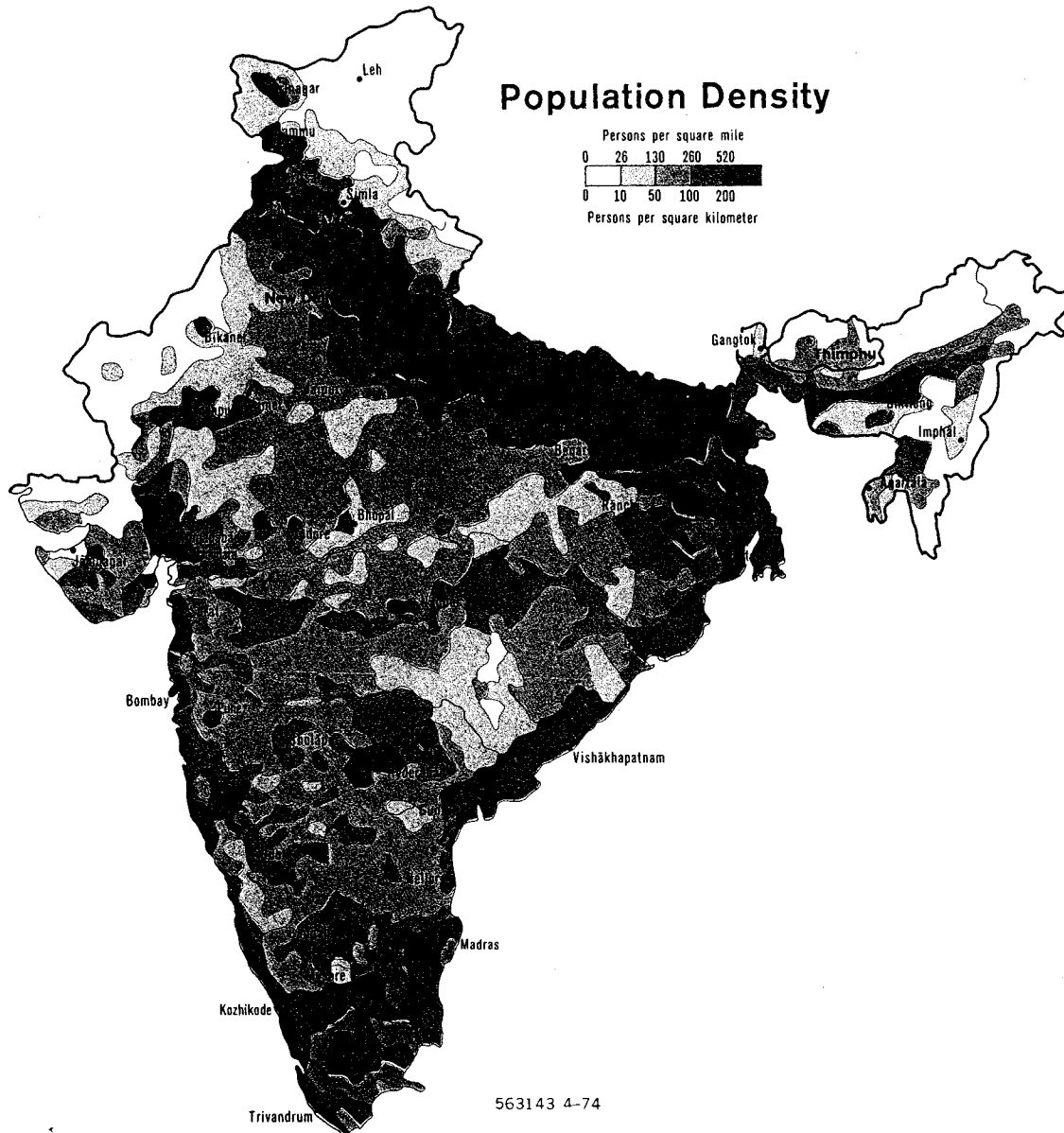
Though Indian statistics must be treated more as rough approximations than exact guides, there are now somewhere between 550 and 600 million Indians.²¹ The annual rate of increase is somewhere between 2.2 and 2.5 percent, or possibly higher. Though this may be a small percentage as compared to, say, some Latin American countries, the result—given the existing large number of people—is a massive population explosion. Thus there are at least 13-14 million more people each year; if the present rate of growth continues, there will be a billion Indians by the year 2000.

The Indian government has long recognized the need to check this rapid population growth. Since the mid-1960s it has pushed an extensive nationwide campaign, not just by exhortation, but also by promotion of such techniques as sterilization, loops, and other contraceptives. There is no objective way of measuring the program's effectiveness. Some observers believe that a good start has been made; others claim the program to be generally a failure, both because of the government's limited efforts and a widespread apathetic response. Though preliminary census figures tentatively indicate some successes, no dramatic victories have been or can be achieved for many years in the best of circumstances.

Health and sanitation programs have greatly reduced the death rate, particularly among children and child-bearing women. This had led to a rapid increase in the proportion of the population in child-bearing ages; according to the 1971 census, 50 percent of the population was then under 20 years of age, and 42 percent was under 15. But fertility patterns have not changed much, and traditional cultural preferences for many births to offset anticipated deaths continue to prevail. The Indians have projected a hoped for, gradual reduction in growth rate to about 1.6 percent by 1981. Even were this probably unrealistic target to be achieved, the country would in that year have only from 30-70 million fewer people than if the rate continued at 2.2 to 2.5 percent—not a huge number in Indian terms.

²¹According to the official census, the population was 547.9 million in April 1971. Since then the number would have increased to some 590 million. The area that is now India had 238 million people in 1901.

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B. Agricultural Developments

Efforts to feed this mass of people have been more successful than programs to slow its growth. Except in a few bumper years when the rains were excellent, India has not been self-sufficient in food since it became an independent country. But it still has been able to raise food production substantially, roughly doubling it in the past two decades. Increases in the 1950s were due largely to much new land being brought under cultivation, and to completion of some major dams and irrigation projects. In the latter part of the 1960s following a serious period of stagnating (and in two years, declining) output, good weather and the "Green Revolution" brought dramatic new gains in food production. This was limited principally to wheat. New strains were grown in northwestern India. Improved water-control measures were applied to already irrigated lands, and, with government promotion, so were large amounts of fertilizer.

By the end of the crop year ending in June 1973, wheat output was double what it had been six years earlier, but still accounted for only about a quarter of India's total foodgrain production of some 100 million tons. By contrast the output of India's other principal foods—rice, pulses, sorghum, etc.—had risen only modestly. Though about a fifth of the sown land is now irrigated, most crops still depend on the rains from the annual monsoons. These are highly variable, and poor monsoons with less than average rainfall and reduced food output recur every few years. To date the Indians have been able to import enough food in poor crop years to make up the gaps caused by inadequate rains. These achievements have led to only modest improvements in living and nutritional standards, however. Most of the gains, of course, were literally eaten up by India's rapidly growing population, and the bulk of the people remain ill-fed.

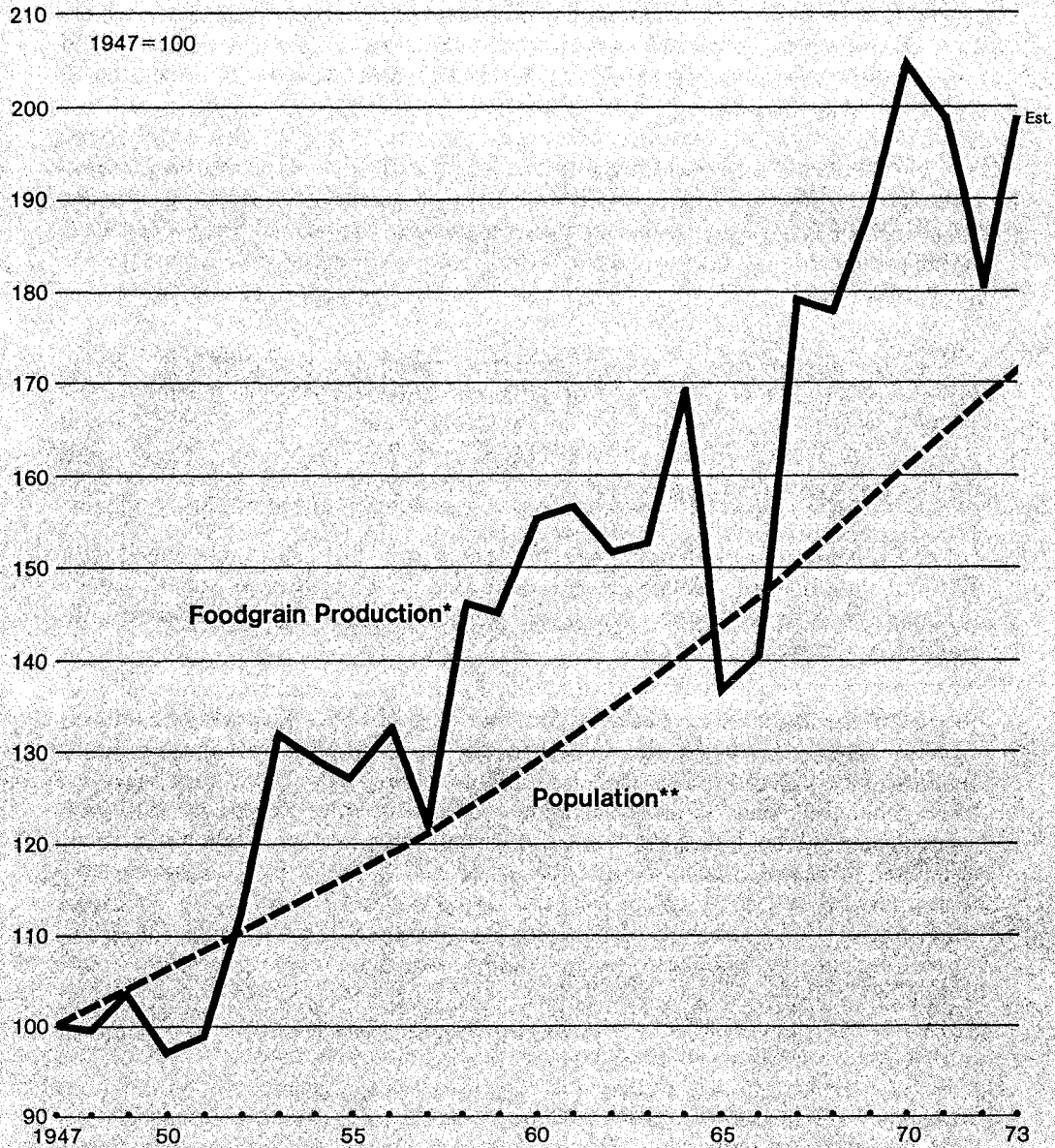
Even without widespread demands for a better way of life, India must continue to increase food availability just to provide a subsistence diet for 13 to 14 million new citizens each year. The added food must come either from additional imports or increased domestic production. Though there is little new land which could be brought under cultivation, there is nothing in a technical sense to prevent India from increasing food output many times over. Large areas of the country now being dry-farmed would have to be brought under irrigation. Existing irrigation systems would also need to be improved. The use of fertilizer would have to be sharply increased. Higher yielding, more adaptable strains of rice and some other crops would have to be developed to fit India's wide range of growing conditions.

Given India's highly creditable past record (achieved in part by using such techniques), there are many grounds for optimism for continued good performance. Indeed, the Indian government has shown both dedication and determination in pursuing measures to ensure enough food for its people.

But there are some factors pointing to the danger—even the likelihood—of a Malthusian crisis in India in the years ahead. Among these are:

a. *The quantitative factor.* India's steady population growth and the large increases in absolute numbers rather than just in percentage terms makes the problem of feeding the country a more formidable one each year. Today India has nearly 600

INDIA: Population and Foodgrain Production



*Foodgrain production in crop years beginning 1 July of stated year.

**Midyear population.

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million people, as opposed to 439 million in 1961, or 361 million in 1951. By the early 1980s, the population will be approaching 700 million, not as large as that of China but still a formidable volume. To feed these additional people, it must invest in more numerous irrigation projects, fertilizer plants, extension services, and transportation networks than it has in the past. Given the fact that state-to-state economic aid programs to India are now declining and that future prospects for large increases are poor, it must do so more and more out of its own resources. If domestic production does not meet demand, it must seek imports which, in absolute rather than percentage terms, would be very large.²²

b. *India's own past record.* Despite its many achievements in raising food output, India has not been able, except in a few bumper years, to meet its own production targets. This has been true also of its efforts to increase the manufacture of fertilizer, and to put more land under irrigation, thereby reducing the country's dependence on the weather.²³

c. *The dangers of the "Green Revolution" itself.* New strains of high yielding varieties of wheat and rice have enabled India substantially to boost food output. These (unlike the old, traditional, lower yielding but generally disease-resistant strains) could, unexpectedly, be attacked by plant diseases such as rust or blight which would cause widespread crop losses.²⁴

d. *The continuing need for imports.* In the crop year 1970-1971, India did—for the first time since the early 1950s—produce more food than it consumed. It has been unable to do so in succeeding crop years, and the goal of achieving self-sufficiency still remains in the future.

e. *Tightening world supplies of food and fertilizer.* World stocks of grain are currently small, and whether they will be rebuilt to pre-1974 levels remains uncertain. Imports of the volume India could need might be impossible. World supplies of fertilizer could also remain tight. India will not be the only country in the world with too many people and too little food. Increasing demand may push international prices up to the point that India, poor to begin with, could not pay for the food it needed even if it were available.

²²In calendar year 1951, India imported nearly 5 million tons of foodgrains to cover shortfalls. In 1966, it received over 10 million tons. These were, respectively, 10 and 14 percent of the food grown domestically in those years. Were India to need, say by the early 1980s, emergency imports of equivalent percentages, this could amount to requirements of 15 million tons or more.

²³For example, the most recent Five Year Plan (1969-1973) postulated food output in 1973-74 at 128 million tons. Actual attainment may be about 105 million tons. Failure to expand irrigation has long been a major constraint in achieving a high growth rate, not only in foodgrains but in other crops as well. The Indian government estimates that achievement in expanding irrigation during the same Five Year Plan was three-quarters of the goal, while expert observers, including a former Minister of Irrigation and Power, estimate performance was about half of the goal. Although expenditures were made at the planned rate, physical achievements fell short as sharply rising costs forced cutbacks in the number of new irrigation schemes initiated.

²⁴There is a considerable literature (and controversy) about the green revolution. A pessimistic view, including a discussion of the dangers of plant diseases, is given in W.C. Paddock, "How Green is the Green Revolution?" *BioScience*, 15 August 1970.

This is not to say that India will inevitably fall prey to a food/population disaster, either in the short or long term. Given the wide range of variables and uncertainties, long-term projections of Indian foodgrain production cannot be made. But the obstacles to avoiding a crisis are clearly present. Given the number and nature of the challenges the Indian government must face, these obstacles are becoming more formidable. Barring new technological breakthroughs or spells of exceptionally good weather, the danger will grow as the end of the 1970s approaches. During this period, the cumulative stresses brought on by the population pressures and food scarcities, which are already making their impact, are likely to affect India greatly; a monsoon failure would bring a crisis. The following section discusses some ways in which these could be manifested in political terms.

C. The Political Impact

The likely political consequences of a series of famines are not easily predicted. Historically, famines in India and elsewhere have led to passivity rather than to disruptive protest. While this could again be the case in the event of widespread mass starvation, there are lesser gradients of famine which would be more conducive to political troubles than to human mortality. Indeed this is already occurring. Until roughly the 20th century, famines occurred in India every year. But they were regional, even local. Some areas had droughts and the less fortunate perished while their neighbors, even a few miles away, were enjoying a surplus.

Only after the British installed an efficient administration, covered the subcontinent with a national rail and road network, and brought the entire country into a monetary economy could mass starvation deaths be ended.²⁵ Bounty in one region could then be shipped to make up for scarcity in another. "Famines" in India since then (except in Bengal in World War II) have been characterized by nationwide food shortages, price inflation, and political disruption rather than by stark human disaster in certain food deficit regions.²⁶

In this sense India in the past year has experienced food shortages which have led to famine-like conditions, including price rises, local scarcities, and widespread public unrest. It is likely over time to experience more, and on an increasingly serious scale. In these circumstances more and more people will be struggling for what, in relative terms, will be less and less. Without major improvements in food supplies, the country would eventually see a change from coping with increasingly painful shortages to facing the threat of mass starvation.

How would these grave human difficulties most likely be translated into political issues and contests? The politics of protest in a democratic India (and in its immediate neighbors) over the past decades does provide some clues as to what could occur. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Congress, leading the fight for independence, em-

²⁵The British Indian government's Famine Code of 1883 signaled the beginning of a concerted attack on the problem. The last major disaster occurred in 1899.

²⁶Some vestiges of the old ways are still seen in food scarcity periods when those Indian states which grow a surplus of food try to impose bans on shipments to states which do not have enough. Though these legal proscriptions are not decisive, major food shortages are still concentrated in specific regions (as in Bihar in 1967 and western India in 1973) which feel the effects far more severely than other areas.

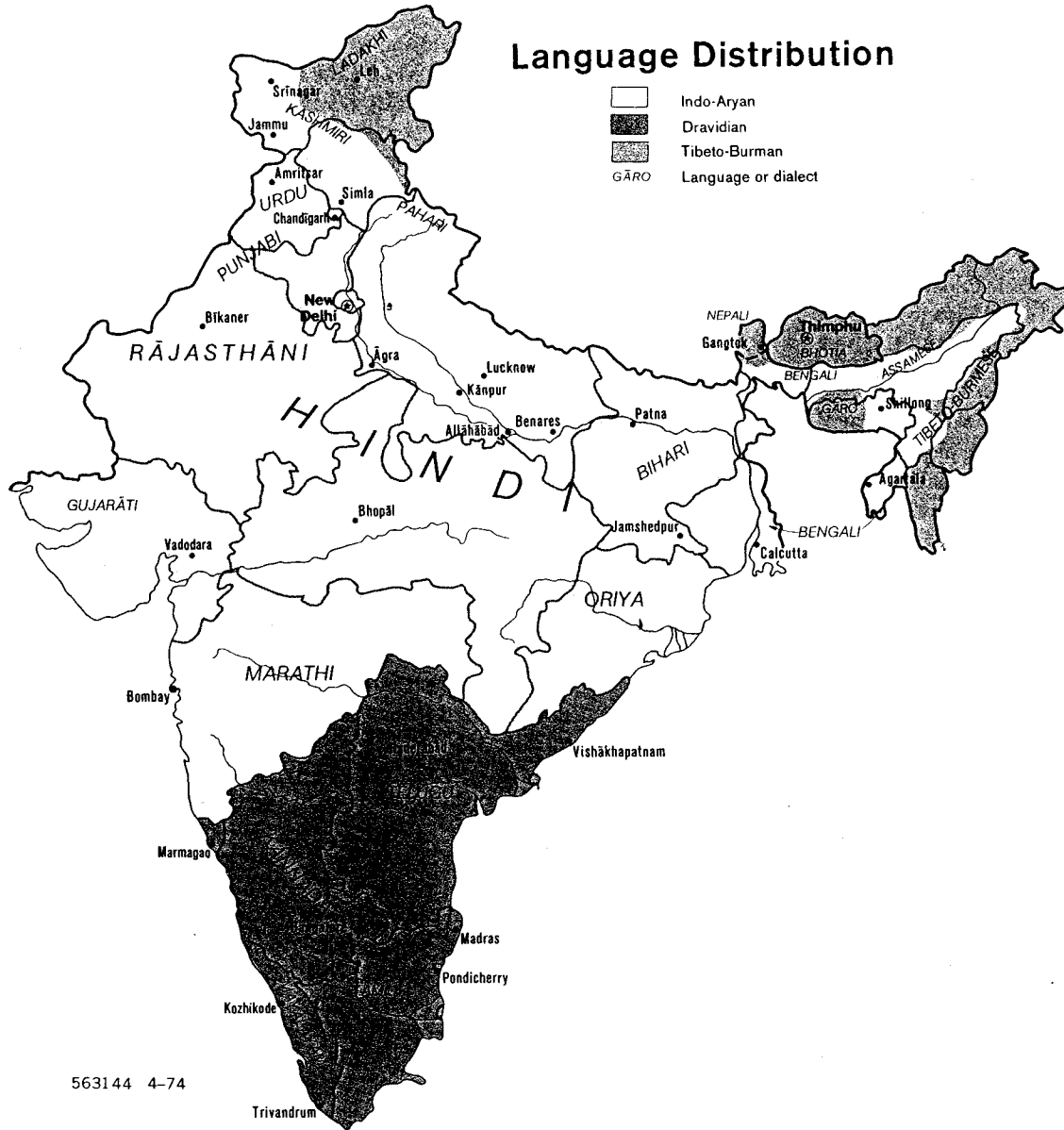
braced—through alliance or membership—most leaders and political groups throughout the country. Even then, it experienced dissent and defections; these have continued to the present day. In many instances the departures resulted from personal disputes and reflected only slight disagreement in ideas and methods, but in others they indicated more basic dissent. Over time, the Communists and the Muslim League split off. After independence Congress found (and still finds) itself being challenged by a number of lesser groups. In some cases their disagreement has been drawn on ideological, economic, and class lines. In others the differences were essentially communal, cultural, or regional. In both instances there are overtones of the have-nots assailing the haves, of those with grievances challenging the ruling establishment. In worsening times this pattern is likely to be repeated, but on a more intense scale, with regional, communal or class grievances being woven into protest movements characterized by demands and methods of a more extreme and anti-democratic nature.

1. *Regional Differences.* These would play an important part. While strong national loyalties and a sense of Indian identity have taken deep root, India's people still speak several hundred different languages. There are 14 official ones, and of these only 10 or 12 are of real importance. The struggle over which, if any, should become the "national" language has been protracted, sometimes violent, and undecided. Though analogies are often misleading, roughly the same percentage (40 percent) of Indians speak Hindi (and closely related tongues)—the most widely used local language and the main candidate for becoming the national one—as the residents of the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire spoke German. The latter, despite their long dominant political position, were unable to impose their control over the other nationalities. Under the shock of defeat in World War I, that empire disintegrated. More recent and closer to India geographically is the analogy of Pakistan. The residents of East and West Pakistan were fellow nationals and co-religionists, but over a span of only two dozen years the two regions became so inimical in political, linguistic, cultural, and economic terms that in 1971 they split into two separate nations.

A principal linguistic/regional antagonism in India is the north-south one. Historically the north and south were never united politically (at least not for any significant period) until the British conquest. And while the residents of each region all speak a number of different languages, the tongues of the north and those of the south have entirely different and mutually incompatible origins. The southerners speak Dravidian languages; i.e., those derived from the original, prehistoric inhabitants of South Asia. Most northern languages, Hindi included, are derived from the ones of the Aryan invaders of the subcontinent. While national sentiments are strong and north and south Indians remain united in a common nation, there remains considerable antagonism between many of them which could be exploited by protesting leaders in troubled times. Indeed, parts of south India, e.g., the state of Tamil Nadu, have already seen the flourishing of political movements demanding political autonomy or even secession.

There are other regional/linguistic rivalries as well. The residents of Kashmir—Muslims, distrustful of Hindus and of India, and long claimed by Pakistan—are a special case. So too are the many primitive tribes in northeast India (the Nagas are the best known) which have been in periodic rebellion for years. These peoples have been held in the Indian union by military force. Though they would not

Language Distribution



- Indo-Aryan
- Dravidian
- Tibeto-Burman
- GĀRO Language or dialect

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automatically rebel in times of trouble, their loyalty cannot be taken for granted. Both the Bengalis of eastern India and the Mahrattas (centered around Bombay) have some sense of separate identity and of distinct historical tradition. These have been manifested at one time or another in language riots, movements for greater autonomy, and local xenophobia.

2. *Political Extremism.* The development of radical movements in India aimed at revolutionary social and economic change are phenomena that observers have been predicting for several decades. But the predictions have not always been borne out by developments. India has had a fairly large and aggressive Communist movement since well before independence. In 1948 and 1949, the Communist Party of India (CPI) did try unsuccessfully to overthrow the government of India and seize power by violent means, but the results were disastrous to it. Failure brought widespread public alienation and effective government repression. Admitting its mistake, the CPI renounced violence as a means of seeking power, and began operating as a legal party in the early 1950s.

Its achievements since have been modest; they have amounted to electoral victories in two non-Hindi speaking states (Kerala and West Bengal) and strong showings in few others. Party membership has fluctuated from year to year, but the percentage of the electorate voting for Communists nation-wide has not changed much from the 10 percent or so of 20 years ago. Further, in the 1960s the CPI split into two antagonistic parties of roughly equal strength, and has also spawned several lesser groups. The two new Communist parties differ mainly on their ties with the USSR; one follows the traditional pattern of looking to Moscow for tutelage, while the other is rather xenophobic in its hostility to non-Indians, the USSR included. Each remains demonstrably weaker than its parent. This fact, and the less than inspiring performance of the state and local Communist governments of either faction elected in the past 20 years have tarnished the movement. The question of whether India will "go Communist" is no longer as relevant as once seemed to be the case—at least so far as these formally constituted Marxist groups are concerned.

But, as in many countries both in the developed and underdeveloped world, India has seen the emergence of various radical, activist youth groups. Most are highly politicized, but with so little formal or cohesive organization as to appear anarchic. They have been nihilist in their outlook and urban in their activity. The most significant and best known of these are the "Naxalbari Communists" or Naxalites. They say they are out to foment widespread peasant rebellion. In practice, most Naxalites have engaged in widespread terrorism in and around Calcutta. They draw their strength from that national potential for trouble—the educated, urban unemployed. The Naxalites are now of limited importance because of heavy official repression, but a few years ago were able to inflict serious blows.

Calcutta is probably not unique. Like others throughout the underdeveloped world, all of India's cities have seen a very large influx of people from the surrounding countryside.²⁷ As the nation as a whole has become more overcrowded, the villages offer less

²⁷Statistics tell the story. In 1920, 5 percent of South Asia's residents lived in cities of 20,000 or more. In 1950, the number was 8 percent, and in 1970 15 percent. Calcutta had 1.8 million in 1920, 7 million in 1969. Bombay had 1.3 million in 1920, 6.2 million in 1969. W. Howard Wriggins and James F. Guyot, *Population, Politics, and the Future of Southern Asia*, page 44 ff. The statistics are derived from UN sources and differ slightly from the official 1971 Indian census figures.

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opportunity to make a suitable livelihood. Their surplus people move to the cities where even the most menial jobs offer them a marginal improvement in their lot. The longer term results are usually disruptive as the traditionalism of village life is eroded by urban pressures and begins to disappear. Among some of the new city dwellers, acceptance of the traditional way of behaving and believing changes into a discovery of political, economic, and social injustice.

This is particularly true among those who, thanks to the city's opportunities, are able to receive considerable schooling, to have their ambitions aroused, and who are then unable to find either a job commensurate with their expectations—or perhaps any job at all. The “educated unemployed,” disaffected and sometimes alienated, are already a serious problem in the subcontinent. Again there are few exact numbers or statistics. But the magnitude of the problem can be illustrated by the fact that 60,000 of India's 300,000 engineering graduates were registered as out of work in 1971. The number of unemployed teachers, lawyers, journalists, et al, was certainly very much higher. The ability of this group to make serious trouble for established authority has already been demonstrated in neighboring Pakistan and Ceylon, whose societies recently experienced major eruptions under stress.

There are also right-wing political extremists in India. They are generally traditionalist, ardent Hindus whose outlook is colored by authoritarianism and xenophobia. Most come from what would now be called the lower middle class; in fact, they draw their support from the shopkeepers, small farmers, and others who had an established place in traditional Indian society. Many belong to militant Hindu groups in north India and take harsh stands against all things foreign, including Communism, parliamentary democracy, the English language—and even other Indian languages besides Hindi. Their anti-Muslim biases are particularly strong.

Since well before independence, some of these right-wing extremists have been organized into disciplined paramilitary forces. They have been involved in very many anti-Muslim riots and various violent acts; one of their members assassinated Mahatma Gandhi. They have also, principally through the Jan Sangh party, sought power through legitimate political processes, though their achievements have been limited. In times of political tranquility they are little more than irritants, but in periods of disruption their impact would almost certainly be greater.

3. *The Official Response.* Indian governments have been often, and justifiably, criticized as incapable of stimulating economic progress and of fulfilling promises of social reform, as enmeshed in red tape and ineffective. There is a danger of carrying this assessment too far and underestimating the capacities of New Delhi in fields where it has already demonstrated considerable strength. As noted above, it has already been faced with problems generated by regional dissent, attempted Communist insurrection, active insurgencies in tribal areas, urban terrorism, mass rioting and protests, and several international wars, among others. All have been contained and controlled, often with considerable skill and strength. However much this “soft state” has lagged in checking population growth, stimulating economic development, and solving the energy crisis, it has not failed to provide India with a functioning, legitimate political order and government.

[REDACTED]

In the following section, scenarios are presented of ways in which India's internal crises would intensify in kind and in scope. The case for such happening is a strong one. It is further postulated that the difficulties will become so severe as to cripple the power and authority of the Indian government itself, thereby permitting more widespread turbulence and disorder. The case for this happening is much weaker. Civilian (or if they fail) military authorities in New Delhi may be able to cope with problems far more severe than they have known in the past. They also may not. No confident judgment either way can be made, but the possibilities, and dangers, of failure are great enough to merit consideration of the contingency.

III. INDIA IN CRISIS

Requisite conditions for a major Indian crisis could be projected as follows:

a. Several years of growing food scarcity and rising prices characterized by general shortages, but with low income groups, city dwellers, and certain geographical regions hardest hit. This cumulative hardship could then be followed by an acute shortfall brought on by a major harvest failure. With world food supplies increasingly tight, India could expect little meaningful outside help.

b. General economic malaise, with increasing inflation and urban joblessness.

c. Growth of political extremism and of activist forces of protest—on social, economic, regional and other issues. Almost any grievance, economic, linguistic, religious, caste, might then trigger violence, but in a grave crisis all would probably eventually emerge as contentious issues. However the grievances developed and intertwined, they would culminate in a sustained and widespread civil uprising.

d. Weakening governmental credibility and strength. Both officials and the general public lose faith that the government can cope any longer, and governmental incapacity becomes a fact.²⁸

As an illustration, rioting could break out in one city and then spread to most other urban areas, in a manner similar to what happened in Pakistan in 1969. In various parts of the country, the initial issues might be economic and social; in others, regional or linguistic. The turmoil would sustain itself in area and scope; it would increase week after week, month after month. Normal commercial and economic activity would begin to be crippled. As official efforts at reconciliation and/or suppression fail, the dissidents' demands increase and their leaders become bolder. The police begin to lose heart and the bulk of the military would then find itself affected. The dissidents would then move from the cities to the surrounding countryside, and take over control of entire states.

²⁸These conditions could also apply to India's South Asian neighbors. Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have food/population problems of their own. Indeed Bangladesh's are worse than India's and turmoil could erupt there sooner, bringing another element of instability into the whole area. Sri Lanka's small size and its insularity would probably keep its difficulties from spilling over into India. Pakistan on the other hand, with a more favorable land to population ratio, and a better record in raising agricultural output, is the South Asian country least likely to be affected, at least in the next decade or so.

In a second scenario, an insurgency—while led by members of the intelligentsia—would find its principal bases in rural areas. (This happened in a widespread and nearly successful uprising in Ceylon in 1971.) In the case postulated, armed insurgencies would be covertly planned, suddenly executed, and then succeed in capturing control of some areas of the country. Though revolutionary cadres would mostly come from the cities, universities, and other centers of protest, their movement would be characterized by their strength in certain substantial rural regions and by their effectiveness in conducting sustained guerrilla warfare. Some units of the police would go over to the rebels. The military, accustomed to and well equipped for fighting conventional campaigns, would be unable to suppress the insurgents. The latter would then take over more of the countryside, inhibit commercial and transport activity, and begin to disrupt activity in various cities.

In Pakistan, unexpected turmoil brought down President Ayub's government and set in train events which eventually led to the change of East Pakistan into independent Bangladesh. The Ceylon insurgency came close to success though it was finally suppressed. Neither of these analogies could be expected to apply precisely to the Indian case; India is quite a different country and society from either Pakistan or Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). But the kinds of crisis which struck India's immediate neighbors offer some clues about its own perils—and most of the causes of the troubles which afflicted Pakistan and Sri Lanka already exist to one degree or another in India. Under enough pressure they could erupt—and on a substantial scale. If the Indian government, say by accommodation, military suppression, or a combination of such efforts, were quickly able to restore tranquility the episode might become insignificant. If not, an Indian internal crisis would probably take on international dimensions.

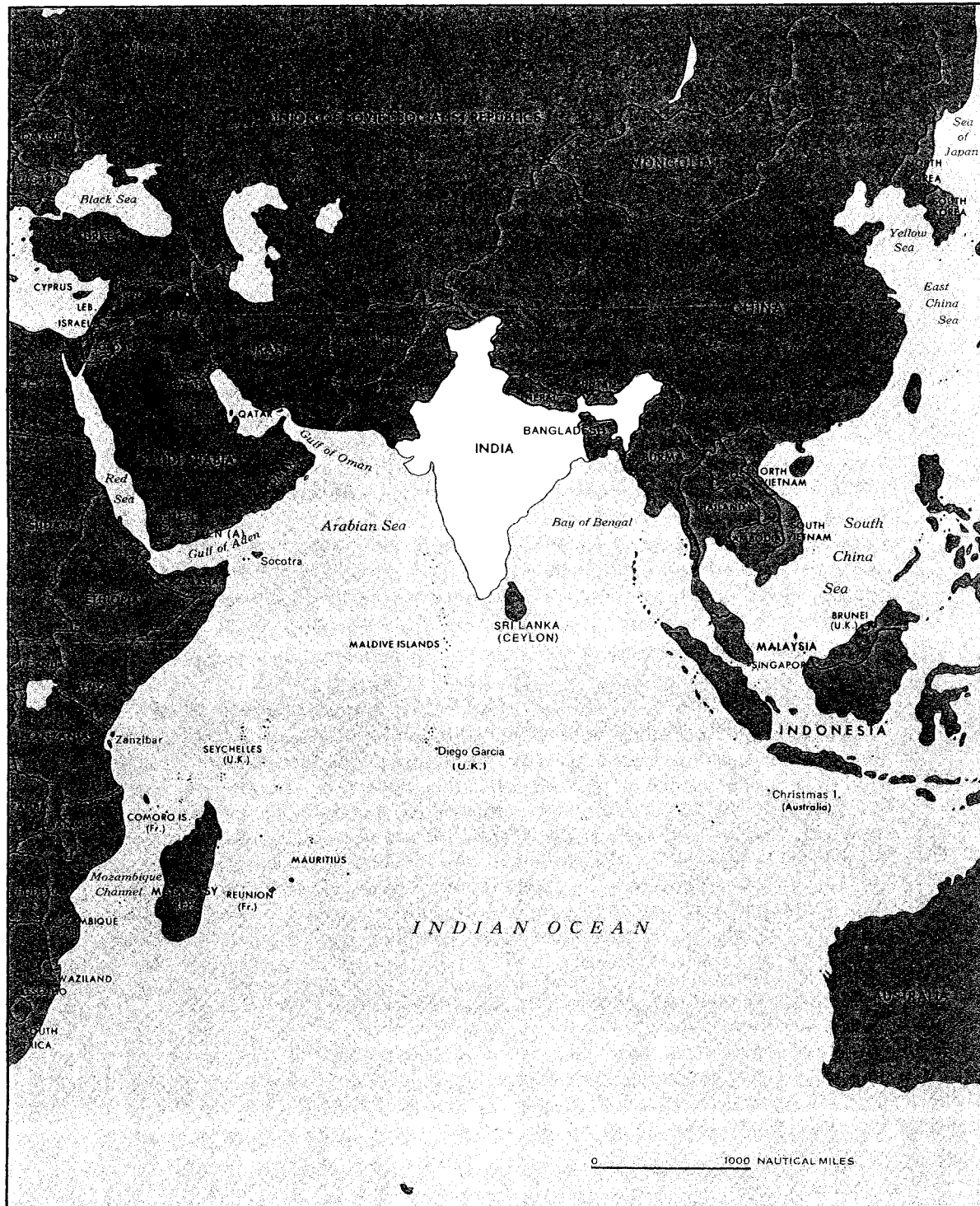
IV. THE WORLD RESPONSE TO AN INDIAN CRISIS

The rest of the world might observe turmoil in India with detachment and a determination not to get involved. Each of the great powers would feel some strong incentives to do so. The US has no physical installation, military or otherwise, which could be threatened. Neither it nor Western Europe nor Japan has in India major investments whose security could come into question. Nor would a reduction of trade brought on by an economic slowdown have any major effect on those countries who buy from or sell to India. But, assuming that New Delhi's relations with its neighbors and the great powers have not changed much from what they are now,²⁹ most outsiders would probably feel they must watch the situation—and each other—carefully.

The *Chinese* would be delighted to see the Indian central government, which they have long detested, in worsening straits. But Peking could also face a decision: should it respond to pleas for arms, training, even safehaven from Indian insurgents who said they shared Chinese ideological views in a struggle against a bourgeois, reactionary Indian regime? Should it support, say through increased arms supplies, Pakistani efforts to take advantage of India's troubles? Whatever the views or sympathies of the

²⁹This assumption may not, of course, be a valid one. The specific relationships of India, its neighbors, and the great powers could be quite different many years from now. In any event, it is valid to assume that India's relations with these countries are likely to remain of very considerable importance to all parties, whatever specific changes in attitude might have taken place.

India and Surrounding Area



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Chinese leaders, there would be strong pressures working on them not to interfere or to take sides.

Principally, the Chinese would have to take *Soviet* attitudes and reactions into consideration in deciding what to do. India has become perhaps the Soviet Union's closest friend in the non-Communist world. Government-to-government ties have become quite close; the November 1973 visit of Brezhnev to India, and the August 1971 Soviet-Indian Treaty of Peace and Friendship³⁰ are but two examples of these links. Trade and commerce between the two have grown steadily in the past few years. Moscow probably sees India as playing a major role as a counterweight to China, as a stabilizing force in the great Asian land mass south of its own frontiers, and possibly as the principal factor in a future Asian security scheme.

A threatened disruption of India would probably bring on determined Soviet reactions. Direct military intervention in an Indian domestic crisis seems unlikely. Such a move could be counterproductive, both internationally and in India itself. But other Soviet efforts would be likely. Already the supplier of most of India's complex and sophisticated weaponry, the USSR would accede to Indian requests for military equipment to suppress troubles. It would also probably advance such technical, economic, and commodity assistance as could be spared and was useful to New Delhi. There are precedents; emergency shipments of arms were sent from the USSR just prior to the Indo-Pakistani war in 1971. And though Moscow has consistently refused to accept any long-term responsibilities for aid to the India economy, it did lend two million tons of wheat to a hungry India in late 1973.³¹

Soviet political backing of the Indian government, and pressure against anyone else intervening or otherwise seeking to exploit the situation to India's detriment would be highly probable. Moscow would discourage (say by private or public warnings) efforts by the Chinese to involve themselves in India's troubles. An Indian crisis of sustained duration (as is postulated here) would almost inevitably increase Chinese-Soviet tensions, if only because of the deep suspicions and fear which now exist between the two Communist states. Even if all parties maintained an overtly hands-off posture, neither Moscow nor Peking could ever be sure of the true acts and intent of the other.

The reactions of *Pakistan*, a close friend of China and the US, and India's traditional foe, would probably become a concern of all interested parties. The threat of Pakistani intervention in a badly torn India would not be a remote one. The two have fought several wars in the past 25 years. Pakistan, the smaller and weaker, has lost all of them. The most recent conflict (1971) decisively established India's military paramouncy. India's capability to manufacture nuclear explosives further enhances its armed forces' superiority. The 1971 war appeared permanently to lay to rest Pakistan's quarter-century-old claim to Kashmir.

Whether the Pakistanis have finally renounced their emotional commitment to this long-sought Muslim territory is doubtful. They would calculate that an India torn by

³⁰This treaty pledges the two countries to mutual consultation in time of difficulty, and not to undertake any hostile acts against the other.

³¹As of mid-1973, the USSR had committed about \$2 billion in economic aid, mostly for such large public-sector enterprises as steel mills and power plants.

rioting and insurrection could be so weakened that acquisition of Kashmir—either through enhanced diplomatic pressure, subversion, or even military seizure—would become feasible. In the past, Pakistani leaders—particularly the military leaders—have overestimated their strength with respect to the Indians. This propensity could reappear and encourage an added degree of recklessness. Beyond this, virtually any government in Islamabad would find itself under strong popular pressures to intervene in some way, particularly if Kashmir itself had become the scene of continuing troubles.

Depending on the nature and scope of Indian difficulties, Pakistani involvement in India's troubles could develop slowly and over a considerable period. Initially Islamabad would do little more than enjoy India's discomforts, but continued signs of weakness would bring domestic pressures for a more forceful policy—say in covertly supplying insurgents, or openly demanding Kashmir. These sentiments would not escape Delhi's attention, and Indian leaders, invoking the 1971 Soviet-Indian Treaty of Peace and Friendship, would urge the USSR to exert pressures for Pakistani non-involvement—both directly and through Pakistan's principal friends: the US, China, and Iran.

The Pakistanis in turn would seek backing from their friends. The US would certainly be approached in the hope of getting political support for its acts and a common front against its foes. Economic and material assistance would also be sought. The Pakistanis would also look to Peking, which is their principal source of military materiel, to apply enough pressure to divert the Indians from trying to counter the Pakistanis. Pakistan would surely turn to Iran as well. The Shah, with his powerful new military machine, has taken an increasingly proprietary view of Pakistani matters, and has openly committed himself to the maintenance of the territorial integrity of his neighbor.

Some of the developments postulated above are reminiscent of events which preceded the December 1971 Indo-Pakistani war. Future developments cannot, of course, be expected to duplicate the past, but the attitudes and possibly the actions of the principal actors, e.g., the governments of the US, the USSR, China, Pakistan, and Iran, as well as of India itself would probably be somewhat similar.

The point can be made in illustrative fashion. Moscow, Peking, Washington, and other concerned capitals would all be seriously concerned were one of the following roughly sketched contingencies to apply:

- a. The leaders of one or more geographical regions in India get enough popular support along with defections from the army, police, and civil service to enable them to declare their independence and to fight off efforts at repression. They seek foreign recognition, supplies, and support—say from the US, China, and Pakistan. New Delhi asks for greater backing from Moscow.
- b. A major rural Indian insurgency is sustained over many months, in part because of ill-concealed Pakistani support. India threatens military reprisal, and Islamabad turns to the US, China, and Iran for protection.

c. A spiral begins wherein famine or near-famine conditions generate so much disorder that normal economic, commercial, and political activity is reduced to the degree that the central government can no longer provide the rudiments of public order and administration. Claimants to legitimate sovereignty over part or all of the country appear. But none has much hope, without outside assistance, of succeeding. Most ask for such aid.

d. An insurgency suddenly erupts, sweeps through much of the countryside and many of the cities. It establishes a militant and perhaps nihilist regime dedicated to revolutionary upheaval both in India and in neighboring countries.

Any attempt to create or play out specific scenarios is outside the scope of this study. But it is clear enough that aggravated Indian turmoil along the lines described above would generate a mix of temptation, suspicion, competition, and reaction among the principal powers. This is where India's "negative importance" to the world would surface—an importance which can be overlooked while that country, even though a member of the nuclear club, remains fairly stable and takes a passive (or largely ineffectual) role in international affairs. But in extremis, each of the great powers and the lesser ones abutting on India would be hyper-sensitive to what the other parties were doing or planning to do; each would be inclined to suspect the worst and would prepare to take countermeasures. The opportunities and incentives for one or another kind of interference in the matter would be very great; the chances of action and reaction leading to confrontation—or conflict—are large enough to merit serious US contingency study now.