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India today is shaping her own destiny in her own way, and, as was evidenced by the events of 1971, she will likely play an ever greater role in future world politics. Although plagued by continuing shortages of scientific, technological, and investment capital resources as well as a burgeoning population, the Indian Government is determined to pursue the independent domestic and international policies felt necessary to achieve economic growth and national security. India's and indeed all the Third World's success or failure in this enterprise will fundamentally affect the future world in which we all must live.

INDIA—AN ECONOMIC FAILURE OR A POTENTIAL SUPERPOWER?

An article prepared

by

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On 28 December 1968 the successful test of China's first thermonuclear weapon initiated a profound shift in world power balances. India's competent 13-day rout of Pakistan's armed forces in late 1971 marks a second stage of this realignment. This stage is perhaps even more significant than the first, particularly in its implications for the non-Western, non-Marxist, impoverished Third World.

India has been contemptuously dismissed by Gunnar Myrdal and others¹ as a "soft state" incapable of modernization along the lines of European welfare socialism. Humiliated by China in 1962, glad to gain a draw in the conflict with Pakistan in 1965, India suddenly displayed excellence in military planning, logistics, and operations in 1971. Indian national intentions, long ignored by the international community, have suddenly aroused loud

concern. India, formerly a symbol of moralizing loftiness and practical chaos, is now acting as a regional great power. Is India on the way to superpower status, or will the competence revealed in December 1971 be overwhelmed as well by the claims of population growth and hunger?

How can these contradictions be understood? The facts are complex. Here they will be sketched primarily as a guide to badly needed future study. In this sketch the status of Indian efforts in nationbuilding, economic growth, and international security and influence will be briefly assessed. Some interpretations of India's future potentials and their international relevance will also be hazarded.

The author is deeply indebted to Professor M.N. Srinivas for many insights, especially in regard to Mrs. Gandhi's charisma.

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India is favored by the presence of important cohesive forces. It is unified by a preponderant socio-religious tradition—Hinduism, the faith of five-sixths of the population.² It is unified, furthermore by:

... considerable commitment to Western parliamentary government as well as ideological dedication to socialism and egalitarianism. Much more indigenous to India has been its commitment to conciliation and bargaining as a means of resolving internal conflict. These characteristics are reflected in the country's competitive party system, the absence of military intervention in politics, the continuation of a free press, the constitutional as well as de facto strength of the states, and a range of significant as well as symbolic policies adopted by the government in every area of social life.³

The backbone of this governmental system is a politically responsive elite composed of effective civil and military bureaucracies, including an efficient police power. The key to entry to elite status rests in part in membership in a significant interest group, especially a regionally dominant caste.⁴ It is ratified by higher education in English, the sole common language of India, and by selection largely on merit.

From the first days of independence, the political leadership and supporting bureaucracy of India have steadily improved their strategic control of the nation, separatist forces and conciliatory ideologies notwithstanding. India has eliminated both foreign and princely power within its borders. It has not hesitated to set aside elected Communist power in both Kerala and West Bengal states. It has strongly opposed foreign missionaries and other alien influences in its villages.⁵ The bureaucratic elite has preferred mass unemployment among Indian intellectuals to

too much of a sharing of power.⁶ Over the past decade India's Government has even been deaf to the growing consumer orientation of Indian big business because of growing priorities for defense.⁷

Nayar's analysis is highly relevant: ... at least since the second Plan, the purpose of economic planning in India has been, contrary to what is proclaimed and generally accepted, not necessarily mass welfare but national power as an imperative and quite legitimate means for the protection and enhancement of national independence in its various aspects: (1) political sovereignty, (2) military security, and (3) economic independence. Hence the costly and painful but nonetheless necessary emphasis on heavy industry rather than on consumer goods industry or agriculture. Such an emphasis may eventually make for welfare as well, but for the period of economic planning under consideration here national power has been a priority goal.⁸

The undeniable spirit of national unity and high morale evident in India today must be attributed in the final analysis to the ability and leadership of Indira Gandhi, who has reversed the divisive trends evident in Indian politics over the past decade. Mrs. Gandhi's grasp of Indian realities, the competence of her advisers, and the multiplicity of her appeals to the Indian public give her unique strength as was clearly manifested in the 1971 elections. She virtually receives the religious veneration of her people as the personification of the Hindu ideal of *dharma*, i.e., the public duty of the elite.⁹ Her populist promises to eliminate poverty and attack rural unemployment have coincided with an upswing in agriculture, perhaps a sustained "green revolution."¹⁰ A tireless campaigner, she has been an idol of India's women, especially in the villages; many of the 20 million new

voters in 1971 responded to her image of feminine leadership.¹¹ With the victory over Pakistan, the civil and military bureaucracies, big business, and other conservative elements have rallied to her—as a virtual reincarnation of Queen Victoria, a symbol of revival for the Indian Empire. Little wonder that the Moscow-oriented Communist Party of India has cautioned against “blind, anti-Congressism” in recognition of Mrs. Gandhi’s appeal to the “vast sections” of the Indian population.¹² It is sad that some in the United States have not yet perceived these facts.

However, the Government of India and its supporting bureaucracy face immense domestic problems—those of the Indian village, the Indian city, and linguistic rivalry being perhaps the most acute. Four-fifths of the Indian people still live in the nation’s 567,000 villages, which average fewer than 500 inhabitants each, although 776 villages have populations of more than 10,000.¹³ Indian villages, despite their small average size, are complex structures, made up of numerous castes (and outcaste groups), with different ascribed socio-economic roles and limited permitted modes of contact and interaction with other castes. At the same time, each caste maintains extensive relations with its counterparts in other villages. The higher castes particularly are involved, as well, in organized migration and the formation of new colonies in cities; their pilgrimages to holy places also provide them with broader “pan-Indian” perspectives.¹⁴ Governmental intervention in the villages now, as in the past, is primarily to secure taxes and maintain control. Elementary education, particularly for boys, has become general, but other modernizing influences penetrate less effectively. Adult literacy is low, language barriers and poverty limit communication while local transportation is still primarily by bullock cart. In 1966-1967 there were only 268,000 trucks and 78,000 buses

in service, compared to 12,600,000 carts, in all of India.¹⁵

The extensive clearance of forests and the expansion of irrigation so that it now covers one-fifth of all cultivated land have been the means through which Indian farmers have sought, until recently, to provide for human nutritional needs and the fodder for some 230 million cattle and buffaloes and over 100 million sheep and goats.¹⁶ The oversupply of cattle is an acute economic and ecological problem; it arises from fanatical religious resistance to slaughter (or even castration) which dooms livestock unneeded for plowing, transport, and milk production to lives of slow starvation. The extreme pressure on fodder production consequently limits the supplies of heating and cooking fuels available, thereby raising the incidence of disease. The increased use of dung as fuel instead of fertilizer adversely affects crop yields and thus adds to the adverse effects of too many cattle.¹⁷

Clearly, the margins of survival in Indian villages are very limited. Customary institutions, the caste, and extended family are considered vital insurance against hardship, notwithstanding their blocking much needed change.

Yet change has come and is accelerating. Better farm practices, the new so-called “miracle” strains of wheat and rice as well as hybrid corn, better fertilization, some pesticide use, and other innovations have at long last brought on a “green revolution” which, hopefully, can be sustained.¹⁸ Accompanying these economic changes have been political ones, especially the displacement of high caste by midlevel caste dominance.¹⁹ Improvements in sanitation, including mosquito control via DDT, have increased life expectancies at birth to 50-55 years of age.

The effects of socio-economic change have also been unfavorable. Greater farm profitability for the larger farmer has accelerated land dispossessions of

the marginal farmer, weakened traditional ties, and raised the already large numbers of the landless laborers as well as the completely destitute. The surplus of labor has diminished women's economic value, thereby intensifying female passivity and reluctance to accept birth control. The rate as well as the absolute size of Indian population growth is still rising; by 1969 this figure was 2.5 percent per year.²⁰

India's cities, particularly Calcutta, have been all but overwhelmed by the resulting migrations from the rural areas and this produced more situations for exploiting misery than obligations to relieve it.²¹ The anxieties of the dispossessed have formed the basis for rural revolutionary movements, particularly the quasi-Maoist Naxalbari of the lower Ganges (Bihar and West Bengal states).²² This was one reason for India's extreme sensitivity to the influx of millions of Bengali refugees in the fall of 1971. The alternative to war with Pakistan might well have been a rural social explosion in India.

Nevertheless, the destitute people of India, both rural and urban, are largely the weak, too cowed, too responsive to even minor ameliorations to be very dangerous as revolutionary forces today. The potential leadership for such forces is, moreover, scattered, poorly indoctrinated, and vigorously repressed.²³ More dangerous to India's unity are the forces of internal ethnicity, symbolized by resistance to the adoption of Hindi as the national language. The issue is particularly acute in South India, where non-Aryan languages (Tamil, Telegu, et cetera) and pre-Aryan traditions predominate. Acute resistance to Hindi (the language of a quarter of the population) has both maintained the official position of English (an elite language spoken perhaps by 2 percent of the population) and enlarged the roles of local languages in each state.²⁴ How India can retain common communications is a truly basic administrative

problem; which languages will predominate is a source of major potential conflicts in the future.

Economically, India's survival depends upon an early termination of population growth. Until recently the outlook has been gloomy, virtually hopeless. Indira Gandhi's political victory of 1971 may presage a slightly better prospect—her appeal to women, coupled with a slight improvement in their lot, may give an impetus to recently intensified Indian Government programs of birth control. Another alternative for India's future is the acceptance of huge losses of lives as an integral part of the "hard" road to industrialization and national power. Thus, chaos, self-regulation, or selective survival appear to be the broad possibilities over the next generation.

Within this framework, certain capabilities and problems can be identified for the Indian economy. Physically, the basic deficiencies of Indian agriculture have been those of improper management and consequently very low yields of crops and livestock.²⁵ India's per capita supplies of cultivated land approximate those of Europe (excluding the U.S.S.R.); adequate supplies of water, fertile soil, and sunshine exist but are not utilized to full capacity. Correspondingly, while some resources (e.g., coking coal) are in short supply, both metals and energy potentials (coal, oil, thorium) are great.²⁶ In almost every category, Indian manpower is underemployed,²⁷ even after allowances for the debilitations of disease, malnutrition, and depressing poverty are made. Indian science, although excellent in many areas, has done little to promote technological innovation. Capital utilization has actually deteriorated over two decades of planned investment.²⁸

Thus, while a modest rate of growth per capita has been realized by India since 1950, the results have fallen far short of planned levels. The reasons for this failure are complex. In part, they

stem from the fact that 85 percent of India's economy still remains in the private sector, while governmental efforts have concentrated on the public sector, especially in armaments and producer durables. Until recently, poor crops greatly weakened economic demand, while both bureaucratic interference and widespread corruption have further choked India's market economy.²⁹

In general, while India's economic resource base compares favorably with China's, Indian policies have greatly favored sociopolitical stability over economic mobilization and growth. This stability has also dampened consumer demand, so that the margin of resources available for national defense and prestige purposes has remained high. The persistence of old social structures has also delayed the need for modernizing India's social welfare system to meet the needs of a truly mobile, urban society. The cost of stability in terms of unrest has been modest; however, the correlates of uncontrolled population growth for man and cow present grave threats to India's survival.

Notwithstanding long-term domestic problems, India's leaders have, since 1962, been almost obsessed with the menace of China. The Chinese attack destroyed Nehru's fancies of Asiatic Brotherhood, the so-called "Bhai-Bhai" relationship between India and China, which was purportedly based on Five Principles of Amity (*Panchsheel*).³⁰ This disillusionment, coupled with shame felt over the malfeasance of the Defence Minister, Krishna Menon, and from the poor performance of the Indian Army, reversed hitherto pacifistic Indian sentiments.

The indecisive conflict with Pakistan in 1965 further accelerated India's search for military strength. A Department of Defence Supplies was organized that year to execute a 5-year ordnance modernization plan, which included the assembly of Soviet MIG aircraft, the

production of French Alouette helicopters, and the design and manufacturing of Indian radars.³¹ The development of a nuclear capability from India's plutonium plant has been given much thought, but thus far no decision has apparently been made.³² India, however, has refused to be a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

By 1969 Indian hostility toward Pakistan was being openly expressed, as in this statement made before the General Assembly of the United Nations:

Pakistan, while in illegal occupation of a part of the State [of Kashmir], continues to incite people and thus create an explosive situation. If an explosive situation was created, the entire responsibility for it would lie at the door of Pakistan.

... In violation of Article 3 of the Tashkent Declaration, interference by the Pakistan Government in the internal affairs of India continued during the year.

Pakistan continued actively to assist, train, and arm Naga and Mizo rebels in its territory... Infiltration from East Pakistan into India also continued on a small scale.

Pakistan also continued its propaganda against India with the evident motive of creating disaffection among the various communities of India, particularly the Muslims and Sikhs.

Pakistan's military collaboration with China continued during the year...³³

Concurrently, India pursued a course of pragmatic diplomacy designed to strengthen its international position. It reinforced economic ties with the United Kingdom, which is still the largest foreign investor in India. Notwithstanding open Soviet involvement with the Communist Party of India, India conducted economic and military talks with the U.S.S.R. (culminating in

the *de facto* alliance of August 1971).

India has extended technical aid to other underdeveloped countries including Malaysia, Singapore, and Brazil. Economic cooperation with Iran, Thailand, Indonesia, and Japan has been encouraged by the Indian Government. Indira Gandhi even has visited Guyana to express official interest in a people more than 50 percent of Indian origin—symbolizing as early as 1969 India's progress toward achieving great power status.³⁴ In sum, the events of 1971 provided India with a long-expected challenge in its search for national power, freedom from external hazard, and regional dominance.³⁵

India has proven to be neither a "soft state" nor a paragon of international virtue. Domestically, the government of Indira Gandhi promises to exercise more concern for the Indian poor, to reduce extreme inequities in Indian society, and to curb corruption, all with the proviso that national unity and power remain dominant goals. Nevertheless, India's long-term economic future remains precarious. Internationally, India's relations are likely to be pragmatic; India's defense and economic ties appear to be shifting in response to felt threats and opportunities. India will collaborate with the Soviet Union or Japan or the United States to gain its security goals. It will even pay a ghastly price for an independent nuclear capability, if no other course toward its vital national goals seems open.

India is representative of other nations of the Third World that have their own cultures, histories, aspirations, and styles of action. Countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran, Nigeria, Brazil, and Mexico face basic problems such as population pressures and hunger. They suffer from limited access to the scientific, technological, and capital resources of the wealthiest nations, non-Communist and Communist alike. They feel intensely the contempt of Western intellectual and political leaders, as

exemplified by Gunnar Myrdal's dismissal of India and its neighbors as impotent "soft states." Further, they realize that the path to military power via nuclear weapons, ship-to-ship missiles, and other advanced technology, although painfully costly, appears far surer as a means of international influence and aid than do appeals to justice and compassion.

The population of India alone exceeds those of the Soviet Union and the United States combined. The world's poor people are, indeed, predominant, and they seek to control their own destinies. It is time that they be heard by the superpowers, in the name of prudent self-interest, if nothing more. That is the lesson of India's decisive victory in 1971.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Born in Omsk, Siberia, in 1916, Professor Demetri B. Shimkin is a derivative citizen of the United States. He received his A.B. degree in anthropology from the University of California in 1936 and his Ph.D.

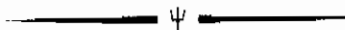
from that institution in 1939. As a U.S. Army officer, he graduated from the Command and General Staff College, instructed at the National War College, and served as a member of the War Department General Staff (Military Intelligence Division). Following his duty with the National War College, he became a member of the Institute for Advance Studies at Princeton in 1947 and in 1948 served as a research associate at the Russian Research Center, Harvard University. He subsequently served with the Government as a senior research specialist and consultant and joined the faculty of the University of Illinois as professor of anthropology and of geography. Professor Shimkin is currently occupying the Claude V. Ricketts Chair of Comparative Cultures at the Naval War College.

FOOTNOTES

1. Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama. An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, 3 vols. (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1968), esp. v. 1, p. 57-69, 276-303. Note the following (I:301): "Nor can much, if any, encouragement be derived from recent trends of domestic politics in India. The ruling party appears to evade its ideological commitments in the day-to-day pragmatic decisions." See also Bernard Nossiter, *Soft State* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), particularly p. 180. [India's problems]
 - ... are bound up with indiscipline and indifference, nurtured by a religious and social system reaching back to antiquity. Without a change in values and attitudes, one that insists on the dignity of men and worth in this life, it is difficult to see how the soft state will quicken, how social discipline will evolve.
2. The remainder are largely Muslim, Christian, and Sikh. Buddhism has risen sharply in importance since 1951, primarily as a vehicle of social escape for former Untouchables in Maharashtra Province (Bombay).
3. Jason L. Finkle, "Politics, Development Strategy, and Family Planning Programs in India and Pakistan," *Journal of Comparative Administration*, November 1971, p. 290.
4. Rajni Kothari, et al, *Caste in Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970), p. 3-25.
5. Nossiter, p. 157-69.
6. Warren F. Ichman and Trilok N. Dhar, "Optimal Ignorance and Excessive Education: Educational Inflation in India," *Asian Survey*, June 1971, p. 523-43.
7. Wilfred Malenbaum, "Politics and Indian Business: The Economic Setting," *Asian Survey*, September 1971, p. 841-49.
8. Baldev Raj Nayar, "Business Attitudes Toward Economic Planning in India," *Asian Survey*, September 1971, p. 852.
9. For a discussion of dharma and other basic Indian political concepts see Ashis Nandy, "The Culture of Indian Politics: A Stock Taking," *Journal of Asian Studies*, November 1970, p. 57-80, esp. p. 67-70.
10. Susanne H. Rudolph, "The Writ from Delhi," *Asian Survey*, October 1971, p. 958-69.
11. Marcus F. Franda, "Thoughts on the Indian Elections," *Asia*, Winter, 1970-71, p. 1-8.
12. *USSR and Third World*, 20 September-24 October 1971 (Central Asian Research Centre, London), p. 498.
13. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India: *India, A Reference Annual 1969* (New Delhi: 1969), p. 15-16.
14. A basic analysis is by Harold A. Gould, "The Indian Village: A Sociological Perspective," p. 178-207 of Baljit Singh and V.B. Singh, eds., *Social and Economic Change* (Bombay: Allied, 1967; see also David E. Sopher, "Pilgrim Circulation in Gujarat," *The Geographical Review*, July, 1968, p. 392-425.
15. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, p. 62-63, 142, 243, 391.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 225, 243.
17. Thoughtful discussions of the Indian cattle problem are in O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth, *India and Pakistan. A General and Regional Geography*, 3d ed., (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 93-94, 254-259, 264-266, 291; also Alan Heston, "An Approach to the Sacred Cow of India," *Current Anthropology*, April 1971, p. 191-210.
18. See, for example, Nossiter, p. 11-45. A more technical study is Gilbert Etienne, *Studies in Indian Agriculture. The Art of the Possible* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968). For a pessimistic view see William C. Paddock, "How Green Is the Green Revolution?" *BioScience*, 15 August 1970. The development of agricultural colleges and experimental stations, by means of long-term "sister" relationships with sponsoring land-grant universities in the United States, was a basic aspect of this quiet transformation.
19. Gould, p. 194 ff.; for a case study also involving interactions with Telegu ethnicity and Congress Party-Communist Party factionalism, see Carolyn M. Elliott, "Caste and Faction Among the Dominant Caste, the Reddis and Kammas of Andhra," in Kothari, p. 129-174.
20. Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, *Population Programmes and Economic and Social Development* (Paris: O.E.C.D. Publications, 1970), p. 11.
21. Nossiter, p. 93-106; Spate and Learmonth, p. 591-97.
22. Mohan Ram, *Indian Communism. Split Within a Split* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1969), p. 224 ff.
23. Ram; Etienne, p. 161-163.

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24. Nossiter, p. 118-124; also Spate and Learmonth, p. 150-58; Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, p. 15.
25. Myrdal, v. I, p. 413-417.
26. Spate and Learmonth, esp. p. 113-117, 225-233, 280-299.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 131; Ichman and Dhar.
28. Malenbaum, p. 844.
29. Nossiter, p. 56-74; also, Stanley A. Kochenek, "The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Indian Politics," *Asian Survey*, September 1971, p. 866-85.
30. M.S. Rajan, "India and World Politics in the Post-Nehru Era," *International Journal*, Winter 1968-69, p. 138-158.
31. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, p. 54-56.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 87; see also D. Som Dutt, *India and the Bomb*. *Adelphi Papers* No. 30 (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1966).
33. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, p. 525-526.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 527-539; *USSR and Third World*, p. 494-499.
35. Rajan; also, Maharaj K. Chopra, *India. The Search for Power* (Bombay: Lalvani, 1969), p. 269-325.



Change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better.

Quoted by Johnson, as from Hooker, in the
Preface to the "English Dictionary"