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# **India: The Opposition's Search for Unity**



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**An Intelligence Assessment**

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*NESA 83-10326  
December 1983*

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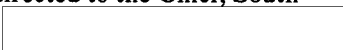
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# India: The Opposition's Search for Unity



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**An Intelligence Assessment**

This paper was prepared by   
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,  
with a contribution from  Office  
of Central Reference. Comments and queries are  
welcome and may be directed to the Chief, South  
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**Key Judgments***Information available  
as of 15 November 1983  
was used in this report.*

A united coalition of opposition parties probably would have a better than even chance of achieving a majority or at least denying one to Prime Minister Gandhi in the next parliamentary election to be held by January 1985. Even so, a winning coalition would have to include the entire spectrum of national and regional non-Communist parties, and formidable obstacles threaten to keep the opposition divided. No opposition leader has Gandhi's stature or popularity, and no single party can challenge the Congress Party in national elections.

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The opposition's shared view that the Prime Minister's popularity has diminished is helping to unify it:

- Opposition parties across the political spectrum are meeting to discuss the need for more regional government autonomy and to explore other issues that could unite them.
- Two groupings of rightist and leftist national parties—encouraged by the declared support of India's two major Communist parties—have recently emerged to confront Gandhi, and we believe that efforts to bring important regional parties into formal opposition to Congress will succeed, especially if the Prime Minister appears vulnerable.

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Before rejecting Gandhi at the polls, the increasingly informed and impatient Indian electorate will demand convincing assurances that an opposition alternative will be durable and can manage India's enormous ethnic and cultural diversity. In our view, the opposition will try to gain credibility by basing its platform on popular general issues that can be endorsed by all participating coalition parties. We believe that a victorious, cohesive opposition coalition government initially would be stable, but as in the past, unresolved differences among opposition parties within a year or two probably would endanger a coalition government.

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Prospects for a durable coalition to oppose Gandhi are still problematic because of several difficulties:

- An older generation of quarrelsome opposition leaders is reluctant to cede leadership to younger and more flexible junior officials.
- Opposition parties represent a plethora of seemingly incompatible ideologies, personalities, and constituencies.
- Factionalism within opposition parties—particularly between the national leadership and state units—may prevent party leaders from striking meaningful deals with other parties.

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- Gandhi may return to her familiar strategy of gaining support from one or more regional parties with promises of autonomy or more central aid. She may seek Indian Communist Party support should the regional parties reject her and an opposition coalition appears threatening.



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We believe the Soviets prefer Gandhi—who generally supports Soviet foreign policy objectives—to an opposition coalition that might include conservative, anti-Communist parties.



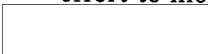
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As domestic politics heat up before the elections, we believe Gandhi will look for scapegoats to divert domestic criticism and to demonstrate the tough leadership she believes appeals to Indian voters. To undercut the appeal of the opposition parties, the Prime Minister may increase her leftist rhetoric and intensify her attacks against “outside forces” that she alleges threaten India’s national security. Opposition gains would encourage Gandhi to criticize more actively US policy in world trouble spots.



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US interests and policy in South Asia are likely to come under sharp criticism from Gandhi and her party as India’s parliamentary elections approach. She has already implied US interference in state assembly elections earlier this year and raised the foreign hand bogey more recently in strategically sensitive Kashmir. Gandhi’s recurrent charges of Pakistan’s involvement in civil disorders in the Indian state of Punjab are chiefly an effort to mobilize domestic political support and preempt the opposition.



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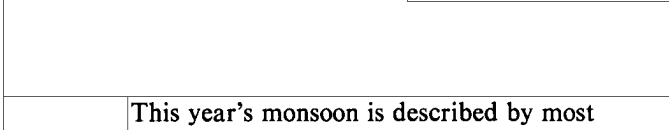
### India: The Opposition's Search for Unity



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The organized opposition to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her Congress Party is divided, but the shared perception among the major opposition parties that Gandhi is vulnerable is promoting opposition unity (see table 1). In our view, opposition parties are groping for an issue and a leader to provide a credible alternative to the Prime Minister. Despite the opposition's potential to successfully unite against the Congress Party, in our analysis Indian voters will demand firm evidence that the opposition can provide an effective and durable government before rejecting the Congress Party at the polls.

The prospect of national parliamentary elections before the January 1985 deadline adds urgency to opposition plans to challenge Gandhi with a coalition of national and regional parties.



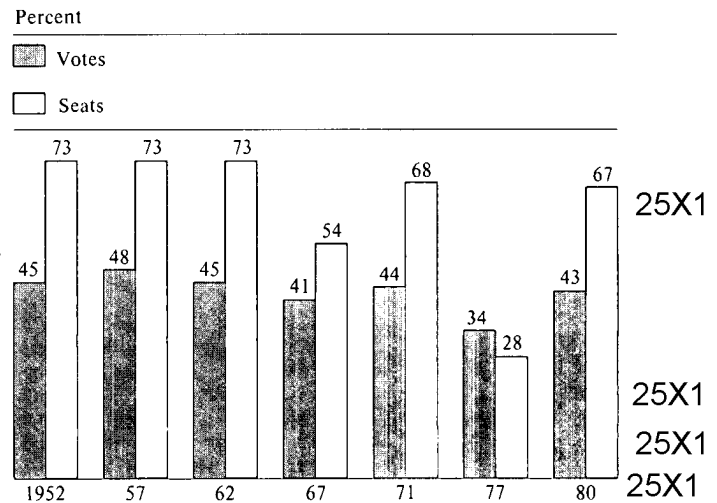
This year's monsoon is described by most experts on the Indian economy as one of the best in recent years, and many political observers argue that the Prime Minister may take advantage of that by calling for early elections. Nonetheless, bickering and longstanding rivalries continue to hamper rapid progress toward a united opposition.

#### The Divided Opposition

The opposition in India has long been divided into many small parties. Chronic opposition disunity reflects various regional interests and wide ideological differences. Since independence the opposition has produced only one popular leader—the late J. P. Narayan—capable of challenging the Nehru family dynasty and arbitrating the often petty quarrels among politicians outside the Congress Party. State and regional parties often led by locally popular figures have periodically wrested control from Congress in their home areas, but the Congress Party has won six of seven nationwide elections and is the only party with an effective organization in all of India's 22 states (see figure 1).



Figure 1  
Congress Party Results in Parliamentary Elections, 1952-80



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Since independence in 1947, many opposition parties have emerged, most of them transient or highly localized. Many were formed around leaders of particular castes or ethnic communities, and others represented various ideologies. On the right, several parties emerged representing the landed Hindu farmers of the northern states as well as primarily urban, educated Hindus advocating a free enterprise economic system (see foldout at end of text). On the left, various Socialists and Communists fought for the allegiance of landless laborers, the underprivileged, and the

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**Table 1**  
**Goals and Constituencies of Major**  
**Non-Communist National Parties <sup>a</sup>**

	Goals	Constituency
<b>Government</b>		
Congress	Formally committed to a general policy of "democratic socialism," a secular state, and nonalignment. Policies are pragmatic and mandated by Gandhi rather than developed through intraparty debate.	National following, but serious erosion occurred in south and outside the Hindi-speaking belt. Embraces broad spectrum of support overlapping parties of left and right.
<b>Opposition</b>		
Janata	A pivotal party in any united opposition, party president Chandra Shekhar wants to make the party more responsive to the rural electorate. A left-of-center party of former Congress Party members. Janata has recently gained support from leftist defectors from the Democratic Socialist Party and the Lok Dal and leads the United Front coalition.	Wide geographical base but support largely drawn from urban and higher educated groups in Hindi-speaking states. Has concentrations of strength in Karnataka—where it formed a state government in January 1983—Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Bihar.
Lok Dal	To foster cooperation between independent farmers, small businessmen, and the self-employed. Agricultural development is seen as essential to industrial development, which the party believes should be small-scale and based on self-reliance. Party wishes to see rejuvenation of the village and enhancement of peasant proprietors. Led by former Prime Minister Charan Singh, the conservative Lok Dal formed the National Democratic Alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party in August 1983.	Small landowners and independent farmers of the Jat caste in the northern Hindi-speaking states—particularly Uttar Pradesh and Haryana—with some support in Bihar and Orissa.
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	Although the BJP is trying to project an image of a secular, national party, a substantial element seeks to protect Hindu society, advance Indian domination of the subcontinent, and promote Hindi as the national language. The BJP split from the Janata Party coalition in 1980. Many members attracted from the erstwhile Jan Sangh Party, the political arm of the militant Hindu Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The RSS is a cultural organization dedicated to the preservation and renaissance of Hindu culture. Led by former Janata Foreign Minister A. B. Vajpayee, the BJP formed the National Democratic Alliance with the Lok Dal Party in August 1983.	Has strong, well-organized grass-roots support among north Indian landowners, civil servants, Hindu traders, and shopkeepers. Strongest in the Hindi-speaking states of Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, with strength also in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat. The BJP has tried to broaden its support outside Hindi areas with only marginal success.
Democratic Socialist Party	The creation of party president H. N. Bahuguna, a former outspoken Cabinet minister and general secretary of the Congress Party, the Democratic Socialist Party hopes to unite all left-of-center parties against Indira Gandhi. The party joined the United Front coalition in September 1983. Bahuguna rejects an opposition front with the BJP and would like to include the Communists under his leadership. The Indian press has noted his strong advocacy of closer Indo-Soviet ties while a member of Gandhi's government in the mid-1970s. Both journalists and political observers speculate that Bahuguna received Soviet financial support during his successful parliamentary campaign in 1982. We believe Gandhi fears Bahuguna because of his close ties with Congress politicians and his strong political base in the Prime Minister's home state of Uttar Pradesh. From his public statements and participation in organizing opposition leader meetings, Bahuguna is clearly trying to lead efforts to unify the opposition.	Core areas of Uttar Pradesh—where Bahuguna was once state chief minister—and a modest following in other Hindi-speaking states. Bahuguna also has support among nominal Congress Party members who favor more pro-Soviet policies and has friends in the Communist parties.

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**Table 1**  
**Goals and Constituencies of Major**  
**Non-Communist National Parties <sup>a</sup> (continued)**

	Goals	Constituency
Congress (S)	A left-of-center "Gandhian socialist" breakaway from Gandhi's Congress, the Congress (S) (for socialist) favors mobilization of all leftist parties and has worked with the Communists. Party identity is maintained only by its national leadership under former Maharashtra chief minister, Sharad Pawar. The West Bengal and Kerala units of the party have rejoined Congress over the past year. Congress (S) joined the United Front coalition in September.	Maharashtra.
Rashtriya Sanjay Manch	Founded in 1983 by Indira Gandhi's estranged daughter-in-law, Maneka, the party wants to establish a socialist, secular state with a centrist foreign policy. Hopes to galvanize youth and unemployed and rid government of corruption.	Disaffected Youth Congress activists and close associates of the late Sanjay Gandhi. Maneka has attracted some support from women's groups. The party has pockets of strong support in Uttar Pradesh and has recently established a number of state organizations, but membership is probably far below party claims of 800,000.

<sup>a</sup> Some 22 political parties are represented in the two houses of Parliament, but only six of these qualify as "all-India parties," defined in the Constitution as those obtaining 4 percent of the vote in Lok Sabha elections or in elections to at least four state assemblies. All-India parties are the Congress, Congress (S), Bharatiya Janata Party, Janata Party, Lok Dal, and Communist Party of India (Marxist). We consider the additional dozen or so nonregional parties not included relatively insignificant and likely to merge into the Congress or major opposition parties at election time.

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newly enfranchised (see figure 2). The Congress Party itself split in 1969. The larger splinter faction followed Gandhi after she won control of the party from regional party bosses. Her chief rival, Morarji Desai, led the minor, more conservative faction. [redacted]

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scholars agree that through his inspiration and encouragement opposition party leaders temporarily put aside their differences under the leadership of Morarji Desai. [redacted]

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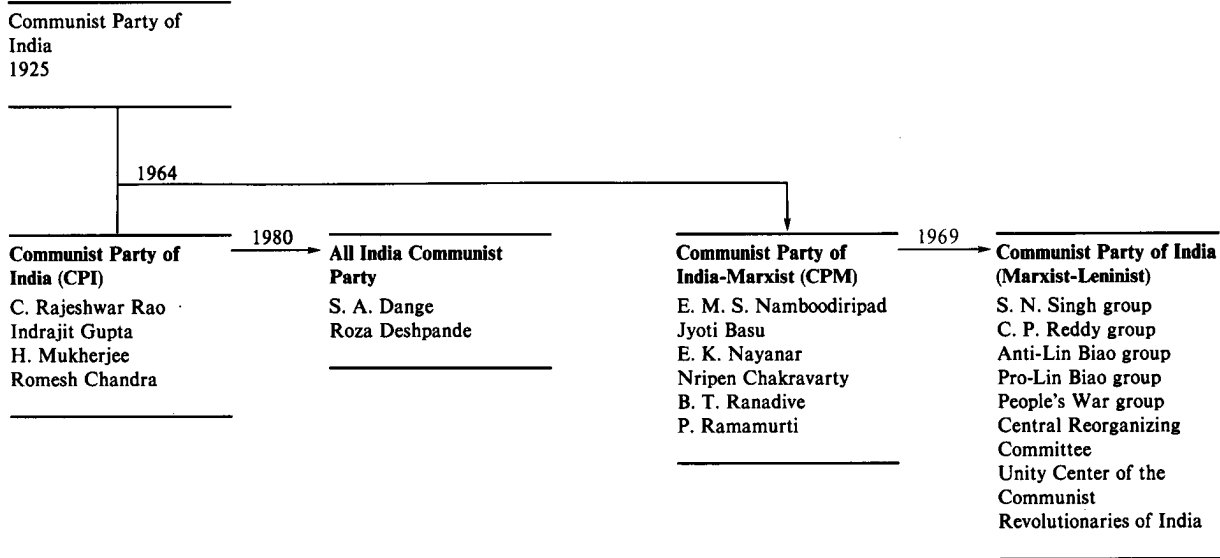
The opposition defeated Congress in 1977, we believe chiefly because Gandhi underestimated deep dissatisfaction with her regime in the northern Hindi-speaking states (see figure 3) and because two years of authoritarian emergency rule unified the disparate opposition parties. J. P. Narayan, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, led a nonviolent civil disobedience campaign that mobilized Muslims and untouchables—the bedrock of Congress Party support—against the Prime Minister. Narayan rejected personal participation in the new Janata government, but

Indian and American scholars have documented the factional and ideological disputes and disruptive personality clashes that soon emerged. Scholars point to Janata's failure to draft and implement a coherent national program as an important factor leading to the fall of the Janata Party coalition. Gandhi returned to power in January 1980 with a fresh mandate to provide a "government that works." [redacted]

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**Figure 2**  
**Evolution of India's Communist Parties**



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[Redacted]

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Several current opposition party leaders presided over the disintegration of Janata in 1979. Each of the old party leaders comes from separate and mutually antagonistic social groups. Morarji Desai—officially retired but still influential among some elements of the Janata Party—is an urban Brahmin with a conservative economic and political perspective. Charan Singh is a spokesman for relatively well-off rural landholders, and Jagjivan Ram for years has represented the interests of untouchables in northern India.

[Redacted]

**Opposition Opportunities**

We believe that Prime Minister Gandhi is susceptible to a unified opposition despite the two-thirds majority that Congress now enjoys in Parliament (see figure 4).

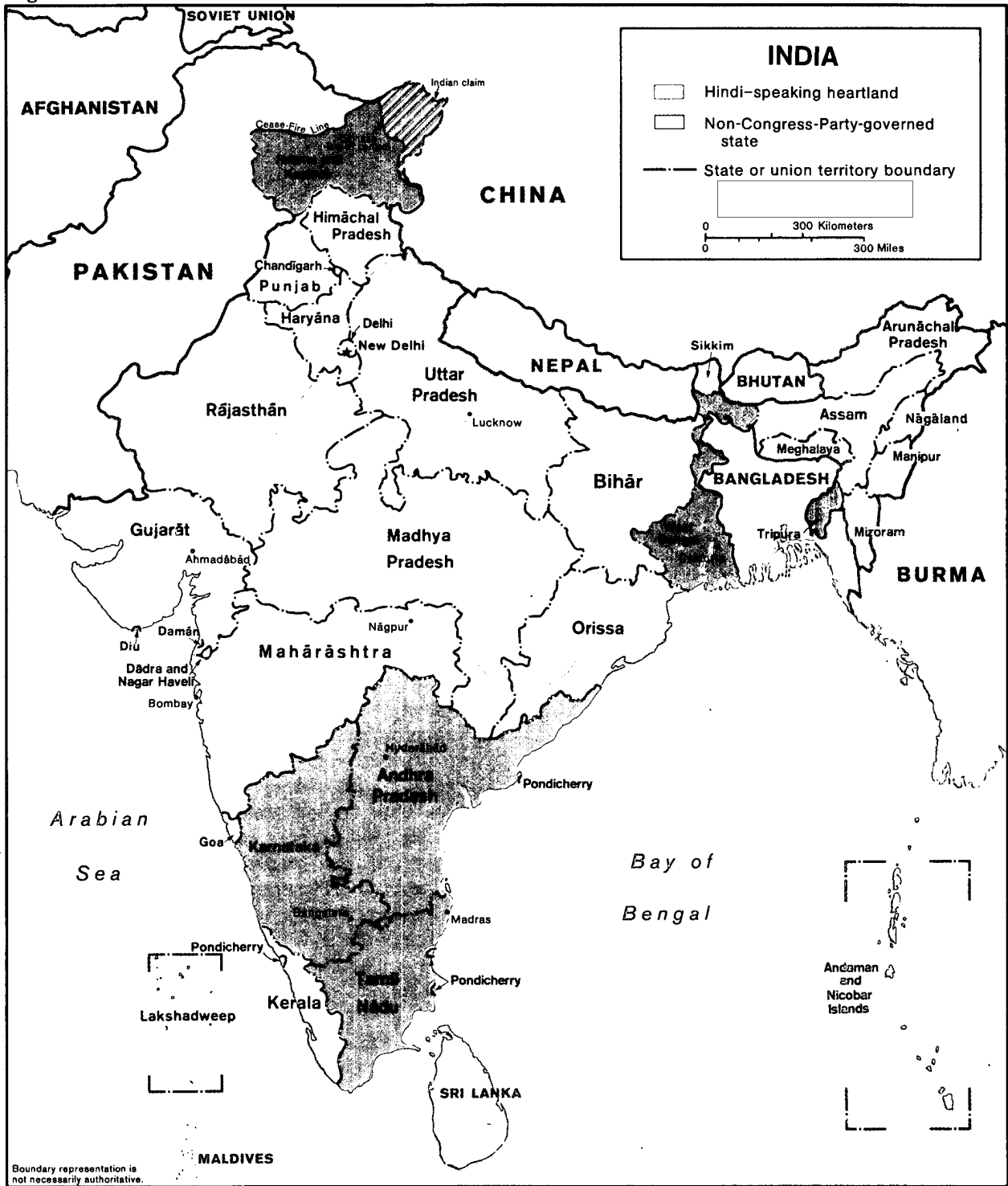
One opposition leader describes Gandhi's party as a movement that united all Indians briefly to win independence from the British but has since not satisfied an increasingly impatient electorate. According to US Embassy reports, opposition politicians believe that the Congress Party has weakened considerably since 1980. [Redacted]

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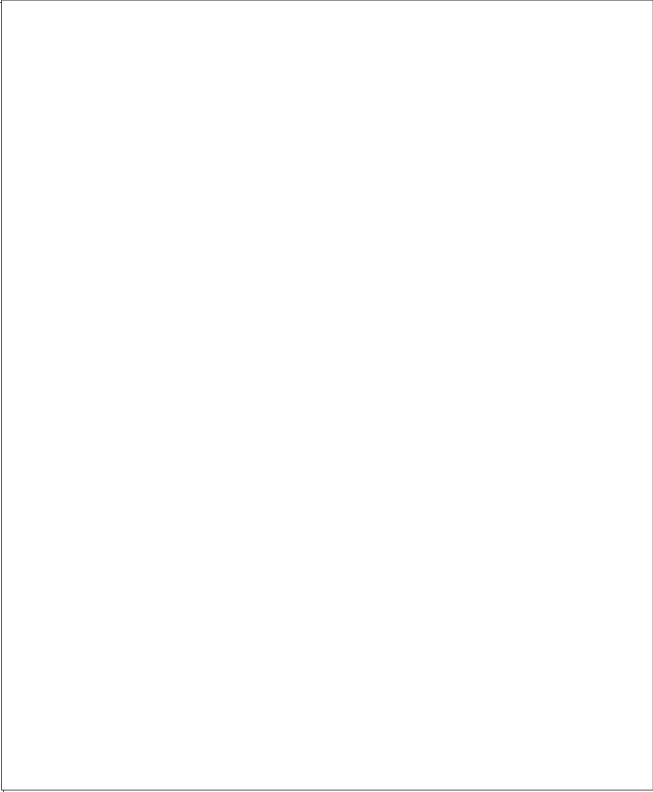
In our analysis, the image and credibility of the Congress Party have been tarnished as it has lost ground to the opposition. Five major states with a combined population of 200 million—Jammu and

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Figure 3



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Kashmir, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu—are governed by opposition parties that have strengthened their hold over the past year. We believe the legitimacy of Congress governments in Assam and Punjab is challenged by violence and civil disturbances. Political commentators point out that Congress-led governments in Kerala, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh share power only through the tenuous support of independents and unreliable coalition partners. In our view, returns from numerous state assembly elections and parliamentary byelections held since 1980 suggest that state organizations of the Congress Party have deteriorated badly, and few have met the special demands of India's various linguistic and ethnic groups, which are now turning to regional parties.

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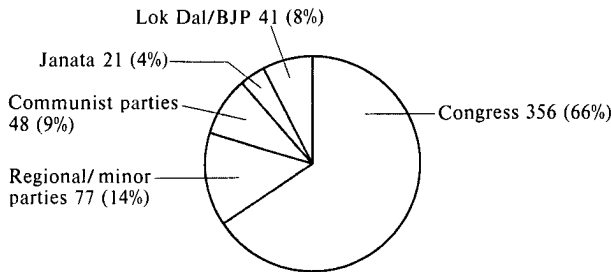
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We believe regional parties—which appeal to particular linguistic, cultural, or ethnic groups—have grown stronger and more assertive at Congress's expense. Of the six states now governed by non-Congress parties,

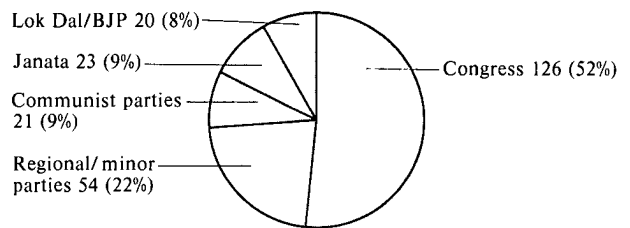
**Figure 4**  
**Party Strength in Parliament, June 1983**

Number of seats

**Lok Sabha (Lower House)**  
Total number of seats: 543



**Rajya Sabha (Upper House)**  
Total number of seats: 244



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three—Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir—are controlled by regional parties. Journalists and political observers note that regional parties provide strong opposition to shaky Congress governments in other regions including the strategically sensitive northeastern states and Punjab, which borders on Pakistan. In other major Congress-controlled states—notably Gujarat, Kerala, and Orissa—regional parties are gaining strength. [redacted]

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In our judgment, many in the lower castes and minority communities have deserted the Prime Minister for regional parties. Political observers attribute regional party gains in the south earlier this year to the defection of Muslims, untouchables, women voters, and youth activists. According to US diplomats, increasing communal violence is causing fewer Muslims to regard Congress as their principal patron and protector, and many are seriously considering regional party alternatives. [redacted]

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**Maneuvering Toward an Opposition Front**

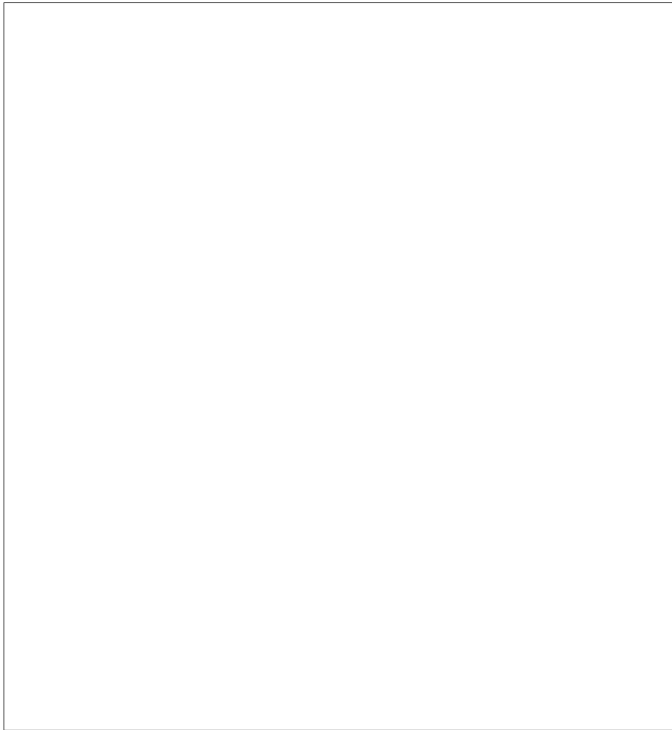
Despite periodic bickering among major opposition leaders, national and regional parties over the past year have managed to arrange local and state electoral alliances to challenge successfully Gandhi's weakened Congress Party. The Embassy has identified four general opposition groupings:

- A "left and democratic front" centered on the CPM, CPI, and small leftist parties.
- A mainly socialist combine of the Janata Party, Congress (S), and occasional participation by Democratic Socialist Party leader H. N. Bahuguna.
- A rightist alliance linking the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the landed farmer-oriented Lok Dal.
- Regional parties allied with one or more national opposition parties. [redacted]

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We believe the first tentative movement toward national opposition unity began at a conclave including 16 non-Communist and Communist opposition parties sponsored by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and Telugu Desam leader N. T. Rama Rao in May 1983. Even though the participants acknowledged that policy differences still blocked formation of an opposition front, US diplomats reported a consensus on several broad demands relating to states rights. The Embassy also noted creation of an informal council in which leaders of national and regional parties will periodically assess the political situation and formulate alternatives to national issues. Followup conclaves met in July and October 1983, and the Indian press reports that opposition leaders have planned additional meetings before the end of the year. [redacted]



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The Bharatiya Janata Party, led by former Foreign Minister and current BJP President A. B. Vajpayee, in August 1983 forged the first national opposition coalition since 1977 by photo joining a right-of-center "National Democratic Alliance" with the Lok Dal. This alliance reflects an effort, according to Embassy reports, to consolidate opposition forces in the Hindi-speaking heartland of northern India, an area that most analysts agree will be crucial for Gandhi in the next elections. In a joint public statement, BJP and Lok Dal officials announced that a steering committee will coordinate the activities of all alliance member parties in Parliament and in the state legislatures. The agreement specifies that member parties of the alliance will not run candidates against each other in the national parliamentary election. [redacted]

We believe these opposition alliances by themselves will not pose serious electoral threats to the Congress Party. The BJP has been unimpressive in recent elections, while the Lok Dal is seriously troubled by factionalism. The parties comprising the United Front are plagued by weak organization. According to Embassy reports, the national leadership of the parties in the United Front and National Democratic Alliance may have trouble convincing their state units to cooperate in fielding joint slates. [redacted]

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Another national grouping of opposition parties, including the left-of-center Janata, Congress (S), the Democratic Socialist Party, and the regional Rashtriya Congress, emerged as the "United Front" in September 1983. Like the National Democratic Alliance, the United Front also plans coordinated action inside and outside Parliament, according to Embassy reports and the Indian press, and each party will maintain its independence. Indian political commentators report that the United Front's strategy is based on the ability of each party to mobilize support in the states and districts where it is strongest. In a press statement announcing formation of the front, member parties pledged to pursue alliances with other opposition parties. [redacted]

**Regional Parties: Keys to Opposition Unity**

We expect most principal regional parties will eventually join or cooperate with one of the two major opposition alliances, particularly should a Congress Party defeat appear possible. In our analysis, regional party leaders—who believe more regional autonomy is inevitable and necessary to preserve India's unity—perceive Gandhi as perhaps the strongest proponent of centralization in Indian politics. They view Gandhi, therefore, as a greater obstacle to increased regional autonomy than a possible opposition coalition government dependent upon regional party support. [redacted]

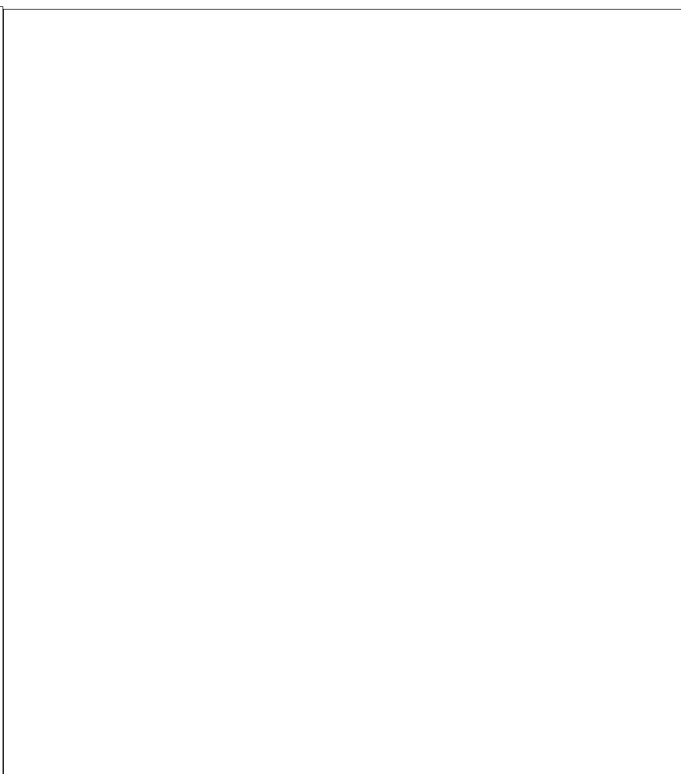
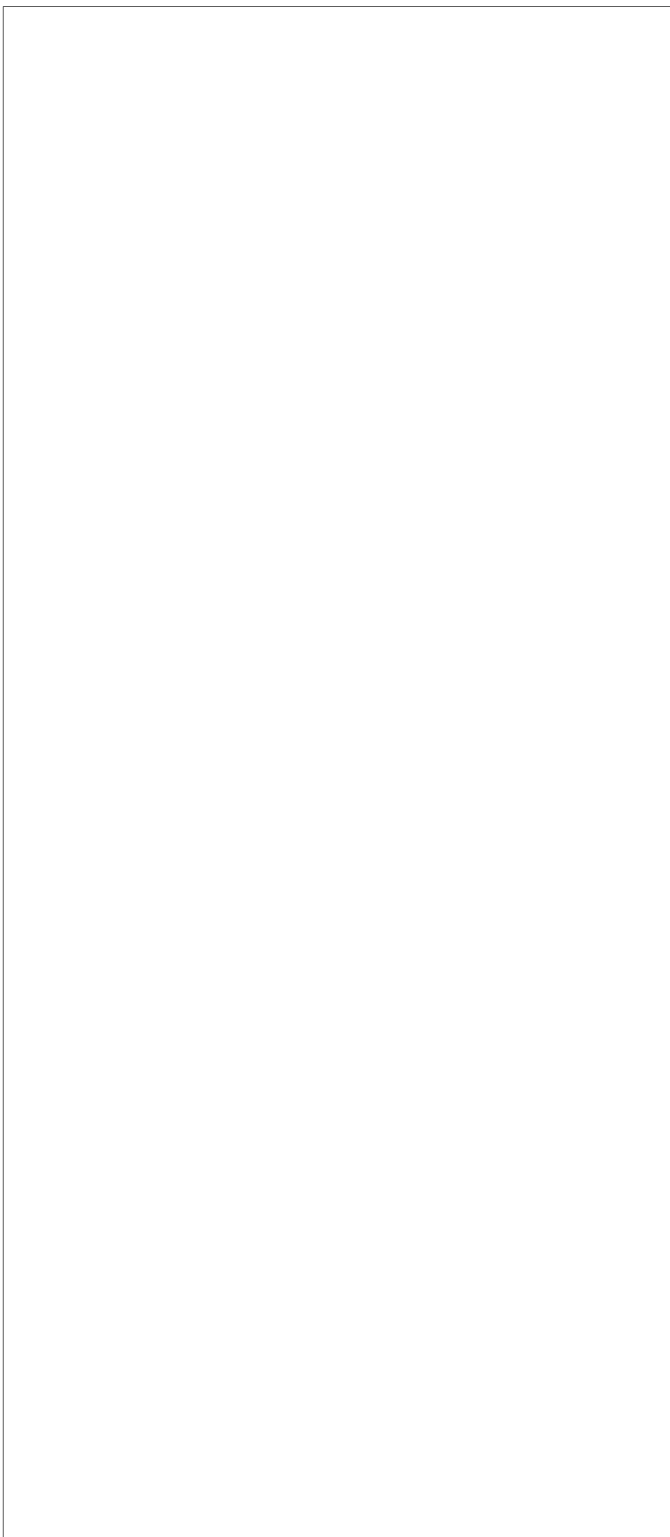
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The increasingly important regional parties so far have remained aloof from formal opposition alliances, but we believe they have shown a convincing interest in opposition unity efforts. The Indian press reports that strong regional party leaders such as N. T. Rama Rao (referred to as NTR), Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran (known as MGR) are talking about cooperating in a coalition. Recent press statements from these regional party leaders suggest that Rama Rao and perhaps Farooq Abdullah want the lead in an opposition front. US diplomats and Indian journalists report that Rama Rao already projects himself as a national political force rather than merely a regional party leader. The Embassy believes Rama Rao may bide his time until he can play a more important role in the opposition, probably as a unifying force as elections approach.

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In our judgment, the more parochial and local orientation of the regional parties limits their appeal and makes them susceptible to Gandhi's promises of more state autonomy or central government aid. The Embassy reports that the Prime Minister maintains contact with regional party leaders and periodically

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**Table 2**  
**Major Regional Parties**

Party	State	Leader
Akali Dal	Punjab	H. S. Longowal
AIADMK	Tamil Nadu	M. G. Ramachandran
DMK	Tamil Nadu	M. Karunanidhi
National Conference	Jammu and Kashmir	Farooq Abdullah
Telugu Desam	Andhra Pradesh	N. T. Rama Rao

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tests for possible future alliances. She and Rama Rao have had several lengthy discussions in New Delhi, and the Indian press speculates that the Prime Minister has made special efforts to cultivate M. G. Ramachandran in the past few months. [redacted]

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According to our analysis, in the south Gandhi has long played off regional Dravidian parties against each other. Embassy officials report that although Congress has not formally offered to stand with the ruling All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Party (AIADMK) in the next election, high-level election talks were held in April. The Indian press notes that Ramachandran has instructed party members not to criticize the Prime Minister's government, and some commentators speculate that an AIADMK deal with the Congress has already been agreed to in principle. The press indicates that most opposition leaders discount possible AIADMK participation in an opposition coalition, but Tamil Nadu state officials insist that Ramachandran will avoid an electoral arrangement with Gandhi because of the decline of Congress in the state and because of general dissension within Gandhi's party throughout India. [redacted]

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We believe the recent religious violence in Sri Lanka has enabled Gandhi to score propaganda points with Ramachandran's ruling AIADMK by seeking to protect Tamil interests in Sri Lanka. Both the AIADMK and the state opposition Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) vie to be the champion of Sri Lankan

Tamils, and US diplomats believe AIADMK and DMK demands on Gandhi to support the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils carry added weight because Tamil Nadu is the one southern state where she hopes for some support in the next parliamentary election. [redacted]

#### Role of the Communist Parties

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Although the more independent Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and the traditionally Moscow-backed Communist Party of India (CPI) have sent representatives to some opposition conclaves, the Indian press and knowledgeable political observers note that mutual antipathy and distrust virtually rule out alliances between the Communists and the conservative BJP and Lok Dal parties. Despite the Communist parties' public support for the United Front, press reports suggest that many non-Communist opposition leaders believe that Communist participation in opposition planning is counterproductive because they judge the CPI and CPM are untrustworthy and could defect to Gandhi. [redacted]

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The CPI—allied with Gandhi from the late 1960s until 1977—appears to be moving toward greater support for opposition unity efforts, but eventual Indian Communist support for Gandhi cannot be ruled out. The US Embassy reports that the CPI recently hardened its anti-Gandhi stance by censoring a pro-Gandhi party official. [redacted]

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We believe that Gandhi might again court the Communist parties and ask the Soviets to press them to support her, particularly if most regional parties reject cooperation with the Congress Party. The Indian press notes that Gandhi appealed to the Soviets to

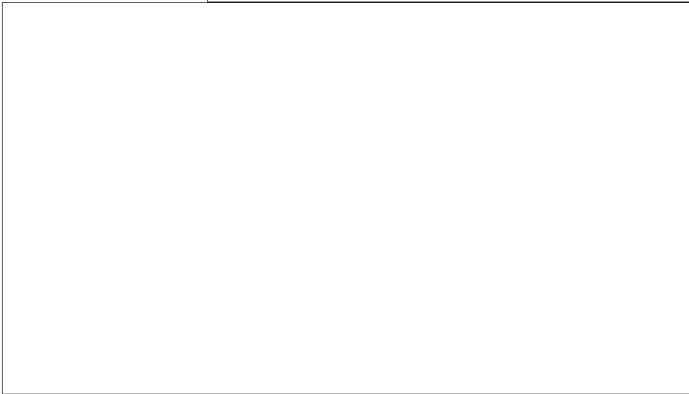
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curb Indian Communist criticism during her visit to Moscow last year. Gandhi has publicly acknowledged having asked the Soviet Communist Party in September 1983 to encourage CPI support of her government. [redacted]

We believe the Soviets prefer Gandhi—who generally supports Soviet foreign policy objectives—to an opposition coalition that might include conservative parties such as the BJP and Lok Dal. For more than a year the Soviets have been trying to protect their relations with Gandhi by quietly encouraging the CPI to support her. [redacted]



In our view, however, Soviet officials may have reservations about trying to mobilize support for Gandhi among Indian Communist parties. Indian commentators note that the CPM is maintaining adamant opposition to the Prime Minister even as it develops closer ties to Moscow and cooperates more closely with its longtime rival CPI. The Soviets may calculate that pressures on the Indian Communist parties to back Gandhi could ruin the potential Communist unity in India that we believe the Soviets want in place when the Nehru dynasty leaves the political stage. [redacted]

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**Outlook**

In our view, major problems still obstruct formation of an effective and unified opposition coalition. The leaders responsible for the collapse of the Janata government are still on the scene and sometimes seem unwilling to ignore personal differences. Several opposition parties object to any alliance with the BJP. Although the BJP leadership is formally committed to opposition unity—minus the Communists and the

Muslim League—disciplined Hindu communal chauvinists in the BJP stridently oppose party president Vajpayee's goal of an opposition front. [redacted]

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We believe opposition unity efforts are bound to be influenced by Gandhi. The Prime Minister, as in the past, will seek to divide the opposition groups. Given the number of personal conflicts among the opposition leaders and the almost unlimited resources at the Congress Party's disposal, the likelihood of successful mischief is high. Gandhi also controls the election machinery, and she alone determines the timing of elections. [redacted]

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In our view, opposition leaders have already discounted the possibility of a single united party in favor of a loose confederation in which opposition parties will agree on a single candidate to oppose the Congress Party in each constituency. The Janata Party's fragmentation in 1979 seems to have taught the opposition that a loose coalition of separate parties is more manageable and certainly more practical than a single opposition party containing inflexible personalities and diverse factions. We expect opposition unity efforts to proceed on the principle that each potential coalition partner will maintain its own identity and agree on a minimal platform—greater state autonomy, less government corruption, and a central government more responsive to the electorate's rising expectations. [redacted]

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In any case, an opposition coalition of most major national and regional parties, however loose, would be a formidable threat to Gandhi, and a determined united front of rightist and leftist opposition parties would probably beat her. Even without a coherent opposition front we believe the Congress Party faces a reduced majority in Parliament, and some political observers argue that a mere plurality for the Congress Party is possible. Congress accordingly would be forced into a coalition government with at least one party. We believe a motivated, well-coordinated opposition coalition could even defeat Congress, but opposition efforts would require more progress than they have made. [redacted]

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**Implications for the United States**

Gandhi—watchful for indicators of a resurgent opposition—will weigh all major political decisions in the coming months as to their probable effect on her election chances. Should opposition efforts to build a coalition appear to be gaining momentum, in our view Gandhi will seek scapegoats for her domestic troubles.

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The Prime Minister raised the foreign hand bogey more recently during the Jammu and Kashmir assembly election campaign in June 1983—which her party lost—and again several weeks later when she claimed publicly that the only base for the Khalistan separatist movement in Punjab is in the United States. Her son Rajiv repeated the allegation several weeks later. Gandhi's advisers have assured US diplomats, however, that her recent references to a foreign hand are principally campaign rhetoric. [Redacted]

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To draw attention to the threat to national unity, we believe Gandhi will intensify her attacks against "outside forces." The Prime Minister probably believes a firm foreign policy toward India's neighbors—especially Pakistan—will contribute to her image as the only politician able to provide strong national leadership. US diplomats in New Delhi and other political observers attribute her public condemnation of the Zia regime for its handling of unrest in Sind Province as an attempt by Gandhi to placate Hindu nationalists in India's Hindi-speaking heartland. [Redacted]

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In our judgment, Gandhi's determination to undercut the more leftist elements of the opposition could also lead to more frequent criticism of the United States. Gandhi and her Congress Party may decide that they cannot allow themselves to be outflanked on the left and could therefore seek to seize the initiative by condemning US policy in troubled areas of the world. Equally possible would be gestures to the left by the Prime Minister in economic policy, but we see little likelihood of major Indian policy changes. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

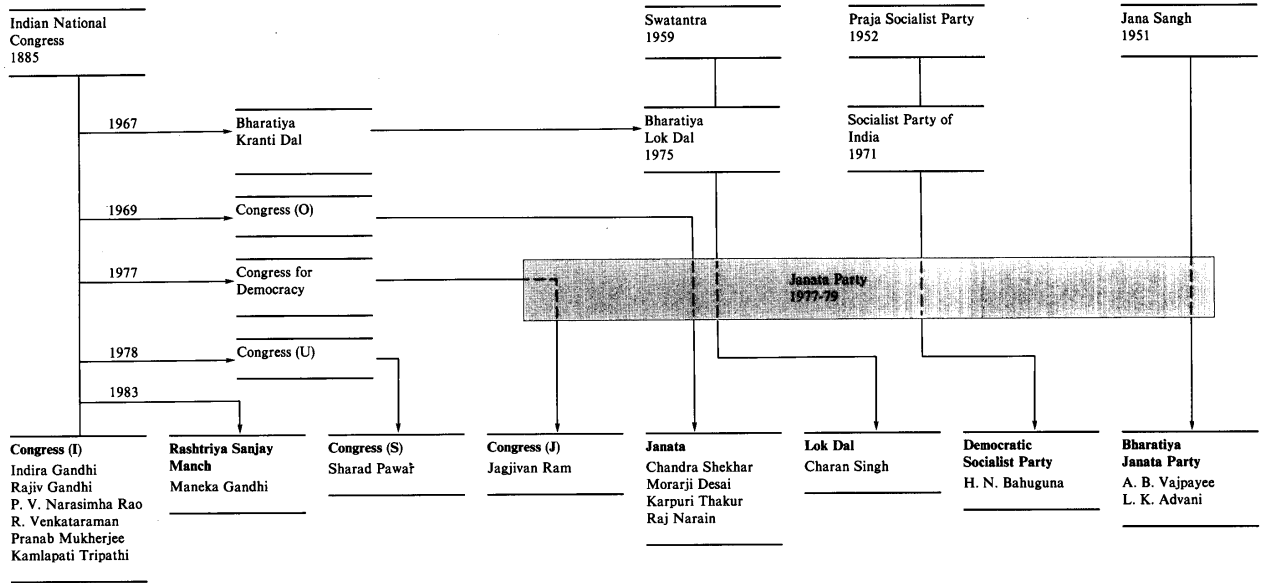
The United States could become a major target of Gandhi's frustrations, in our judgment. During her campaigns in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, Gandhi accused "outside forces" of abetting efforts to undermine the political system and national unity. US diplomats reported soon afterwards that some Indian officials in the Prime Minister's office suspected US involvement in the Congress Party's subsequent state assembly losses in January. Gandhi herself failed to rule out possible US involvement in election violence in Assam the following month, according to press reports. [Redacted]

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**Figure 5**  
**Evolution of India's National Political Parties**  
**(Non-Communist)**



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