

Congress, the Lok Dal, and the Middle-Peasant Castes: An  
Analysis of the 1977 and 1980 Parliamentary Elections in  
Uttar Pradesh

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# Congress, the Lok Dal, and the Middle-Peasant Castes: An Analysis of the 1977 and 1980 Parliamentary Elections in Uttar Pradesh\*

Paul R. Brass

THE DRAMATIC CHANGES that have taken place in Indian politics in the past five years have their roots in the post-Independence political history of north India, particularly of the state of Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in the Indian Union and the home of four of five of the prime ministers of the country. It has been widely noted that the "Emergency" imposed upon India by Mrs. Gandhi for two years between 1975 and 1977 affected the north Indian states more than the south and that Mrs. Gandhi's overwhelming defeat in the 1977 elections and the success of Janata was principally a consequence of the nearly total sweep of the parliamentary seats in that election in every state in the north. By the same token, the ability of the Congress to recoup most of its losses in the north Indian Hindi-speaking states by winning 144 seats there in 1980, compared to only 2 in 1977, made it possible for the Congress and Mrs. Gandhi to regain power at the Center.

In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the conflicts for control of

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the government of India that have been going on for the past five years, during which the Emergency and the 1977 and 1980 elections have been dramatic focal points, have been almost entirely a playing-out on the national stage of social and political conflicts that have their origin in the north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, which contain between them approximately 150 million people. The leading political actors and forces who have articulated those conflicts, excepting Moraji Desai, all have come from U.P. and Bihar: Mrs. Gandhi, Charan Singh, Raj Narain and H.N. Bahuguna from U.P.; Jayaprakash Narayan and Jagjivan Ram from Bihar; and the Jan Sangh, with its principal strength in U.P., Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. The issues that have overlaid the struggle for power at the Center also have derived largely, though not exclusively, from persistent political and social problems in the north: Hindu-Muslim conflict and violence, widespread student unrest, the differential impact of the Green Revolution on regions and rural social classes, the failure of industrialization to provide off-farm employment for the rural poor, and the consequent increasing discontent of the low castes and landless laborers in the countryside.

The significance of the north in the Emergency and in the 1977 and 1980 elections has been widely noted, but analysis of the sources of its importance in the social and political conflicts of the region have been neglected in the undue and misplaced attempts to read into the election results a great victory for Indian democracy or to explain them in terms of the specific issues articulated during the campaigns. The 1977 election results were hailed by most observers of Indian politics as a virtually unprecedented restoration of a democratic system by popular vote and as a confirmation of the deep commitment of the Indian populace, rich and poor alike, to the values of democracy and parliamentarism. Specific factors associated with Mrs. Gandhi's regime also were pinpointed as particularly important in her defeat: the sterilization campaign, demolition of squatter houses, the curtailment of civil liberties in general, and the increased prominence of Mrs. Gandhi's son, Sanjay. Similar comments were made about the 1980 elections. Once again, journalists praised the Indian public for their commitment to democracy by throwing out yet another unpopular regime. Again also, specific factors were identified as especially important to the result—namely, prices and shortages of basic commodities and the discontent of the Indian public with the "politics of defection."

Yet, clearly the more sweeping interpretations of the 1977 and

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1980 elections are wrong: since Mrs. Gandhi never expressed any genuine regrets for imposing the Emergency regime, it is not possible to see *both* elections as expressing deep commitment by Indian voters to democracy. As for the more specific explanations, they are not wrong, only superficial: they ignore the deeper patterns revealed in these elections that have developed during the past thirty years of north Indian political and social history and that set the stage for the Emergency and its overthrow, as well as for the return of Mrs. Gandhi to power.

The purpose of this article is to examine these underlying patterns of behavior of the leading social forces in U.P. in the elections of 1977 and 1980 and to trace the development of the social conflicts that were expressed in those two elections. Although this article focusses on the state of U.P., many of the patterns described here apply also to Bihar.<sup>1</sup> The remainder of the article is divided into four parts. The first part summarizes the main features of the electoral history of U.P. and offers an explanation for the rise of the Janata party and its sweep of the 1977 elections. The second part examines the break-up of the Janata coalition and the setting of the stage for the 1980 elections. The third part presents a detailed analysis of the electoral history of five rural constituencies in U.P. The conclusions are presented in the fourth part.

### THE ELECTORAL HISTORY OF U.P. AND THE RISE OF THE JANATA PARTY

Table 1 presents the results of the seven parliamentary elections in U.P. Three features of those results should be noted. The first concerns the overall decline of support for the Congress: having achieved its peak electoral support in 1952, when it polled 53 per cent of the vote, it began to decline thereafter to 46 per cent in 1957, 38 per cent in 1962, and to less than one-third of the popular vote in 1967. Although the Congress popular vote share increased markedly in 1971, it dropped even more severely in 1977 and then reverted to somewhat above one-third of the popular vote in 1980. It is especially important to note that the decline of the Congress was most pronounced in a tract of eight agriculturally prosperous districts near Delhi, between the Ganges and the Jumna rivers, known as the Upper Doab. This

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<sup>1</sup> See Harry W. Blair, "Rising Kulaks and Backward Classes in Bihar: Social Change in the Late 1970s," *Economic and Political Weekly*, XV, no. 2 (January 12, 1980), pp. 64-74, and Pradhan H. Prasad, "Rising Middle Peasantry in North India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, XV, nos. 5, 6, and 7, Annual Number (February 1980), pp. 215-19.

TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE OF VOTES POLLED BY POLITICAL PARTIES IN UTTAR PRADESH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, 1952-1980

Political Party*	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980
Congress	52.99	46.29	38.20	33.04	48.56	24.99	35.90
Congress (O)	(Founded in 1969)				8.58		
Socialist Party	12.94	5.67	8.64		0.24		
Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP)	4.90						
Praja Socialist Party (PSP)		15.34	10.35	3.74	0.23		
Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP)	(Founded in 1964)			10.27	4.10		
Jan Sangh	7.29	14.79	17.57	22.58	12.28		
Hindu Mahasabha (HMS)	1.91		1.39		0.07	0.12	
Scheduled Caste Federation/ Republican Party of India (RPI)	2.88		4.27	4.07			0.16
Communist Party of India (CPI)	0.35	1.67	3.63	3.75	3.70	1.10	1.63
Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPM)	(Founded in 1964)			0.71	0.19	0.10	0.10
Swatantra	(Founded in 1959)		5.04	4.77	0.05		
Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD)	(Founded in 1967)				12.70		
Janata/Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD)	(BLD founded in 1974, Janata in 1977)					68.08	22.57
Lok Dal	(Founded in 1979)						29.02
Independents and Unsuccessful Parties	16.76	16.24	10.91	17.08	9.31	5.61	10.62
Total	100.02	100.00	100.00	100.01	100.01	100.00	100.00

Sources: Compiled from official reports of the Election Commission of India and from G.G. Mirchandani, *The People's Verdict* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1980). \* All parties that won at least one seat in one election are included. The KMPP also is included in 1952, though it did not win a seat, to facilitate comparison of the 1957 PSP vote with the votes of its two pre-merger progenitors, the SP and the KMPP. The figure for the Socialist Party in 1957 is for the Lohia Socialists, who broke away from the PSP and fought the 1957 elections as Independents.

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tract is also the home of Chaudhuri Charan Singh and the center of his Jat caste in U.P., the leading owner-cultivator caste not only of the Upper Doab, but of the adjoining state of Haryana as well. Finally, it is also the most politicized region of the state with the highest turnout rate in every election. In the parliamentary constituencies of these districts, the median vote share for the Congress declined from 58.2 per cent in 1952 to 30.3 per cent in 1980. In 1952, the Congress won every seat in these districts. In 1980, the Congress won only 2 out of 14, whereas the Lok Dal won 11 and Janata 1.

The leading causes of discontent in this region arose from two sources: the continued dominance of politics and patronage in most of these districts by the elite Brahman and Rajput castes in the countryside and by urban trading castes in the towns; and the failure of the government to provide desired incentives of capital inputs and prices to increase the profitability of agriculture for the main cultivating castes, especially the Jats. From 1957 until 1969, the discontent of the middle proprietary castes in this region was expressed in the form of voting for independents and other small parties;<sup>2</sup> but no single opposition party was able to organize this discontent until Charan Singh defected from the Congress in 1967 and founded in 1969 the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) as a party of agrarian interests, representing the peasant proprietors.

A second noteworthy feature of the electoral history of U.P. has been the relative weakness of the radical leftist opposition. However, the Socialists, particularly the radical wing, did establish a consistent base of support that stabilized around the 10 per cent level in the central and eastern districts of the state which, in contrast to west U.P. and the Upper Doab, have been agriculturally less advanced and have a very large population of marginal landholders and landless laborers. In these districts, as elsewhere in the state, the Congress organization in the 1950s and 1960s was dominated by the elite proprietary castes of Brahmans and Rajputs. The radical wing of the Socialists here appealed, with considerable success, to those who were either excluded from or were junior partners in the Congress coalition—namely, the middle cultivating castes of Ahirs (Yadavs)<sup>3</sup> and Kurmis;

<sup>2</sup> Space considerations preclude the presentation of the regional data on which this and other statements about regional voting behavior are based. However, for regional voting patterns for the U.P. Legislative Assembly elections from 1952 to 1977, which are similar in important respects to the parliamentary results, see Paul R. Brass, "The Politicization of the Peasantry in a North Indian State: Part I," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, VII, no. 4 (July 1980), pp. 395-426 and "Part II," in *ibid*, VIII, no. 1 (September 1980), pp. 3-36.

<sup>3</sup> Ahirs and Yadavs are interchangeable terms for the same caste category in U.P. The term "Yadav" is used virtually exclusively in Bihar, more often than not in eastern U.P., and less of-

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a higher status proprietary caste, the Bhumihars; and the landless laborers.

The third important feature of the electoral history of U.P. has been the rise of the Jan Sangh as the leading and best-organized non-Congress party in the state, with a popular support base above 22 per cent in the 1967 elections. The Jan Sangh was a party of militant Indian nationalism, which drew its symbols from the Hindu religion and the Sanskrit and Hindi languages, and whose strength was confined to north India, including Punjab, Haryana, U.P., Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar. It, and especially its principal organizational prop, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), were widely considered to be anti-Muslim, as they were usually opposed to educational and linguistic concessions demanded by the Muslim minority. In U.P., the Jan Sangh—like the Congress—drew its main support from the elite castes of Brahmans, Rajputs and Kayasthas, and from the Vaishya castes in the towns. Moreover, like other non-Congress parties in U.P., it developed a strong regional support base—in this case, the central plains districts of Oudh, once the homeland of the great landlords of U.P., known as the *talukdars*. For some time the party drew heavily upon the support and resources of several of the *talukdari* families, but eventually it succeeded in establishing itself more broadly in this region as the principal voice for the leading proprietary communities, including many from among the backward cultivating castes of Ahirs (Yadavs) and Kurmis. In Oudh as well as other regions, then, the Congress support base among the important land-controlling communities had been eroded as early as the 1960s.

Before we can comprehend the social significance of the rise of the BKD and the Janata party, we need to examine the consequences for the Congress support-base of the party splits that occurred between 1967 and 1969. In 1967 Charan Singh left the Congress. For many years he had been the principal spokesman in the U.P. government on behalf of rural, peasant interests and values and had developed a network of relationships in the U.P. districts among the middle-caste groups in the state, particularly Jats and Yadavs. Following his defection from the Congress in the U.P. legislature, he joined forces with the opposition to form and lead the first non-Congress government in the history of the province. Although only seventeen persons left the Congress with him in April 1967, Charan Singh had the broader sup-

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ten in Oudh and western U.P., where the term "Ahir" is still common. Ahir is the traditional census name for this caste, and Yadav the preferred name used by politicized and socially mobile segments of the caste.

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port of the middle proprietary communities, particularly in western U.P. This fact was demonstrated by the dramatic rise of his party, the BKD, to second position behind the Congress in the 1969 legislative assembly elections and again in the 1971 parliamentary elections, by its emergence as the leading party in the Upper Doab in the 1969 legislative assembly elections (with 31 per cent of the vote), and by the strong positive correlations between its vote share and the percentage of landholdings above five acres in the plains districts of the state as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

The defection of Charan Singh in 1967 was far more significant for the future of the Congress in U.P. than was the major split which occurred in the Congress in 1969. Also, because of the critical importance of U.P. nationally, it was to be very significant for political developments in the central government in the 1970s. Insofar as U.P. is concerned, the Congress split of 1969 involved the departure of the Gupta faction, a largely urban-based political machine, but one with connections also to important landed groups—particularly Rajputs—in the countryside. After the split, Mrs. Gandhi attempted to reabsorb the Charan Singh forces into the Congress (I) and even supported a minority BKD government led by him in 1970. However, when Charan Singh refused—or proved unable to deliver the parliamentary BKD delegation—to support the Congress government at the Center, Mrs. Gandhi withdrew the support of the Congress in U.P. from Charan Singh's government. Gandhi's landslide victory in the 1971 parliamentary elections made it unnecessary for her to seek an alliance with Charan Singh thereafter. From 1971 onwards, therefore, she sought to maintain control of U.P. through the remnant of the Congress organization in the state, which was left in the hands primarily of Brahman politicians and their allies.

However, it deserves to be noted that, despite the defection of the Charan Singh forces before the 1969 election in U.P. and the loss of the Gupta faction thereafter, the total support for Mrs. Gandhi's Congress was consistent at one-third of the popular vote in both the 1969 and 1974 state assembly elections and, after the dramatic fluctuations of the 1971 and 1977 parliamentary elections, remained at about that same level in the parliamentary elections of 1980. How can this stability of the Congress vote—albeit at a low level—be explained in the face of the erosion of its base among the middle proprietary castes? The Congress was able to hold onto its one-third share

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<sup>4</sup> Brass, "Politicization of the Peasantry," I, p. 419 and II, pp. 18–20.



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of the total vote partly by retaining its support among the influential rural Brahman and some Rajput castes, and partly by drawing upon varied and heterogeneous groups of supporters that any large political party is bound to collect because of its superior organization and, in the case of the Congress, its control of government patronage. At the same time, the party managed to increase its support among the rural poor, the landless and the Scheduled Castes, by such measures as allotting land to Scheduled Castes for cultivation and house sites, establishing the Small Farmers' Development Agency and the Marginal Farmer and Agricultural Labour Agency, and abolishing forced labor. Thus, under Mrs. Gandhi's domination, the Congress in U.P., which had been always conceived by both scholars and journalists as a great, broad-based party of the Center, became a party of extremes—but of opposite extremes—comprising within its fold the old dominant landlord and leading proprietary communities of Brahmans and Rajputs and the rural poor and landless. Largely disaffected from the Congress was the band of middle cultivating groups, generally less influential and less widespread than the Brahman and Rajput groups, but forming a broad and diverse alliance of varying local importance.

Needless to say, the above description understates the complexity of the support bases of the various political parties in U.P., which have often varied from constituency to constituency and election to election, depending upon the state of local rivalries, the castes of local candidates, and the interrelationships among local, provincial, and national leaders. Nevertheless, I believe it to be valid as an account of the core regional and caste support bases of the U.P. parties through the 1969 elections. Between 1969 and 1977, two steps were taken which built upon the shifts in party support bases noted above and ultimately led to the great Janata sweep in the 1977 elections. The first was the dismantling of the Socialist movement in U.P. principally by Raj Narain<sup>5</sup> and the decision to merge its most vital segment, the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), with Charan Singh's BKD in 1974. This merger had the effect of giving the BKD more balanced support between western and eastern U.P. In the process, though not entirely because of the alliance with the SSP, the BKD—by now renamed the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD)—extended its support base among the middle cultivating castes, particularly among the Ahirs

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<sup>5</sup> See Paul R. Brass, "Leadership Conflict and the Disintegration of the Indian Socialist Movement: Personal Ambition, Power and Policy," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, XIV, no. 1 (March 1976), pp. 19-41.

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(Yadavs), who are the largest cultivating caste in the central and eastern districts of the state. The BLD also succeeded in winning some support in areas where low-caste groups are concentrated.

The second step toward the grand electoral sweep of 1977 was the formation of the Janata party itself which, insofar as U.P. was concerned, meant the addition to the BLD of the Jan Sangh strength. Since the Jan Sangh support base was strongest in the central districts of the state and among the middle and rich peasantry, the Janata was now in a position that only the Congress had occupied before. It had become a coalition with strong and relatively even support across the length and breadth of this vast and populous state. Not only had it gained a solid base of support among particular castes, particularly Jats and Ahirs (Yadavs), but it also had gathered into its fold large segments from the middle and rich peasantry of other communities. Moreover, it received some support from Scheduled Castes and Muslims because of developments during the Emergency that turned many from these groups away from the Congress and towards Janata—particularly, the demolition of squatter houses, the rumors about forced sterilizations, the killing of Muslims in Muzaffarnagar, and the call by the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid in Delhi to support the Janata party. However, the principal social significance of the Janata party in U.P. was the successful formation of a broad-based party of the Center with the middle and rich peasantry at its core.

#### THE BREAK-UP OF THE JANATA COALITION AND THE PRELUDE TO THE 1980 ELECTIONS

The Janata victory in the 1977 elections was built principally upon a coalition of three major social forces—the middle and rich peasantry, the Muslims, and the Scheduled Castes who had become disaffected from the Congress during the Emergency. That coalition broke apart because of both external pressures and internal contradictions that have their sources in the social fabric of north India and the multiple cleavages of that society with which coalition leaders must cope in order to succeed. The Janata retained its central core of support among the peasantry throughout its two-year rule; but such support depended largely on the identification of the peasantry with Charan Singh, the leading advocate of and most articulate spokesman for this much-maligned social category. The depth of that support was clearly demonstrated during the period that Charan Singh withdrew from the Janata government, between June 1978

and January 1979. In December 1978, in the largest and most impressive demonstration ever carried out in Delhi for a political cause, five million *kisans* (peasants) expressed their firm commitment to Charan Singh and his pro-peasant policies.

As Home Minister before his exit from the Cabinet, Charan Singh was not able to accomplish much of significance for the peasantry directly, even though his ideas provided much of the guiding force behind the Janata government's policies in favor of agriculture and rural industries. Throughout his tenure he remained dissatisfied with the overall budget allocation for agricultural research and production-related measures, which he thought should be doubled. He also failed to persuade the government to support a higher price for sugar cane. His advocacy of such measures, however, was well known to his supporters and made his withdrawal from the government appear to be a consequence of its failure to do enough for the peasantry.

After his reinduction into the Cabinet as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Charan Singh was able to implement two measures of direct benefit to the peasantry. One was a reduction, by 50 per cent, of the excise duty on artificial fertilizer. The other was the transfer of the excise duty on tobacco from the grower to the manufacturer, a move which benefited mainly the *kisans* in south India. Both these measures occurred in a budget that otherwise bore down heavily—particularly on the urban sectors—with excise duties and other taxes on consumer goods. In these and other ways, Charan Singh and his followers made clear their conviction that cities tended to get better breaks in such matters as taxation, resource allocation, price policies and availability of credit—and showed their determination to do something about it.

Charan Singh's base among the middle peasantry of north India was also reinforced by the selection of people from middle and "backward" castes<sup>6</sup> as chief ministers of three north Indian states—Chaudhuri Devi Lal, a Jat, in Haryana; Ram Naresh Yadav, an Ahir, in U.P.; and Karpuri Thakur, from a caste of barbers (Hajjam), in Bihar. These state governments in turn took measures on behalf of agricultural development, and in support of the backward castes in particular, that ensured continued support for Charan Singh and his

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<sup>6</sup> The term "backward" castes is commonly used in political language in India to refer to the middle castes, whether or not they are landed, landless, or come from artisan and service castes. In general, I prefer the more neutral term "middle castes" for these groups, and "middle proprietary castes" for the landed groups among them; but sometimes it seems appropriate to use the term "backward" castes also, as here where the referents are to both the middle, typically landed castes of Jats and Yadavs, and the lower middle artisan caste of barbers.

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allies in the north. Some of those measures—such as the Bihar policy of reserving a percentage of places in government service and in schools and colleges for the backward castes—were also quite controversial and drove the wedge more deeply between the upper-caste groups and the middle cultivating and artisan castes.

During his brief tenure as Prime Minister of India, Charan Singh was not able to do much more for the peasantry. However, he supported the establishment of a very high cane-price in north India that partially offset the considerable losses because of the poor monsoon rains in the summer before the 1980 elections. This measure could not have been more timely: the elections of January 1980 were held precisely during the period that cane is harvested in north India.

Though the Janata—or rather Charan Singh—was able to retain the support of the middle peasantry, it had already lost its hold over the other two elements of its 1977 coalition even before the disintegration of the coalition at the leadership level in July 1979. Muslim support was weakened by the failure of the central government and the governments in U.P. and Bihar to make any significant concessions concerning the use of the Urdu language, by the slowness of the central government in framing a new Aligarh Muslim University Act that would guarantee the future Muslim character of the University, by the appointment of a non-Muslim, Minoor Masani, to head the new Minorities Commission established by the Janata government, and by an increased incidence of Hindu-Muslim communal riots. The support of the Scheduled Castes was weakened by the failure of the Janata leadership to name Jagjivan Ram as Prime Minister and, more importantly, by the growing attention given to the tension between Scheduled Castes and middle proprietary castes in the countryside, especially in north and central India. The press and Mrs. Gandhi were giving wide publicity to several particularly violent incidents in which Scheduled Castes were killed at Belchhi in Bihar, at Pantnagar in Agra in U.P., and at other places.<sup>7</sup>

Although the collapse of the Janata coalition was due primarily to competition among the top leaders for preeminence and the Prime Ministership and struggles for power among the original party constituents, social contradictions in the coalition also were important during the several crises that occurred during its two years in power. Of particular importance in this regard was the conflict for control over the chief ministerships of the north Indian states, in which the

<sup>7</sup> For descriptions of these and other incidents, see Udayan Sharma, ed., *Violence Erupts* (New Delhi: Radha Krishna Prakashan, 1978).

chief protagonists were the former BLD group of Charan Singh and the former Jan Sangh group. As already noted, Charan Singh and the BLD were able to place in power as chief ministers in Haryana, U.P., and Bihar persons from backward castes. Eventually, however, all three were displaced in a continuing struggle for power.

Throughout these struggles for control over the north Indian states and over the Janata party organization, issues concerning the relative political and economic status of elite, backward, and Scheduled Castes and concerning Hindu-Muslim relations were ever-present. Eventually, the followers of Jagjivan Ram tended to ally with the Jan Sangh in conflicts with Charan Singh's BLD group. Members of the Scheduled Castes, who often suffered at the hands of dominant peasant-proprietor groups from the backward castes, were clearly opposed to any measures enhancing the influence of those whom they already saw as locally powerful and whose political spokesmen were their rivals for power in state politics. Consequently, they sought an alignment with the Jan Sangh, both because they hoped that Jagjivan Ram would become Prime Minister with Jan Sangh support and because they opposed concessions to the backward castes. For their own part, elite-caste followers of the former Jan Sangh objected to the BLD group's policies favoring reservation of jobs in services and colleges for backward castes, as decreasing their own opportunities for advancement. The BLD leaders, caught in a crossfire between both ends of the caste order, attempted to divert attention from the backward caste issue to the Hindu-Muslim issue, by describing the conflict as an attempt by the RSS elements in the Janata to gain control of the party and destroy its secular character.

It is a measure of the significance of these two contradictions in north Indian society—in the caste order and in Hindu-Muslim relations—that as the Janata coalition fell apart socially as well as politically, the Congress of Mrs. Gandhi rebuilt its old coalition of the late 1960s by capitalizing on the discontent of the elite castes, the Scheduled Castes, and the Muslims. It is movement back and forth from within these three broad groupings that largely explains the dramatic shifts in voting from 1971 to 1977 and from 1977 to 1980.

#### FIVE CONSTITUENCIES IN UTTAR PRADESH

The development of the social contradictions discussed above, the ways in which the political parties have been affected by these contradictions and have tried to control them to their own advantage,

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and the ways in which such phenomena have been perceived by voters can best be brought out by a detailed examination of several rural constituencies in U.P. Five constituencies have been selected, drawn from four regions of the state.<sup>8</sup> (The detailed election results for each of the constituencies for 1977 and 1980 are given in Table 2.) Each constituency chosen illustrates a different aspect of the main social conflicts that have been prominent in U.P. politics, but there are also certain patterns common to all. The history of each constituency will be discussed and then followed by an analysis of the strategies of the parties in the 1980 elections and of the likely voting behavior of particular categories of voters based on interviews with voters, non-voters, and knowledgeable observers carried out in December 1979 before the elections. The interviews were not random in the scientific sense and do not provide a basis for an accurate account of the detailed voting results in each constituency. They have been used to provide some insight into the ways in which persons from different castes, communities, and economic levels perceive the parties and the social conflicts in U.P. The interpretations of events in each constituency, therefore, which are closer to guesses than to scientific judgments, are less important than the broader historical patterns and the similarities in the statements of categories of voters across the several constituencies.

### *Naini Tal Constituency*

Naini Tal constituency comprised in 1980 all of Naini Tal district, including both plains and hills regions, and a small part of Bareilly district. The district had a population of 790,080 in 1971.<sup>9</sup> The constituency had an electorate of 645,203 in 1980. There is only one town in the district with a population above 50,000—Haldwani. Nearly 18 per cent of the population of the district in 1971 was from Scheduled Castes, and another 6.65 per cent was from Scheduled Tribes. There are several unusual social and demographic features of the district that are relevant to its electoral behavior. One is the very

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<sup>8</sup> Four of the five constituencies are in districts in which the field research was done in 1961–62 that led to my *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964). I have also done previous work in Naini Tal on another project. Consequently, the analyses and judgments made about the influences of various social forces in the 1980 elections are based upon information collected in interviews in both 1961–62 and 1979, and also in occasional interviews and meetings with politicians from these districts in the intervening years.

<sup>9</sup> Contemporary demographic data for this section were derived from Government of Uttar Pradesh, Election Directorate, *Population of Uttar Pradesh* (Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, U.P., 1973).

TABLE 2. ELECTION RESULTS FOR FIVE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN UTTAR PRADESH, 1977 AND 1980

Constituency/Year/ (Turnout percentage)	Candidate	Caste	Party	Votes Polled	Percentage of Total Valid Votes		
Naini Tal	1980	(51.68)	N.D. Tewari	Brahman	Cong. (I)	163,117	50.58
			Bharat Bhushan	Agarwal	Janata	58,695	18.20
			Pratap Singh	Rajput	Lok Dal	49,506	15.35
			8 Other Candidates			54,069	15.86
			Total Valid Votes			322,387	99.99
Naini Tal	1977	(60.45)	Bharat Bhushan	Agarwal	BLD*	196,304	61.70
			K. C. Pant	Brahman	Cong. (I)	111,658	35.09
			2 Other Candidates			10,208	3.21
			Total Valid Votes			318,170	100.00
Aligarh	1980	(50.22)	Indra Kumari	Rajput	Lok Dal	128,353	38.49
			Ghanshyam Singh	Rajput	Cong. (I)	110,375	33.10
			Sangram Singh	Rajput	Janata	61,158	18.34
			23 Other Candidates			33,613	10.08
			Total Valid Votes			333,499	100.01
Aligarh	1977	(64.79)	Nawab Singh Chauhan	Rajput	BLD	280,811	70.85
			Ghanshyam Singh	Rajput	Cong. (I)	90,053	22.72
			4 Other Candidates			25,492	6.43
			Total Valid Votes			396,356	100.00
Baghpat	1980	(70.34)	Charan Singh	Jat	Lok Dal	323,077	65.21
			R.C. Vikal	Gujjar	Cong. (I)	157,956	31.88
			Dhara Singh <sup>b</sup>	Gujjar	Janata	3,843	0.78
			8 Other Candidates			10,591	2.14
			Total Valid Votes			495,467	100.01
Baghpat	1977	(74.83)	Charan Singh	Jat	BLD	286,301	63.47
			R.C. Vikal	Gujjar	Cong. (I)	164,763	36.53
			Total Valid Votes			451,064	100.00

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TABLE 2—Continued

Constituency/Year/(Turnout percentage)	Candidate	Caste	Party	Votes Polled	Percentage of Total Valid Votes
Gonda 1980 (35.18)	Anand Singh	Rajput	Cong. (I)	125,196	52.29
	Kaushalendra Datt	Brahman	Lok Dal	52,270	21.83
	Satya Deo Singh	Rajput	Janata	38,849	16.23
	7 Other Candidates Total Valid Votes			23,106 239,421	9.65 100.00
Gonda 1977 (45.25)	Satya Deo Singh	Rajput	BLD	157,963	59.76
	Anand Singh	Rajput	Cong. (I)	86,690	32.80
	Gopal Chand	Not Known	Ind.	19,656	7.44
	Total Valid Votes			264,309	100.00
Deoria 1980 (46.68)	Ramayan Rai	Bhumihar	Cong. (I)	110,014	32.83
	Ram Dhari Shastri	Sainthwar	Lok Dal	109,937	32.81
	Ugra Sen	Rajput	Janata	81,337	24.27
	5 Other Candidates Total Valid Votes			33,823 335,111	10.09 100.00
Deoria 1977 (55.12)	Ugra Sen	Rajput	BLD	258,864	77.15
	Vishwa Nath	Brahman	Cong. (I)	76,691	22.85
	Total Valid Votes			335,555	100.00

Sources: 1980 election returns are provisional and were provided through the courtesy of the Election Commission of India; 1977 returns are from Government of India, Election Commission, Report on the Sixth General Election to the House of the People in India, 1977, vol. II (Statistical) (Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1978).

<sup>a</sup> BLD = Bharatiya Lok Dal, which was the Janata Party in U.P. in 1977.

<sup>b</sup> Dhara Singh withdrew towards the end of the campaign in favor of the Congress (I) candidate.



high proportion of elite castes to the total Hindu population: according to the last caste census in U.P. in 1931, the Brahman castes comprised 19 per cent of the population, the Rajputs 26 per cent.<sup>10</sup> A second demographic feature is the very high proportion of migrants of the total population, composed of refugees from the Pakistan Punjab, veterans, "political sufferers"<sup>11</sup> who have settled on *tarai* land reclaimed from jungle since Independence, and tens of thousands of agricultural laborers from eastern U.P. and Bihar. A third important feature of the district is the presence of the Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, which has been a leading force in spreading the Green Revolution in north India. It is also the largest landholder in the region, having 16,000 acres of its own, including a highly mechanized seed farm employing some two to four thousand mostly migrant laborers. In April 1978, a labor dispute on the university farm led to an incident in which at least fifteen laborers were killed by police gunfire.<sup>12</sup> The killings were politically very significant at the time, since the Vice-Chancellor was a Jat and was considered to be close to Charan Singh (also a Jat) who was then Home Minister in the government of India. The laborers killed were presumed to be mostly low- and lower-middle caste persons, and Mrs. Gandhi lost no time rushing to the scene to identify with them. At the same time, the incident was widely reported to have been precipitated by Jat policemen antagonistic to the lower caste laborers from eastern U.P. and Bihar. On the other side of the issue, the bigger *tarai* farmers in the surrounding region, especially those who themselves employed large numbers of laborers, were said to be sympathetic to the university authorities in the labor dispute, which centered on a wage issue. Although many of these *tarai* farmers received their lands from previous Congress governments, they now often identify with different splinters of the old Congress or with parties other than Congress.

Politically, Naini Tal constituency has been consistently a Congress and a Brahman stronghold, the only exception being the 1977

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<sup>10</sup> *Census of India*, 1931, vol. XVIII: *United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, Part II, by A.C. Turner (Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, 1933), table XVII.

<sup>11</sup> The term "political sufferers" refers to persons who reportedly suffered some personal hardship during the Independence movement and were, therefore, rewarded by the Congress government after Independence.

<sup>12</sup> On this incident and its broader significance, see Sharma, *Violence Erupts*, pp. 107-118, and Paul R. Brass, "Institutional Transfer of Technology in Agriculture: The Land Grant Model and the Agricultural University at Pantnagar," in Robert S. Anderson, et al., eds., *Science, Politics, and the Agricultural Revolution in Asia* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, forthcoming).

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elections. A Brahman Congressman, C.D. Pande, won both the 1952 and 1957 elections. In the next three elections—1962, 1967, and 1971—the successful candidate was K.C. Pant (also a Brahman) the son of Govind Ballabh Pant, and a minister in Mrs. Gandhi's government for some time. In 1977, Bharat Bhushan, from a business caste and formerly a member of the Congress (O), won the seat on the BLD ticket with 61.7 per cent of the vote. In 1980, the seat reverted again to a Brahman Congressman, Narain Dutt Tiwari, a former Chief Minister of U.P. during the Emergency.

Interviews in this constituency in December 1979 suggest that the Congress base of support was principally among Brahmans and low- and middle-caste laborers, whereas the Lok Dal, which came in third with a Thakur candidate from the hills, was strong among Thakurs and *kisans* in general. The Janata candidate, Bharat Bushan (who ultimately came in second) was being supported by the former Jan Sangh cadres, had some support from persons of elite-caste status in the plains, and was thought to have some support from Scheduled Castes because of Jagjivan Ram's leadership of Janata.

The two most impressive factors that emerged from these interviews were *kisan* support for the Lok Dal and open statements from Brahman and laborer voters that they wanted the Emergency back or that things were better during the Emergency. It was also reported that the big farmers in the area, many of whom were members of a local *kisan* association, would support the Lok Dal. Reasons given for supporting the Lok Dal included specific approval for the economic policies of Charan Singh and disapproval of Indira Gandhi's policy of favoring enforcement of land-ceilings legislation.

Sentiment in favor of the Emergency was expressed, for example, by a Brahman *kisan*, who claimed that the government did more for poor people during the Emergency and that police did a better job of catching *dacoits* (armed robbers). In a similar vein, laborers in a labor colony beside the Agricultural University farm claimed that the farm laborers had received wage increases during the Emergency that were not implemented under Janata, and that prices were lower then. They also complained about the shortage of kerosene. Moreover, they were reportedly against the Janata candidate because of the police firing that occurred on the Pantnagar farm and because they felt that the Janata leaders had not come to see what had happened after the killings.

Although Naini Tal constituency is rather atypical both demographically and geographically, several of the patterns revealed in

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this constituency are characteristic of broader trends in the state as a whole. They include the historical association between Brahmans and the Congress organization, broad *kisan* support for the Lok Dal among non-Brahman castes, and the ability of Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress to win support from the Scheduled Castes and the poor.

### *Aligarh Constituency*

Aligarh constituency comprises about half of Aligarh district. Although the town of Aligarh is within its boundaries, it is predominantly rural. It is one of the most interesting constituencies in north India for several reasons. First, in the town of Aligarh is the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), whose founders, students and graduates played a critical role in the development of a modern Muslim political identity in India during the nationalist period. The AMU continues to be one of the leading symbols of contemporary Muslim political identity in India. The demand for a new Aligarh Muslim University Act, which would ensure the preservation of the predominantly Muslim composition and Islamic character of the university, has been a salient political issue for many years. Just before the 1980 elections, the government of Charan Singh and Mrs. Gandhi both promised to meet this Muslim demand. Second, partly because of the presence of the AMU, the town has frequently been the scene of Hindu-Muslim conflict and riots, which were recurrent during the two years of Janata rule. Third, the town and the surrounding countryside contain a large population of low-caste Chamars. Moreover, the region has been a leading center of political mobilization of the Chamar caste category—particularly of the Jatavs, an upwardly mobile segment of this large caste. Fourth, Aligarh district was selected in the early 1960s by the government of India and the Ford Foundation for intensive agricultural development. Along with other districts in the Upper Doab, it has been in the forefront of the Green Revolution in western U.P. Fifth, two of the *tahsils* whose boundaries lie within the constituency—Khair and Iglas—contain very large populations of Jats, the leading cultivating caste of western U.P. and the caste to which Charan Singh belongs. There are also large populations of Brahmans and Rajputs, as well as a broad array of other castes and communities. Finally, the constituency has been an important center of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu religious reform movement that has often allied with the Jan Sangh in support of Hindu causes—such as cow protection—and that draws most of its members

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and supporters from the elite castes of Brahmans and Rajputs and from Jats.

The diversity of this constituency has been reflected in its political history. In contrast to Naini Tal, it has not been either a Congress or a Brahman stronghold. In fact, the Congress has not won the seat since 1957; and no Brahman has ever won on any party ticket. In the 1962 elections, B.P. Maurya, a Jatav, combining the support of Muslims and Scheduled Castes, won the seat for the Republican Party. In 1967, the seat was won by Shiv Kumar Shastri, who was an Independent candidate, a Rajput, and a member of the Arya Samaj. In the 1971 elections, running counter to the "Indira wave" of that year, Shiv Kumar Shastri was again victorious, this time on the BKD ticket. In 1977, another Rajput and a former Congress leader in the district, Nawab Singh Chauhan, was swept into office by the "Janata wave" with a massive 70.85 per cent of the popular vote. In 1980, the seat was won by another Rajput—Indra Kumari, the wife of a big ex-zamindar of the Jadon clan—on the Lok Dal ticket. Thus, during the last three elections the constituency has been a stronghold of Charan Singh's forces in one form or another—first the BKD, then the BLD, then the Lok Dal.

The strategy of the Charan Singh forces in the last three elections has been to combine the support of Jats and Thakurs (Rajputs)<sup>13</sup> in the countryside to form the core of their support base. They have done so by presuming the support of the Jats for any candidate of Charan Singh and by running a Thakur on the ballot. On the other side, the Congress strategy has been to rely on Brahman support for Mrs. Gandhi, to regain the support of Muslims and Scheduled Castes, and to attempt to split the Thakurs, who are divided into numerous distinct clans in this area, by also running Thakur candidates. With the exception of the 1977 "Janata wave" elections, when the Congress lost its support base among Muslims and Scheduled Castes, the strategies of both sides have largely worked. The outcome has depended upon the strength of the respective coalitions, the degree to which a candidate of either side can muster additional support, and the extent to which the electorate is divided by the appeals of strong third-party or independent candidates.

Looking first at the Congress strategy in the 1980 elections in Aligarh, the Congress candidate, Ghansyam Singh, was a Thakur of the Chauhan clan, who had run for the Congress in 1977 but had

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<sup>13</sup> The terms Rajput and Thakur are interchangeable in U.P., Thakur being the title used for persons of Rajput caste, but also a substitute generic term for the caste category.

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polled only 22.72 per cent of the vote. In 1980, his vote share increased by 10 per cent to 32.51. His major support in both elections presumably came from some Thakurs and most of the Brahmans. It is notable that in neither election was there an independent Brahman candidate who drew a large share of the vote. The additional 10 per cent vote share in 1980 probably came principally from Muslims and Scheduled Castes.

The Muslims were reportedly somewhat divided in 1980. They were overwhelmingly opposed to Janata because of the recurrent Hindu-Muslim riots in Aligarh during the two years of Janata rule and because of the identification of the Janata party with the former Jan Sangh in the minds of many Muslims. Some Muslims turned to the Lok Dal because of the support given the latter by the two communist parties—the CPI and CPM—which have some Muslim followers in this area. Others preferred the Lok Dal to the Congress because they continued to resent the police attacks on Muslims which had occurred during the Emergency in the neighboring districts of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar. The Lok Dal opposition to the Jan Sangh and the attempt by Charan Singh to promulgate an ordinance establishing a new Aligarh Muslim University Act on the eve of the election<sup>14</sup> also may have inclined some anti-Congress Muslims to support the Lok Dal. At the same time, many Muslims in Aligarh town supported the Congress in this election because of the backing given to Mrs. Gandhi's Congress by the Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, because of the return to the Congress of H.N. Bahuguna (who is considered to be an outspoken defender of the Muslim community), and because the Congress manifesto clearly promised the maintenance of the minority status of AMU. As for the Scheduled Castes, it was expected that most would simply return to the Congress fold.

The presumption before the election among academic observers in Aligarh was that the Congress would have support from most Muslims, most Scheduled Castes, nearly all Brahmans, and many Thakurs—altogether a stronger coalition than that of the Lok Dal. The fact that the coalition ultimately did not produce sufficient votes for a Congress victory was largely because the Thakur, Jat, Ahir, and other backward class votes in the countryside went predominantly to the Lok Dal, many Muslims also voted for the Lok Dal, and many Scheduled Caste people voted for Janata.

The Lok Dal strategy was simpler than that of the Congress. It

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<sup>14</sup> The ordinance did not, however, receive Presidential assent.

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was decided, for two strategically sound reasons, not to place a Jat candidate on the party ticket. On the one hand, few people other than Jats would vote for such a candidate; on the other, virtually all Jats would vote for *any* candidate of Charan Singh. The strategy, therefore, was to put forward a Thakur of a clan different from that of the Congress candidate, with the hope of winning broad support in the countryside among the two leading proprietary castes of Thakurs and Jats and from their allies and clients. The Lok Dal strategy proved the more successful: its candidate won the seat with 37.81 per cent of the vote, 5 percentage points ahead of the Congress candidate.

#### *Baghpat Constituency*

Baghpat constituency in Meerut district lies in the heart of the Jat country of western U.P. and in the forefront of the Green Revolution in this part of the state. It is also the home ground of Chaudhuri Charan Singh. Jats are the leading proprietary caste here comprising between 15 and 19 per cent of the population, according to the old gazetteer of the district. Other important proprietary castes are Brahmans, Rajputs, Tyagis, and Gujars. Chamars comprise approximately 12 per cent and Muslims between 15 to 23 per cent of the population in different parts of the constituency.<sup>15</sup>

In district Congress politics, and often in elections in this district, Jats and Tyagis have been allied with each other in competition with Brahmans and the mostly urban trading castes of Banias. In the countryside, there are also traditional rivalries between Jats and Rajputs and between Jats and Gujars. The electoral history of the constituency has partly reflected these alliance patterns and rivalries.

Congress won the first three elections in the progenitors of this constituency—Meerut South in 1952 and Sardhana in 1957 and 1962—with urban Brahman and Bania candidates. However, by 1962 Chaudhuri Charan Singh had become disaffected from the dominant group in Congress state politics, and his own dominance in the district also was being challenged. Moreover, discontent was growing in the countryside among the *kisans* over the failure of the state government to provide adequate support for agricultural development and for food-grain and sugar-cane prices. Consequently, the Congress candidate's vote share in 1962 dropped to 32.86 per cent, and a rural Jat candidate running as an independent—allegedly with

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<sup>15</sup> H.R. Nevill, ed., *Meerut: A Gazetteer, Being Volume IV of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1904), pp. 187-316.

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the surreptitious backing of Charan Singh—polled 27.22 per cent of the vote. In 1967, in a replay of the contest between the Congress urban Brahman candidate and the Jat independent, the latter won the seat with an absolute majority of 50.15 per cent. In the next three elections, the pattern of rivalry changed completely to an entirely rural competition between Ram Chandra Vikal, a man from the middle proprietary caste of Gujars, who ran on the Congress ticket in all three elections, and Jat candidates running on the BKD/BLD/Lok Dal tickets, respectively. In 1971, Ram Chandra Vikal defeated the BKD Jat candidate who had won the seat in 1967. Then in 1977 and 1980, Charan Singh himself contested and defeated Vikal with the largest majorities ever achieved in the constituency—63.47 per cent in 1977 and 64.45 per cent in 1980. In a sense, therefore, the electoral history of this constituency capsulizes several important aspects of the broader post-Independence history of state politics: namely, the transition from urban to rural leadership, the rise in importance of the middle agricultural castes, and the competition between parties for support among these middle castes.

Interviews and newspaper reports from Baghpat constituency forecast the following trends during the 1980 election.<sup>16</sup> Most Brahmans had voted for Ram Chandra Vikal in 1977 and would do so again in 1980. Brahman respondents expressed a favorable view of the Emergency and their faith in Mrs. Gandhi. It was expected that the middle landed castes, such as Ahirs (Yadavs) and, of course, Jats—but not Gujars—would vote for Charan Singh. Some Scheduled Castes who were interviewed—Julahas and Chamars—expressed a preference for Mrs. Gandhi and hostility towards Charan Singh. It was assumed, once the Janata candidate had withdrawn, that nearly all the Scheduled Caste votes, except those controlled by Jats, would be cast for the Congress. Muslim votes were expected to be divided, with most going to the Congress candidate.

In general, the electoral contest in Baghpat seemed to turn primarily around three factors: divisions among the leading proprietary castes; conflict between the Scheduled Castes and the leading proprietary castes, especially the Jats; and the issues of the cane-price and the availability of needed inputs such as diesel, electricity, and water, which were of concern mainly to the landed castes in the constituency. These three factors are representative of broader trends in electoral and political conflict in the north Indian countryside in recent

<sup>16</sup> See, especially, *Statesman* (New Delhi), December 28, 1979; *Northern India Patrika*, December 28, 1979; and *Overseas Hindustan Times*, January 17, 1980.

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years. It should also be noted that these issues and conflicts intersect with each other in such a way as to prevent a polarization of class conflict in the countryside, to perpetuate the complex intercaste alliance patterns that have always characterized north Indian political behavior, and to maintain the economic and political dominance of the landed castes, which is not affected by electoral divisions among them even though the Scheduled Castes and the Muslims may hold the balance of popular votes needed for victory in an electoral contest.

Conflict among the leading proprietary castes was evident in Baghpat particularly in the underlying opposition between Jats and Brahmans. Sure of the Brahman vote, however, the Congress did not feel it necessary to run a Brahman candidate in this constituency. In any event, such a decision would have been counterproductive for the Congress in Baghpat, where the Brahmans are a less powerful rural social class than they are in some other districts of U.P. and where the support of some elements from the middle proprietary castes is essential for victory. Consequently, the Congress ran Ram Chandra Vikal again in the hope of dividing the middle castes. The Janata party pursued a similar strategy at first in also putting forth a Gujar candidate. The withdrawal of the Janata candidate during the election campaign seemed to add considerable strength to the Congress (I) candidate by preventing the division of Gujar votes and also of Scheduled Caste votes, some of which might have gone to Janata because of the identification of that party with the name of Jagjivan Ram. The Congress candidate, therefore, seemed to have a strong base with the solid support of Brahmans, Gujars, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims.

Against this formidable coalition, the Lok Dal relied principally upon the support of the Jats and the middle proprietary castes allied with them, especially the Ahirs (Yadavs) and also, according to one newspaper report, the Thakurs (Rajputs) and other landed communities.<sup>17</sup> The practical issues used to unite these castes were the sugarcane price and the availability of agricultural inputs and other scarce commodities. The high cane-price benefited Brahmans and the Gujars as much as other landed castes in Baghpat, but these two communities were dissuaded from allying with other proprietary groups on economic grounds by the appeal to caste loyalty, which inclined them towards the Congress.

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<sup>17</sup>*Northern India Patrika*, December 28, 1979.



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The Scheduled Castes should be regarded more as pawns than as a powerful force in their own right. All the landed castes share an interest in thwarting the economic and political demands of the low castes, but the votes of the latter are numerous and can be decisive in many constituencies in U.P. In Baghpat, it has been reported often that the landed castes—especially Jats and Gujars—do not permit the low castes to vote as they wish, but cast their votes for them. Although both Jats and Gujars have been accused of this kind of intimidation, the Congress has had considerable success in identifying the Jats and Charan Singh as the leading exploiters of the Scheduled Castes. Given a free choice, therefore, it is likely that most Scheduled Castes in Baghpat would have cast their votes for the Congress (I) candidate. In Jat-dominated areas, however, many Scheduled Castes may have voted for Charan Singh or had their votes cast for them. Regardless of how Scheduled Castes voted, economic and political power in Baghpat, as elsewhere in the north Indian countryside, remains in the hands of the dominant landed castes, who may contest against each other in the political arena, but who nevertheless share common economic interests.

### *Gonda Constituency*

Gonda constituency in Gonda district lies in the former province of Oudh, in a region where politics and rural economy have traditionally been dominated by great landlords—known here as *talukdars*—and their descendants. In the area of Gonda constituency in particular, the most powerful *talukdari* family has been that of Mankapur, a Rajput estate which once collected the revenue from 149 villages. Although the heir to the Mankapur estate, Anand Singh, no longer is entitled to collect the land revenues, his father's and his own good management and political skills have made it possible for him to maintain a very strong economic position and to extend his political influence beyond the area that was formerly controlled directly by the estate. The passage of land-ceilings legislation and numerous attempts by the state government to confiscate the lands under the direct control of the Mankapur estate have resulted in much of the land formerly held by Anand and his father being lost. However, Anand Singh still controls some land<sup>18</sup> and also owns several agro-business

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<sup>18</sup> Some years ago, Anand Singh transferred 500 acres of land to an educational trust. The state government challenged the transfer in the courts on the grounds that it was a bogus transaction, alleging that Anand still controls the land indirectly. Anand is fighting the case in court, insisting that the transfer was a genuine one.

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enterprises. Moreover, the palace of the Mankapur estate has been maintained—as well as a flock of managers and personal retainers, who become campaign managers for Anand Singh or the candidate of his choice at election time. Most important for the political success of Mankapur has been the perpetuation and extension of its influence in the countryside by continuing the princely traditions of dispute settlement, relief of the just grievances of the people who seek help in dealing with the local administration, and distribution of patronage, especially in hard times.

Mankapur is not the only politically active estate in Gonda district or in the constituency. The heirs to the Gonda estate—the second largest former *talukdari* estate in Gonda district—also have been politically active in this constituency, formerly in alliance with Mankapur but lately in opposition. Moreover, Anand Singh's uncle has controlled extensive landholdings and has participated in district politics, sometimes in opposition to Anand and his father.

The constituency is virtually 100 per cent rural, containing only a few small towns within its boundaries. Its largest castes and communities, in rank order, are Brahmans, Muslims, Koiris, Kurmis, Ahirs, Kahars, Chamars, and Rajputs, of whom the most influential are the Brahmans and Rajputs followed by the middle-peasant castes of Ahirs, Kurmis, and Koiris. However, in all elections caste has been a less important factor in this constituency than the resources brought to bear by the heirs to the great estates and their political rivals.

Most of the electoral history of the Gonda constituency has centered around the efforts of the Mankapur scions to demonstrate their political power in order to retain their economic resources. In fact, in all elections except that of 1952, whether or not Anand Singh himself has contested the parliamentary seat and irrespective of the political parties whose candidates have been put forth in the constituency, the contest has been between the Mankapur forces and their rivals. Several of those elections also have been “prestige” contests, bitterly contested, and involving candidates of considerable importance in state or national politics.

Anand Singh himself has contested the election three times: successfully in 1971 on the Congress (O) ticket against his uncle on the Congress (I) ticket; unsuccessfully in 1977 on the Congress (I) ticket; and successfully in 1980, again on the Congress (I) ticket. Running against the Raja of Gonda on the Lok Dal ticket, Satya Deo Singh on the Janata ticket, and seven other minor candidates, Anand won the last election with a huge margin and an absolute majority (50.95 per

cent) of the votes. The result hinged partly on the relative resources and popularity of the contending scions of the two competing houses of Mankapur and Gonda, and partly on caste coalitions similar to those in other constituencies in the state. In both respects, Anand Singh had the advantage.

Despite the fact that Gonda constituency had been gerrymandered in such a way as to divide the central core of Anand Singh's influence, the Mankapur forces had built a broader base of support in the area over the past elections. Moreover, the caste combinations also favored Mankapur in this election. The Lok Dal strategy in Gonda constituency was to win the support of Brahmans, the largest caste in the constituency, on the strength of the fact that their candidate, the Raja of Gonda, was a Brahman; and to combine Brahman support with that of backward castes, particularly Ahirs, who are also numerous in the area. In fact, however, interviews and personal observations in the constituency suggest that the Mankapur forces had broader influence than the forces of the Raja of Gonda and that the Lok Dal's strategy of combining Brahman and backward-caste votes did not work effectively. Insofar as the backward castes are concerned, it was generally conceded that the Ahirs would vote for the Lok Dal candidate. However, the other great middle cultivating caste of Kurmis, who are also numerous in Gonda constituency, were reportedly divided, because their most prominent leader, Jai Ram Verma from the adjacent district of Faizabad and previously a supporter of Charan Singh, had joined the Congress (I). Brahmans, too, were divided; but it is probable that Anand Singh received most of his support from Brahmans and that he secured more Brahman support than the Raja of Gonda. It was also reported that there were some divisions among Muslims and that the trading community and some other urban groups would vote for the Janata candidate, who was a member of the RSS. It was expected that the majority of the Thakurs, the Scheduled Castes, the middle and backward castes other than the Ahirs and Kurmis, and the Muslims would vote for the Congress.

The following impressions emerge most strongly from interviews and observations in Gonda constituency. The first is that the election contest in 1980, as in most previous elections, centered around the conflicts between the descendants of the great landed estates in the district. Second, in this contest not only the lower-caste groups, but also the middle castes, were essentially pawns in an arena dominated by men with great resources. Third, the Congress in this constituency,

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despite its desire to project an image as the party for the poor and the landless, was dependent upon the Mankapur forces for its victory. Finally, the coalition put together by the Congress strikingly illustrates a general aspect of Congress support in U.P.—namely, that it is a party of extremes, combining the upper and lower levels of the social and economic order in its coalition, but lacking much support among the middle proprietary castes.

### *Deoria Constituency*

Deoria constituency is one of three parliamentary constituencies in the very densely populated district of Deoria, which has always been—and remains today—virtually entirely rural. The leading proprietary castes in Deoria traditionally have been the Brahmans, Rajputs, and Bhumihars, but the most numerous castes in the district are the middle cultivating castes of Ahirs (Yadavs), followed by the low-caste Chamars and Brahmans. The density of population and the absence of other work opportunities except through emigration have led to great pressure on the available land. The ratio of agricultural laborers to the total working population in the district has increased during recent decades. According to the 1972 census, nearly one-third (32 per cent) of the working population were agricultural laborers.<sup>19</sup>

Along with most of the other Eastern Districts of U.P., Deoria has been a leading center of Socialist politics. Here as elsewhere, however, the Socialist movement was set back and ultimately eliminated as a serious political force by persistent factionalism and defections to the Congress. Nevertheless, the politics of the district and of Deoria constituency have come to be dominated by persons who were once prominent Socialist leaders, though they are now members of the Congress, Lok Dal, or Janata. Because of its Socialist political history and because of the large concentration of the middle cultivating castes of Ahirs, Deoria constituency is an ideal site to consider the electoral significance of the alliance forged in 1974 between Charan Singh and the BKD, on the one hand, and Raj Narain and the SSP, on the other hand—and the impact of that alliance on the 1977 and 1980 elections.

In the pre-Independence years, the Congress Socialist Party was a major force in the Congress organization in Deoria district. In 1952,

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<sup>19</sup> *Census of India, 1971, Series 21: Uttar Pradesh, Pt. II-A: General Population Tables*, by D.M. Sinha (Delhi: Controller of publications, 1975), pp. 318–19.

the Socialist party won one-third of the fifteen Legislative Assembly seats in the district and one of the three parliamentary seats. Ramji Verma won the Deoria District (East) parliamentary constituency in the 1952 elections on the Socialist ticket; in 1957, as a member of the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), he won the Deoria seat with 52 per cent of the votes.

In 1962, Deoria constituency was considered "safe" enough to give to Ashok Mehta, the most prominent national leader of the PSP in the country. This time, however, Vishwanath Pande won the seat for the Congress in a four-way contest with a plurality of 40 per cent of the votes. The seat remained in the hands of the Congress during the next two elections. The Socialist parties, which were previously major forces in the constituency, were severely weakened by the defection of the followers of Ashok Mehta to the Congress in 1964 and by a succession of splits and mergers in the remnants of the Socialist parties thereafter. In the election of 1967, the candidate of the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) polled only 27 per cent of the vote in Deoria constituency, and in 1971 another SSP candidate polled only 13 per cent of the vote.

Between 1952 and 1971, the character of the electoral contest changed in two important respects. The first change, already noted, was the decline in the strength of the opposition to the Congress—particularly the Socialist opposition. Another more dramatic change was taking place in successive elections, however, that was more threatening to the Congress: the entry of backward-class candidates into this constituency and the adjacent constituency of Salempur, and the attempts by SSP candidates in particular to mobilize support from the backward castes.

In Deoria constituency, the successful PSP candidate in 1957 was a Kayastha, while the second-place candidate was a Brahman who went on to win the seat in 1962. In 1967 and 1971, the successful Congress candidate was a Bhumihar. The second-place candidate in 1971 was a Yadav, who polled only 13 per cent of the vote on the SSP ticket. However, in 1977 and 1980 the backward castes made their influence felt in a very dramatic way. In the 1977 election, the BLD—formed from the merger of the BKD and the SSP—put forward Ugra Sen, a long-time radical Socialist leader of the district. Though himself a Thakur, he had built up strong support among the backward castes, especially the Ahirs. In that "Janata-wave" election, he defeated Vishwanath Pande by a massive majority, with 77 per cent of the vote. In 1980, after the split in the Janata, Ugra Sen ran again on

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the rump Janata party ticket. However, the main contest was between the Congress (I) candidate, Ramayan Rai, a former PSP leader of the district and a Bhumihar, and the Lok Dal candidate, Ram Dhari Shastri, a member of the Sainthwar caste.<sup>20</sup> In a very close contest, the Congress (I) candidate won with a bare plurality of 77 votes.

Among knowledgeable observers, party election agents, and voters interviewed in this constituency in December 1979, there was a high degree of consensus that most of the backward-caste votes would go to the Lok Dal candidate. Even the Janata party workers, though hoping to get some votes from the backward castes, completely wrote off the votes of the Yadavs and the Sainthwars, "all" of whom, they said, would vote for Ram Dhari Shastri. Interviews with Yadav *kisans* in the constituency yielded the same impression and also made it clear that, by voting for the Lok Dal candidate, they were voting for Charan Singh. It is important to note, however, that this kind of middle-caste pro-Lok Dal sentiment became attenuated or non-existent in this constituency—as elsewhere—among non-Yadav middle castes and the poorer middle castes.

Insofar as the upper-caste votes were concerned, there was a fair degree of consensus among those persons interviewed about the likely voting behavior of these groups. It was presumed that most Brahmans would vote for the Congress (I). There was agreement between the election agents of both the Janata party and the Lok Dal that most Thakurs would vote for the Janata candidate, Ugra Sen, himself a Thakur. It was also generally assumed that the Bhumihars would vote for the Bhumihar Congress (I) candidate.

As for the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes, Janata and the Lok Dal hoped to draw votes from these traditional Congress (I) support groups, but their hopes seemed exaggerated. The aggregate election returns suggest that the Scheduled Caste votes were split between Congress and Janata, with Congress receiving the larger share. It is not clear to what extent or how the Muslim votes were divided.

What does emerge most clearly from the interviews in this constituency and from the election returns is that, even though the Lok Dal candidate lost, the middle castes, especially the Yadavs, made their influence felt very decisively. There was simply no doubt in the minds of any of the persons interviewed, including the opponents of the Lok Dal, that the Yadavs would vote solidly for Ram Dhari Shastri. A

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<sup>20</sup> The Sainthwars are mostly cultivators who, though they claim Thakur status, are generally classified as a backward caste.

second prominent feature of the electoral contest in Deoria constituency was that the Congress here, as elsewhere in U.P., won the seat by combining opposite ends of the social order—Brahmans and Bhumihars, on the one hand, and Scheduled Castes and the Muslim minority, on the other. Finally, this was one constituency where the Lok Dal nearly won because the middle castes, primarily the Yadavs, were united while the upper castes, the Scheduled Castes, and the Muslims were, in varying degrees, divided between Congress (I) and Janata.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions emerge from this survey of five constituencies in U.P.<sup>21</sup> First, to the extent that these constituencies are representative of the state as a whole, the landed castes continue to be politically dominant in the U.P. countryside and constitute the central core of support for all leading political parties. The predominant landed castes in U.P. include the elite proprietary castes of Brahmans, Rajputs and Bhumihars, and the middle castes of Jats, Ahirs, Gujars, Kurmis and other small groups of local importance. The elite castes, especially, have retained their traditional importance as candidates and sources of support in these constituencies. Ten of the fifteen candidates of the three leading parties in these five constituencies in 1980 were Brahmans, Rajputs or Bhumihars; one was an Agarwal; and four were middle castes. Four of the five successful candidates were of Brahman, Rajput or Bhumihar caste and the fifth—Charan Singh—was a Jat. It also should be noted that in three of the five constituencies the main contests were among persons of elite-caste status—a Brahman, a Rajput and an Agarwal in Naini Tal; a Rajput against a Rajput in Aligarh; and two Rajputs and a Brahman in Gonda. In only one constituency—Baghpat—was the main contest between two persons of middle-caste status. Here, however, the Jats have for long been the dominant caste both in numbers and in control over the land; they have traditionally occupied the economic position—if not the status—that Brahmans and Rajputs have held elsewhere in U.P. Only in Deoria, in other words, was there a direct contest between a representative of an elite caste (Bhumihars) and a backward caste (Sainthwars). Even here it is somewhat mis-

<sup>21</sup> Although the constituencies are not representative in a demographic sense, I believe that, taken together, they illustrate the major trends and tendencies in contemporary U.P. electoral politics. Also, my interviews in 1979 were not confined to the five constituencies discussed above. The conclusions, therefore, are based also on my broader impressions derived from interviews in several other constituencies.

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leading to describe the contest in this way, since the Bhumihars have traditionally occupied an ambiguous position in the Hindu hierarchy, and the Sainthwars, though of Kurmi origin, claim Rajput status. All in all, therefore, what is most striking about the leading candidates is that they came overwhelmingly from the chief land-owning castes in each constituency, whether of high- or middle-status ranking.

Especially worthy of notice is the prominence of persons of Rajput caste in these electoral contests. The Rajput and Thakur castes have traditionally been the leading proprietary castes in U.P. Before zamindari abolition, they were the principal landowners in most districts in the province—particularly in Oudh, where they usually held more than half of the land. In the five constituencies discussed in this article, Rajputs contributed the largest number of leading candidates—seven out of fifteen—and won two of the five seats. They were leading contestants in all constituencies except Baghpat, and they ran as nominees of one or more of the three major parties in these constituencies—on the Lok Dal ticket in Naini Tal; on the Lok Dal, Congress, and Janata tickets in Aligarh; on both the Congress and Janata tickets in Gonda; and on the Janata ticket in Deoria. In the aggregate in these five constituencies, Rajput candidates received 51.32 per cent of the votes polled by the leading candidates.

The second important conclusion from this survey of five constituencies is a corollary of the first, namely, that despite the electoral significance of the Scheduled Castes and the Muslims as swing forces, particularly for the Congress, they are really pawns in electoral contests in which the resources and the predominant local support bases are controlled by the landed castes, whose economic interests are similar whatever the status differences among them. Two other features of the political position and behavior of the Scheduled Castes and Muslims should be noted here. One is that their support for the Congress, which has been the preferred party for both of these categories of voters, has fluctuated across time and space. In Aligarh, for example, the Congress lost the support of both groups in the 1962, 1967, and 1977 elections. More generally, the success of the Congress in particular constituencies and in the state as a whole has depended upon its ability to retain the support of most voters from among these two categories. The Congress cannot afford to base its appeal exclusively on the support of these two categories, however, for power in the countryside remains with the landed castes.

The last point to be noted about the low-caste voters and the



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poorer voters of middle-caste status is that, in many cases, their votes can be purchased. The impression is unavoidable that many, if not most, poor persons of low-caste status are looking for protection and patronage from anybody who comes by. Most low-caste persons see the Congress as their protector and vote accordingly, unless they are frightened by such issues as sterilization or are intimidated by the landed castes. They are not, however (as they are in Kerala), an independent political force and do not show signs of becoming one.

A third set of conclusions concerns the support structure and resource base of the Congress. The central core of support for the Congress in U.P. comes from the Brahman proprietary castes and, although there are some exceptions, the Brahmans have tended not to divide their votes. Save for unusual circumstances, Brahman votes will go to the candidate of the Congress, whatever his caste, and will not be diverted to non-Congress candidates of Brahman caste. It is my impression from these constituencies and from interviews in many other constituencies throughout north India that the generalization applies to small Brahman *kisans* as well as to the more prosperous ones.

There is a broader generalization to be made concerning the Congress support base, however, which is that the Congress depends upon elite castes and the wealthy for victory in its election contests while projecting an image of itself as the party of the poor and landless. It is also true that the Congress in 1980 and at other times has won broad support from among the low- and middle-caste laborers and poor *kisans*. The Congress, because of the many ameliorative measures it has taken on behalf of these groups when in power and because of its carefully cultivated image as the protector of the poor and the landless, has become the preferred party for most of these people in U.P. It is because of its mutual dependence on elements from both upper and lower levels of the economic and status hierarchies in U.P. that I have described the Congress as a "coalition of extremes." Moreover, it should be obvious that, whatever its rhetoric, a party so constructed cannot be an instrument for revolutionary change in the north Indian countryside—or probably at all in India.

The Lok Dal emerged from the 1980 parliamentary elections as the second largest party in U.P., less than seven percentage points behind the Congress in the state's total vote share. It was also the principal opposition to the Congress in most constituencies in the state—as it was in four of the five constituencies analyzed in this article. Interviews in all five constituencies left little doubt that there was a solid

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core of *kisan* support for the Lok Dal throughout the state. The solidarity of the Yadav *kisans* was especially evident, particularly in Gonda and Deoria constituencies. The support of the Jats in western U.P. was, of course, taken for granted; but that of the Yadavs was more important, for the latter caste is much larger and more widespread in U.P. Thus, in the 1980 elections, the Lok Dal with its core of support among the Jat and Yadav castes was pitted against the Congress with its core of support among the Brahmans. The support of all other elite- and middle-caste groups was divided among the three leading parties in different constituencies, and sometimes in the same constituency.

The rise of the Lok Dal and its predecessors—the Janata and the BKD—has been associated with the increasing prominence of middle castes both as voters and as candidates. The latter phenomenon was especially evident in Baghpat, where, although they were divided, the leading candidates were all of intermediate-caste status, and in Deoria, where the middle castes were united behind the Lok Dal candidate. The growing political importance of the middle castes in these two constituencies over the last seven elections has involved a movement away from both urban candidates—as in Baghpat—and candidates of elite-caste status. However, the significance of these trends should not be exaggerated, for as has been noted above, the elite castes remain politically more important than the backward castes in the north Indian countryside. Economically, the most important fact is the universal dominance of the landed castes in the U.P. countryside. The political divisions among these castes reflect not only the persisting importance of status differences among them; they also reflect a feeling among the leaders of the middle castes that the elite castes, who have dominated most local institutions, are barring their advancement, which in effect means barring their access to control over these institutions—the banks, the cooperative societies, and the schools—and the resources channelled through them.

If these interpretations of the political divisions among the landed castes are correct, then the political process of the north Indian countryside is likely to continue to be characterized more by tactics of coalition, division, and cooption of particular caste groups and their leaders than by class-caste polarization, for it is primarily a conflict over political control of economic resources that is occurring, and not so much a conflict based on different economic interests. The future political strategy of the Congress, therefore, will probably be to divide the middle castes. As long as political power in the provincial

and national capitals is dependent upon adult suffrage elections, the leading contenders for power are likely to continue to attempt to build inter-caste coalitions that cut across either status or economic differences—or both. Class polarization, therefore, is unlikely to occur as long as the Indian regime is based upon open, competitive elections.

This concluding analysis has focussed so far on questions of caste and class. It remains to consider both the importance of the issues in the campaign and the significance of the 1980 election for the future of Indian democracy. On the face of it, the election seemed to turn overwhelmingly on the issues of high prices, scarcity of essential commodities, the sugar-cane price, and the availability of agricultural inputs (particularly diesel) needed by the *kisans* in the previous growing season. Several of these issues cut evenly across lines of caste and class. Only the very biggest farmers, with ample financial resources and good political connections, were able to obtain sufficient supplies of diesel. Yet, the voters clearly did not respond evenly to the issues. Whether or not a voter blamed government for the economic difficulties and scarcities—and, if so, *which* government—depended more on the caste status of the respondents than on their economic position. The break-up of the Janata coalition also made it convenient for different categories of voters to be selective in allocating blame. Brahman voters favorably disposed to the Congress naturally blamed the Janata government in general, including both the rump Janata party and the Lok Dal. Yadav *kisans*, who were inclined toward the Lok Dal, however, blamed only the Janata government and excused Charan Singh, who had been in office only a short time. Brahman and Yadav *kisans* who harvested cane in November-December had equally good reason to thank Charan Singh for the high price of cane, but only the Yadavs articulated such feelings. In other words, the issues in the campaign were as much excuses for voting behavior as reasons for it. The really central issue in the campaign—in U.P. at least—was whether the voters identified with the middle cultivating castes or with the Congress coalition. The strong undercurrent in this campaign, therefore, was the question of the political and economic advancement of the middle castes.

To give precedence in this way to caste over economic issues is not to deny the importance of the latter. People who supported Charan Singh and the Lok Dal—particularly those from the middle castes—did so for a combination of caste and economic reasons. The cultivating *kisans* of intermediate-caste status with economically viable hold-

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ings believed that Charan Singh and the Lok Dal would promote their economic interests. Moreover, his hold on these castes was solidified by the belief among the middle castes that he was one of them and that he favored their social advancement as well. A Brahman or Thakur with the same program as Charan Singh would not have had the same appeal to these groups.

Another feature of the election and voter reaction to it in U.P., which was most apparent in interviews across the state, was that more voters were oriented to the national leaders and to the party labels than to the local candidates. It would not, however, be correct to infer from this fact that the traditional parochial attitudes of the north Indian electorate had been overcome and replaced by national perspectives. Rather, it was more a case of the voters "parochializing" the national candidates and issues. Often, in fact, the voters did not know the names and castes of the parliamentary candidates, because the parliamentary constituencies are very large and diverse. They did know—or thought they knew—the castes of the national candidates from U.P. and Bihar, with Charan Singh being somewhat of an exception in that he was seen as simply a member of a backward caste. Thus, in a sense, the national leaders have become symbols of the local identifications and aspirations of the north Indian voters. Consequently, Mrs. Gandhi's manoeuver in 1971 of separating the parliamentary from the legislative assembly elections has had the effect of focussing voter attention on national leaders and parties, but it has not freed the parliamentary elections from local, parochial issues and concerns. In some respects, in fact, it has promoted the spread of such issues.<sup>22</sup>

A final observation concerns the optimistic conclusions that have been drawn from the results of the 1977 and 1980 elections about the commitment of the Indian public to democracy and competitive elections. Such conclusions do not seem warranted. In fact, voter comments about the Emergency in the interviews conducted in December 1979 suggest that this issue, even more than the issues of scarcities and high prices, was used to rationalize voting behavior that had other motivations. Voters who identified with the Congress either were prepared to excuse Mrs. Gandhi for her past errors and accept

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<sup>22</sup> It would be interesting to know to what extent the legislative assembly elections have been influenced by similar tendencies, that is, whether in these much smaller constituencies—where the names, castes and personalities of the local candidates are more intimately known to the voters—voting continues to be influenced more by local coalitions and combinations than by the broader identifications that are now prominent in the parliamentary elections.

her statements that she would not impose an Emergency again, or welcomed the prospect of reimposition of an Emergency. Brahmans in particular, some Rajputs, and some low-caste persons openly declared that they would like to see the Emergency back or, at least, that things were better during the Emergency—which, for these persons, primarily meant law and order and stable prices. Opponents of the Congress (I) were naturally also vociferous in their attacks on Mrs. Gandhi and the Emergency regime—which for them meant forced sterilization, detention, and other forms of harassment. It did not, however, appear to this writer in December 1979 that attitudes for or against the Emergency were a primary motivating factor in the voting decisions of most voters.

The significance of the 1977 and 1980 elections in U.P. must be sought elsewhere—in the persistent underlying trends and tendencies that are masked if undue attention is paid to the “issues” articulated by candidates and voters. Two such trends are particularly important. The first is the attempt by the political parties to turn some caste and communal categories into voting blocs, providing a stable basis of support across time and space. Insofar as the attempt is successful, it involves for Hindus the elevation of the caste category to greater importance than local *jati* as a political factor. In the 1980 elections, three caste categories in particular seem to have voted as blocs—Brahmans, Jats, and Yadavs. Brahmans voted overwhelmingly for Congress (I), and Jats and Yadavs for the Lok Dal, often even when presented with reasonably good candidates of their own caste in opposition to a candidate of their preferred party but not of their own caste. Muslims and Scheduled Castes, too, have often voted as blocs—usually for the Congress. Congress probably won most of the votes of these two groupings, but there was some loss of Muslim votes to the Lok Dal and of Scheduled Caste votes to Janata and the Lok Dal. All other castes were more divided both across and within particular constituencies.

The tendency toward bloc voting is partly reinforced and partly counteracted by the dual appeal of the Congress to rich and poor. Its practice of distributing patronage and protection to secure the support of the rich draws into its fold persons and groups from the upper layers of all castes. Its adoption of programs and policies for the poor has the effect of consolidating the support of some Scheduled Caste groups and of drawing away from the Lok Dal segments of *jatis* and caste categories of intermediate status.

The second major underlying pattern in these past two elections is

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really an aspect of the first—namely the politicization and increased cohesion of the middle castes of peasants, who formed the bulk of the support for Janata in 1977 and for the Lok Dal of Charan Singh in 1980. Some of them supported Congress (I) also, but most did not and were in conflict with both ends of the spectrum of support that formed the basic Congress coalition. This has been the principal underlying conflict in north India—between the middle peasantry and all other social forces. It was not changed by the 1980 elections. In fact, it was sharpened. The major political issue in north Indian politics in the immediate future is whether that conflict will intensify or will be deflected by political tactics that divide middle-caste leaders and groups. The future of the Indian parliamentary system depends more on the outcome of that struggle than on either the presumed commitment of the Indian public to democratic values or on transient issues such as sterilization, high prices, and shortage of basic commodities.

*University of Washington, Seattle, U.S.A., December 1980*