



Poverty and prosperity vary greatly by region. In the map above, which shows all but the smallest of India's 31 states and Union territories, solid red denotes average per-capita income (in current U.S. dollars) greater than \$120 annually; medium red, \$100-120; light red, \$80-100; gray, unknown.



India

Eighteen months ago, the West hailed India's return to democracy after Prime Minister Morarji Desai took office in the wake of voters' rejection of Indira Gandhi and her "Emergency" rule by decree. Since then, India has receded from the headlines (except during President Carter's flying visit last January). The nation's current economic and political health is relatively good, but the long-term outlook is a matter of dispute. We present here some diverse views. Former diplomat Edward O'Neill traces Indian-American relations since the bloody Moslem-Hindu Partition of the subcontinent in 1947; journalist B. G. Verghese looks at India's political history; and economist Lawrence Veit assays Indian "socialism."



UNREAL EXPECTATIONS

by Edward A. O'Neill

In 1928 an Anglophile American, Katherine Mayo, wrote a book called *Mother India* that remained on the best-seller list for two years. (The book is still in print.) Profusely illustrated with pictures of snake charmers, lepers, hypnotic swamis, child brides, grotesquely crippled beggars, bejeweled maharajas, elephants, tigers, and "sacred cows," *Mother India* presented a skewed image of India that persists in America to this day. While examples of all of Mayo's bizarrerie (save the bejeweled maharajas and the tigers—the one extinct, the other an endangered species) can still be found in India's crowded cities and mud-walled villages, the "real" India of 1928—or of 1978—is hardly the one she described.

Among the world's newly independent nations, India is

something of a phenomenon. Through all kinds of travail it has managed to keep to the principles on which it was founded—and survive. Survival has not been easy. In the 31 years since the British left, India has undergone the Muslim-Hindu trauma of Partition, four wars of varying ferocity, a half-dozen searing droughts, three near famines, innumerable savage squabbles over language, religion, and regional politics, and a brief flirtation with dictatorship. But thanks to the hundreds of millions of ordinary voters who rejected Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her Emergency in the free elections of March 1977, India remains the world's most populous democracy. (India and neighboring Sri Lanka are the only former colonial areas in Asia that can boast free elections.)

The Indian judiciary, which provoked Mrs. Gandhi's declaration of the Emergency by convicting her while Prime Minister of election irregularities, is once more independent. It may yet send her to jail, as it did her son Sanjay. The Indian press, the best in all of Asia's former colonial countries, is free to speak out again. India's Army, the third largest in the world, could take over the government any time its chiefs might wish. But its leaders have scrupulously stayed out of politics.

Hindi-Chini Bye-Bye

The stereotype of "starving India" remains, yet food production has grown enormously. Grain *reserves* are now more than a third of what total grain *production* was 20 years ago. The country is essentially self-sufficient in a large number of manufactured goods, ranging from shoes and plastics to heavy trucks, small computers, military aircraft, and watches. India has even been able to make an atomic device, and may have rockets that could deliver it. As *Washington Post* correspondent Lewis Simons recently observed, India is "not the loser we make it out to be."

In practical terms, India is much better off now than it was during the heady period when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–64) was the beau ideal of the "nonaligned" nations and world leaders visited New Delhi in procession. Khrushchev and

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Bulganin came together, then Marshal Tito, Chou En-Lai, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and others, each visitor stroking the already inflated Indian ego. During Chou's visit in 1956, huge crowds greeted him with shouts of "Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai" ("Indians and Chinese are brothers").

But six years later the Chinese, enforcing border claims in the Himalayas, overwhelmed an Indian Army trained primarily to fight Pakistan. What India then lost in international prestige has never been recovered. Western newsmen, who streamed in to cover the brief mountain war, gleefully converted the 1956 slogan into "Hindi-Chini bye-bye."

In many parts of the world—even among the country's friends in Washington, to whom Indian diplomats' lectures on American international morality were always galling—wry satisfaction greeted this setback. Nonetheless, the United States quickly offered India political support and military aid against our then enemy, the "Chicoms." The panicky Indians eagerly accepted.

Ups and Downs

An ambivalence has long marked Indo-American relations, and it stems from a host of accumulated mutual misperceptions. Until a generation ago, Americans were taught little more than that India was the place where Alexander the Great stopped in 326 B.C. "because there were no other worlds to conquer." Until 1947, in geography books India was a large area colored red like the rest of the far-flung British Empire. Before World War II, there were probably fewer than a dozen social scientists in this country who could claim any expertise about India. Add to them a handful of roving newspapermen, tourists who had passed through, a sizeable number of missionaries, and some businessmen and consular officials (whose attitudes were as colonial as those of the British). That was it.

In similar fashion, educated Indians at the time of Independence knew practically nothing about the United States. Americans were "materialistic" but at the same time "idealistic." The Indian vision of America was formed in large part from Hollywood movies. In school, Indian students memorized the succession of English kings but were taught little about the British colony that broke away in 1776. Oxford, Cambridge, and other British universities attracted the sons of the Indian elite, with few coming to the United States. Those who did reach America had to return home once they had their degrees; until 1946, Indians, like all other Asians, were barred from immigrat-

ing. The U.S. quotas set in that year limited the admission of Indians to 100 persons annually. (Since 1968, when the quota system was abandoned, nearly 112,000 Indians have come to the United States to live. More Indians now attend colleges and universities in the United States than in England.)

Thus, it was inevitable that relations between India and the United States would not be smooth, and indeed, they have been marked by a curious yo-yo pattern. In the late 1940s, however, many officials in Washington and many romantic Indophile Americans believed that relations could hardly be other than excellent. Were we not the two largest democracies in the world? Had we not both won our freedom from the British Crown?

Yet by then, the yo-yo had already been going up and down for half a decade. It is commonly thought in the United States that, during World War II, Franklin D. Roosevelt pressured Winston Churchill into giving India its independence. In fact, FDR did not press Churchill on the matter in order to keep the British Prime Minister sympathetic to other American war aims. And Indian nationalists, in jail or out, knew it. During the Truman era, Indian leaders hoped that we would be beneficent supporters of freedom in other colonial countries. Americans, in turn, had high hopes that India could play a large role in the confused new postwar world.

With the onset of the Cold War and India's quick avowals of neutrality, both sides awoke from their dreams. The year 1954 was bad on both sides. In February, as part of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's containment policy, the United States began arming Pakistan, India's next-door enemy. India, which had rejected a similar arms offer, as Dulles knew it would, reacted with anger. Indian officials contended that Pakistan accepted the U.S. offer of an anticommunist military pact only to obtain American weapons for use against India. As it turned out, the Indians were right.* That same year, Nehru upset Washington by joining the Communist Chinese in propounding *Panch Shila*, the five principles of peaceful coexistence. To Dulles, such neutrality was "immoral."

Soon afterward, however, India's economic development programs ran into serious trouble and Nehru turned once more to Washington for help. What had begun as a small trickle of aid in 1950 soon became a flood. (Total U.S. economic assistance to India in all forms—the larger part in food—has amounted to

*The Pakistanis used American weapons against the Indians during a skirmish in the desolate Rann of Kutch early in 1965, in the brief war in Kashmir and the Punjab a few months later, and in Bangladesh in 1971 when East Bengal became an independent country.



Drawing by Helen E. Hokinson;
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"It makes me so mad when I think how long I've been patient with India."

about \$10 billion.) With American aid came hundreds of Yankee technicians and administrators who, as the years went by, eroded Indian good will by insisting on telling the "backward natives" how they should solve all their problems. Nonetheless, the aid was important to India and kept its economy afloat.

A high point in Indo-American relations was reached when President Dwight D. Eisenhower visited New Delhi in December 1959. Literally millions turned out to see the "Prince of Peace," as banners throughout the city proclaimed him. When John F. Kennedy succeeded Eisenhower in 1961, Indian intellectuals assumed that the young new President would bring a period of American nonimperialism. Then came the Bay of Pigs. For the first time the American Embassy in New Delhi was stoned by demonstrators.

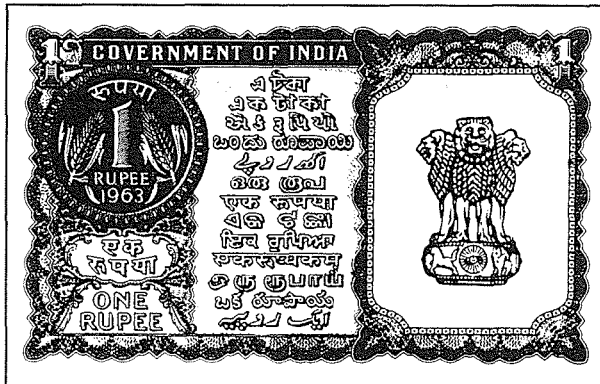
The Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 might have evoked an even more violent response, but by then, as noted above, Chinese soldiers were streaming across the Himalayan passes and routing the Indian Army. President Kennedy, the Soviet missiles gone from Cuba, reacted quickly, and U.S. Air Force C-130s began landing at New Delhi's Palam airport with arms and equipment. Before the American advisory presence had

A GIFT OF TONGUES

India's 1949 Constitution included a provision, passed by one vote, that made Hindi "the official language of the Union." Despite nearly 30 years of vigorous government efforts to promote the language, Hindi today is spoken regularly by only 30 percent of the population. Some 400 million other Indians stubbornly stick to their mother tongues, each of which boasts deep historic roots and a distinctive literary tradition.

A cursory examination of a rupee note (shown below), worth 12¢, illustrates the country's language problem. There are 15 languages represented, each in its own script. There is Hindi, of course, then 13 others "recognized" by the Constitution. The fifteenth, dominating the currency, is English, designated "an associate language" but still the country's lingua franca.

The languages of the north are Indo-European, cousins of our Western languages. Those of the south are Dravidian, with no connections to any tongue outside the subcontinent. (Three other language families are found in India: Tibeto-Chinese in the mountains of the north and northeast; Munda among aboriginal peoples scattered around the country; and Khasi in the Assam hills. The Indian census has counted more than 600 languages in the whole country.)



been fully established, however, the Chinese—having made their point—withdraw. India's gratitude evaporated in haggling over details of arms assistance with a large U.S. military mission that had established itself in a former maharaja's Delhi palace. The relationship soured, and the American military mission went home.

With the ever-deepening U.S. involvement in Vietnam, relations between the two countries again plummeted. In answer to

India's loud criticism of the U.S. role in Vietnam, the United States in 1968 cited India's failure to protest when the armies of the Soviet Union and other communist countries put down Czechoslovakia's brief experiment in "liberalization."^{*}

A "Tilt" Toward Pakistan?

Indo-American relations reached their nadir during the Nixon era when India, in its own self-interest, intervened in Bangladesh, where troops from West Pakistan were slaughtering rebelling East Pakistanis in 1971. A "leak" in Washington revealed that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was, in his own words, "tilting" toward Pakistan in the struggle. Then it was learned that a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier and escort ships had entered the Bay of Bengal. The Indian reaction was predictable. A few months later Prime Minister Indira Gandhi signed a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union—then India's largest supplier of arms and almost always a strong supporter of India against Pakistan.

India emerged from the Bangladesh war in a better strategic position than it had enjoyed since Partition. No longer was there an enemy both to the east and to the west. By 1974, the American Embassy in New Delhi had begun talking to the Ministry of External Affairs about development of "mutual and stable relations." Prime Minister Gandhi's 18-month Emergency, which began in June 1975, was strongly criticized in the United States,[†] but no serious international difficulties arose. With the Emergency over and Mrs. Gandhi out of power, relations between the United States and India, under the coalition government of Prime Minister Morarji Desai, became warmer (as demonstrated by Jimmy Carter's visit to New Delhi in January 1978) than they had been in several years.

In the end, of course, India and the United States remain vastly different countries with widely divergent problems. Even as they agree on democratic values, Americans and Indians should not expect too much of one another; their strategic aims and interests will not always coincide.

^{*}In 1956, when the Russians crushed the revolt in Hungary, Prime Minister Nehru was silent for days, but finally, under severe criticism from the Indian press, mildly objected.

[†]However, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, former Ambassador to India and now a U.S. Senator (D.-N.Y.), managed to find a silver lining in the Emergency: He noted at the time that Gerald Ford would be remembered as the man who was President when the United States became the world's largest democracy.