

# **The politics of state formation in India: the case of Uttarakhand**

by

**Sangeeta Mishra**

**B.A., The University of Arizona, 1991  
M.A., The University of Colorado at Boulder, 1996**

**A THESIS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

in

**THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**Department of Political Science**

**We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**September 2000**

**© Sangeeta Mishra, 2000**

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Political Science

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date Sept. 20, 2000

## Abstract

The recently ratified new states in India have profound implications for understanding the capability of federations globally to accommodate the increasing number of autonomy demands. Granting state status to regions seeking autonomy seems to be one solution to achieving greater stability and unity in a state. However, before fully embracing this as a solution to possible fragmenting tendencies and ultimate cases of dis-unification, it becomes necessary to examine in what context regions are given state status. The political factors determining the fate of statehood movements in India is the topic of this thesis.

In August 2000, the India parliament approved three new India states. The newly created states in India were not unpredicted events. Many of these regions had been seeking separate statehood since pre-independence. However what makes this an interesting topic is to consider why now, why have the regions have been granted state status. This thesis looks at one case study, the case of Uttarakhand, and attentively follows its journey to statehood. A region in the northern Himalayas, the area cites lagging economic and social conditions, along with a separate cultural lifestyle from its host state Uttar Pradesh.

This thesis begins to address this political event by first examining past attempts at explaining why and how new states were created within a federal institutional design. Ultimately, the thesis disregards a fully federal explanation as the real understanding for why these movements occur. Instead, it looks to contemporary political conditions in which statehood movements are likely to be determined. In particular, I argue that coalition politics along with its by-products of leadership and institutional accommodation play a significant role in determining the fate of these movements. Although I recognize that the ability of groups to mobilize around given issues is imperative, I argue that these are not primary considerations when governments decide whether to grant or to not concede statehood demands.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Dedication.....	vii
<b>CHAPTER I</b>	<b>Introduction.....1</b>
<b>CHAPTER II</b>	<b>Precedents and present conditions for the political mapping of India.....13</b>
	2.1 The emergence of a federal India and problems with the federal design.....14
	2.2 Precedents of state formation in India.....21
	2.3 Contemporary conditions for statehood.....25
	2.4 A framework for analyzing new state conditions.....31
<b>CHAPTER III</b>	<b>Politics of separate statehood— the case of Uttarakhand.....32</b>
	3.1 Early agitation for statehood.....43
	3.2 The recent years.....49
<b>CHAPTER IV</b>	<b>Understanding the creation of Uttarakhand.....65</b>
Bibliography.....	81

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1:	1991 – 1999 Lok Sabha (LS) Seats—Uttarakhand.....	43
------------	---	----

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1:	Possible New States.....	3
Figure 2.1:	Princely States of Uttar Pradesh.....	17
Figure 3.1:	Regions of Uttar Pradesh.....	35
Figure 3.2:	Districts of Uttarakhand.....	37
Figure 3.3:	Forested versus unforested areas of Uttar Pradesh.....	39

## Acknowledgements

Many people were instrumental in seeing this project to its completion. This project would never have gotten off the ground nor seen its completion without the supervision of Professor John Wood. I thank him for guiding and editing this thesis. Second, Professor David Elkins, my second reader, had useful suggestions that clarified many vague notions that I myself had been struggling with when writing.

Behind every project more goes into it than the guidelines specified. A host of people played significant roles in this project. I thank my wonderful, wonderful parents and siblings for reminding me who I am through this process. Without that sound sense of self it is difficult to pick up the pen and write on paper with confidence. I thank them profoundly for giving me all that I have.

A very special thanks goes to the Center for Applied Ethics for providing me a home base while in Vancouver. I came here not knowing a soul. They not only provided me the space to work but gave me the home away from home that I needed. A special thanks to my office mate Bryn William-Jones. Not only were his technical expertise useful but also the moral support he provided and his friendship has been the bright light during the many rainy days in Vancouver. I also thank Professor Wayne Norman who encouraged me to pursue the topic of this thesis. Conversations in the corridors with him were instrumental in defining the thesis.

Finally, I thank "B" for loving me like a thousand monkeys. You are the anaconda with altitude. Thank you Jai Govinda for allowing me to feel the ground beneath my feet while in Vancouver. Without your guidance and friendship I would not have lasted here more than two months. And finally, a very big thanks to my friend in Colorado, from where the majority of this thesis was written. They provided a warm retreat where the sunshine brightened my days during a year that can best be described as "damp."

## **Dedication**

To the anaconda with altitude.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

In the fall of 1994, nearly 7,000 inhabitants of Uttarakhand, in India's central Himalayan region, began a journey from Garhwal to New Delhi for a planned rally to be held behind the Indian capital's Red Fort (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 3 October, 1994). The rally, organized by the Uttarakhand Samyukta Sangharsh Samiti (USSS), a coalition headed by the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD), came in response to the Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's decision to approve of the requirements of the Reservation Bill for the state of Uttar Pradesh and thereby extending quotas into the districts of Uttarakhand. The Reservation Bill mandated setting aside 27 percent of seats in education and the workforce for Other Backward Class (OBC) persons. The thirteen districts in the Uttarakhand region contain less than two percent OBCs, thus the Bill was perceived as threatening educational and public employment opportunities for residents of the hills (Gupta 1995: 19). This renewed the Uttarakhandis' past demand for a separate Himalayan hill province to be called Uttarakhand. Thus on October 1, 1994, a peaceful rally was organized to display the earnest desire of the hill people for a separate state. However, before the protesters could make it to the capital, 150 kilometers (90 miles) from New Delhi police began firing on them in Muzaffarnagar. The rallyists were stopped by police, who fired upon, tear-gassed and lathi-charged the protesters and molested and raped several of the female participants.<sup>1</sup> Several people were killed and injured.

Claims for separate statehood have emerged in nearly every corner of India. In the north, Ladakh's struggle for statehood continues to add to the unsettling political conflicts in India's

---

<sup>1</sup> Initially the Muzaffarnagar police and UP State government refused to accept responsibility for the riots. It was not until 1996, due to further probes by the CBI, that the state government apologized and promised to compensate the victims of those killed and raped in the 1994 Uttarakhand riots at Muzzafarnagar. *India Today*: 30 June, 1995; *The Hindu*: 3 October, 1997.

northern-most frontier of Jammu and Kashmir; the Telengana movement has been agitating the south since 1946; the east is plagued by insurgencies of several separatist demands including Gorkhaland and Bodolands and at the center, there are pressures to create Vindhya Pradesh out of Madhya Pradesh and Vidarbha out of Maharashtra. These are a few of the most visible demands for new statehood agitating India today. At least six regional autonomy demands dot the map of India and are likely to permanently alter the political boundaries within the Indian Union.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The six likely new states to be created in India are: Ladakh, Gorkhaland, Telengana, Bodolands, Vindhya Pradesh, and Vidarbha. See Figure 1.1.

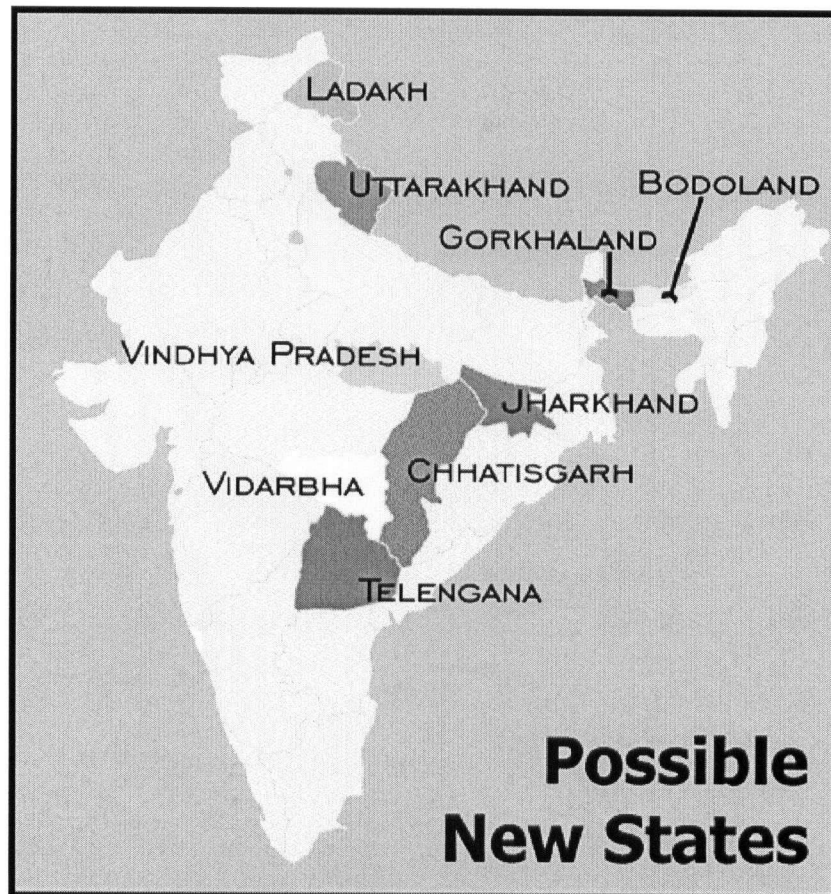


Figure 1.1: Possible new states in the Indian Union  
Source: "Uttarakhand: Indian Himalayas and a land of struggle"

Regional autonomy demands are not new to India.<sup>3</sup> India has been troubled with its state boundaries since independence in 1947. At the time of independence, the constituent Assembly struggled with combining both British and princely states into a unified India. Over 550 princely states constituting more than a third of India's area and more than a fourth of its population had to be combined with British states accommodating both direct and indirect rule.<sup>4</sup> The two systems of rule varied greatly. Princely India consisted of smaller regions governed by a "father figure" like autocratic ruler. Through the use of deputies and Residents, the British were able to facilitate communication between the Crown and Princes, extract resources from the state as official British policy and influence the internal policies of local rulers when necessary (Fisher 1991: 123). Leaders who were typically strongmen linked to the politics of a larger India ruled British India. These two systems of rule were dramatically different and created distinct polities that had to be merged at the time of India's independence. With the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, combined with diplomatic skills of V.P. Menon, the princes were persuaded to cede their territories and political authority in 1947–1948, the time of India's independence.<sup>5</sup>

The compromises made by the princes and India's new political leaders, however, did not succeed in satisfying India's diverse communities. Soon after independence the artificially designed provinces created to build a unified India, began to show signs of disintegration. Fissures began to develop due to the combining of varied groups and polities. A national ideology could not replace natural characteristics of regional identity of the past several centuries. Where artificially created boundaries were delineated to form provinces, there were

---

<sup>3</sup> By regional autonomy demands I mean "demands that treat regions as coherent units politically, having a right to reflect the constituents' aspirations to manage their internal affairs, while making claims on national resources, in competition with other regions. From Akhtar Majeed, *Maldevelopment and regional conflict: a general framework*," In Akhtar Majeed (ed) *Regionalism: Developmental Tensions in India*. New Delhi: Cosmos Publications, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed comparison on British versus Princely types of rule and the problems of political integration see John R. Wood, "British versus Princely legacies and the political integration of Gujarat," *Journal of Asian Studies*, (44)1, November 1984.

deep feelings of resentment and animosity towards the national plan of assimilation that began to manifest in the form of regional autonomy. In the 1950s in the southern region of India, the Telugu-speaking portion of Madras Province displayed signs of discontent and demanded a separate state of Andhra Pradesh from the larger province. This resulted in forming the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) in 1953. The Commission was organized with the task to seriously consider the possibility of forming new states out of old ones. This era of state accommodation put into question the viability of India's centralized federal structure and whether or not it was the best governmental set up to accommodate India's diverse population. Although a strong central form of governance was assumed, the SRC recommended a need to divide some of the states into small, more manageable ones and, a re-drawing of state boundaries that would preserve the distinctiveness of India's vast plural population. Their decision on which states to break down into smaller units was based on language, history, geography, economy and culture, and most importantly, on the condition that the redistribution should promote nationalism (*Report* 1955: Section 93). Although the leaders of India were skeptical of how a division of states would build unity through further fragmentation, in the end, they were forced to give in to demands.

The guidelines used by the SRC to re-map India, then, remained as the guiding principles to evaluate future demands for provincial status. Based on local and linguistic demands, other states were claimed, conceived and eventually elevated to statehood. Thus, in 1960 Bombay was divided again to create Maharashtra for Marathi speakers and Gujarat for Gujarati speakers. Linguistic differences were cited as the reason to divide greater Punjab in 1966 into Punjab,

---

<sup>5</sup> For more on the integration of states see V.P. Menon, The story of the integration of the Indian states, New Delhi: Orient Longmans Limited, 1961.

Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.<sup>6</sup> During the years of 1969-1987 the northeastern region was divided into six states: Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (DasGupta 1998; Baruah 1999). In May 1987, the former Union Territory of Goa was granted state standing (Rubinoff 1992). And most recently, on August 1st, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2000, the three new states of Chattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, respectively, passed a voice vote in the Lok Sabha. Over a period of fifty years (1947-2000), several large provinces have been redrawn into the existing twenty-eight states and seven Union Territories that constitute India today.

## I.

Past justifications for re-mapping were based primarily on local and linguistic demands. However, the latest calls for statehood are profoundly different from those in the past and thus warrant examination in light of the contemporary political changes in India. In the past, states were formed primarily based on principles of distinctiveness and the preservation of plurality within the federal structure of India. Thus, Andhra Pradesh was created to form a Telugu speaking state, and many other states, based on this rationale, followed. However, contemporary demands for statehood differ from the past in that although many of these claims are founded on a sense of primordial distinctiveness, they are really struggles for greater control over local resources (*India Today*: 15 October, 1996). As displayed by the demand for a separate Uttarakhand, there has been an urgency to gain control of local resources before neglect by both the centre and state governments seriously presents a situation where a perceived lack of education, jobs and ultimately welfare for people of the region is threatened. Indigenous identity matters but as these movements have developed, they actually become “an expression of

---

<sup>6</sup> Paul Brass offers a comprehensive case story detailing the creation of the state of Punjab pointing out how language differences were promoted in order to conceal the primary motivation of religion as reasons for a separate state. See Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974, pages 277-367.

heightened political consciousness, expanding participation, and increasing competition for scarce resources” (Hardgrave 1983: 1171).

Previous attempts to make sense of burgeoning regional autonomy demands attributed these developments as a failure of India’s federal system of rule. Without a doubt, the federal design of India was not elaborately set out in constitutional documents. Standard federal provisions were devised “concerning the relations between the union government and the states, indicating the distribution of legislative, executive, judicial and financial powers, and administrative control during normal and extraordinary times” (DasGupta 1998: 206). Concerning the issue of state units, the Constitution simply says that they can be altered and reorganized by the federal government (Indian Constitution, Article Three). It was under this provision the SRC was formed in 1953. However, because so little was said in the federal design about *why* and *when* states are to be formed, it is futile to blame federal theory as having failed in its attempts at state planning. Federal theory only goes so far as to point out the structural constraints and processes of creating provinces but, leaves out any explanation for the more pressing fundamental questions of why and when new states should be formed. Federalism is an institutional blueprint, not an explanation for the conditions underlying state, central or center-state politics. By studying India’s Constitution and other official documents we begin to understand how states relate to the center yet, we learn very little about the conditions under which the new administrative units originate. Thus, to use India’s highly centralized federal structure as a reason for the prolific growth of statehood demands is to point the finger in the wrong direction.

What has emerged in India is a dramatic change in centre-state relations and electoral politics that explains when and why so many new state-seeking demands are now considered likely to succeed. Since the historic decline of the once national political party, the Congress, the contest to govern the country consists of a fierce battle of winning electoral votes at the state

level.<sup>7</sup> Prior to the 1990s, governments were able to isolate themselves from the logic of the traditional social order by ignoring the pressures of traditional society. However, the growth of new localized political parties has meant a dramatic shift of attention from Centre politics to state politics, making local interests of religion, caste and region crucial. Thus, although many of today's demands for distinct political units are not new, they have gained more viability in recent years due to the lack of a national party.

Unlike during Congress rule, there is no one strong central political party dominating the scene. As a result, demands for new state formation have gained feasibility due to the need for grassroots support of political parties. In order to win the central government position, political parties must carve out constituencies to gain loyal electoral votes. And once winning the electoral support, they must compete strenuously to maintain that support. The limitations and opportunities of coalition politics are then played out at the state level. The growing importance of small parties at the national level in a coalition government has shaped the politics of local demands. It is in this light that one can better understand demands for and the conditions encouraging regional requests such as statehood.

The study of state politics in India deserves new attention. The recent change in political control at the center has created a new focus of research in state politics. Over time, research results are likely to change how we assess centre politics in India. Possible reasons why the study of state politics has received little attention include: the framing of India's Constitution around the idea of the country as an organic whole requiring basic uniformity to the system, the available use of President's Rule allowing the center to interfere in state politics, the long domination of a one-party system frustrating autonomous growth of state politics and, the fact that India is a "segmented" polity where happenings in one state do not affect another state (Pai 1989: 94). This study takes state formation as its focal point. Through a study of local, state and

---

<sup>7</sup> The eventual decline of the Congress began in 1984 and then reached its nadir in 1994.



state-centre relations, it is hoped that an explanation can be achieved for why and when regional autonomy demands are likely to emerge and succeed in their aim of gaining statehood.

## II.

The state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) is the fourth largest state (294 thousand square miles) in the union and has the largest state population (nearly 140 million) (Government of India 1991:Series 25, Paper 1). Nearly 72 percent of its inhabitants live in rural areas and the state contains the highest number of poor people. For decades, the state was the launching pad for political movements and set the political agenda for the remainder of the country. Unlike other states in India, the politics of UP largely determined the politics of the nation. With its 85 Lok Sabha seats, the state was crucial to the outcome of national elections. Except for the 1991 and 1996 elections, that party or alliance which won Uttar Pradesh controlled the Lok Sabha (Hasan 1998: 05).

Nestled in the northwestern corner of UP are thirteen districts composing the region of Uttarakhand.<sup>8</sup> Since 1991, these districts have been agitating to separate from UP and form their

---

<sup>8</sup> The new state that was recently ratified by the Indian parliament has been called "Uttaranchal." This name was given to the hill region of Uttar Pradesh by the BJP government in an effort to take credit for the new state movement. However, the people of the UP hill region prefer the name "Uttarakhand." I will therefore refer to this region as "Uttarakhand." In chapter four, though, when explaining the success of the new state movement I refer to the UP hill districts as "Uttaranchal" because it is under this name that the parliament ratified the new state bill.

own autonomous state within the Indian federation.<sup>9</sup> The Uttarakhand seats in the national elections of 1991, 1996, 1998 and 1999 were highly contested by the parties that vied to control UP and ultimately the Centre. All of these election periods mark the decline of the Congress party and reveal how the politics of regionalism have permeated national politics. The study of political happenings in Uttar Pradesh and the Uttarakhand region provides an opening into the politics of state formation and a preview of the nature of state-center politics at the national level.

The decline of the highly centralized Congress party has resulted in a decentering of politics and has shifted its locale from New Delhi to the states. Uttar Pradesh was traditionally a Congress stronghold during the pre-independence and the early years of independent India. UP was considered Congress territory and the four Lok Sabha seats of Uttarakhand had successively been Congress dominated. In the early 1980s, the party system was still under the control of the Congress in spite of the decay of its organization; by the end of the decade however, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) emerged as strong contenders for power.<sup>10</sup> The BJP's strategy emphasizing Hindutva and religious identity allowed it to mobilize at the local levels and permanently alter state, and, eventually, national politics (Pai 2000: 78) In addition to dominating the state, up until the 1991 elections, the Congress had also always prevailed in the hill region. However in 1991, the BJP appealed to the higher caste voters of the hills and promised them statehood, thereby winning all four seats previously held by Congress. This marked a dramatic shift in Uttarakhand politics. First, the region and its four Lok Sabha and twenty-two state assembly seats gained significance. Second, it marked the increasing importance of local and regional interests over national issues.

---

<sup>9</sup> Prior to 1997 Uttarakhand consisted of eight districts: Pithoragarh, Almora, Nainital, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Dheradun, Tehri and Pauri. In 1997, under the state leadership of Chief Minister Mayawati, and additional five districts (Rudraprayag, Bageshwar, Champawat, Udham Singh Nagar, and Haridwar) were created out of the existing constituencies of Uttarakhand.

<sup>10</sup> The BJP emerged from the Janata party in the 1980s and was limited to the Bundelkhand area (see Figure 2.2). By the 1990s it had mobilized a large proportion of upper caste Hindus across the state. The SP is a political party whose membership consists primarily of OBCs. And the BSP is a largely Dalit composed political party.

Since 1991, the electoral seats of Uttarakhand have been highly contested seats where the politics of coalition formation, regionalism and grassroots politics are played out. In order to garner electoral votes in the Himalayan hill districts, successive Prime Ministers have given their parties a boost by voicing support for Uttarakhand, thus allowing their coalition governments to secure UP parliamentary votes and thereby their position in New Delhi. In numerous Independence Day speeches, newly elected Prime Ministers have declared their commitment to a new hill state: in 1996, Prime Minister Deve Gowda (*BBC*: 5 October, 1996) in 1997, Prime Minister Mr. Inder Gujral (*The Hindu*: 26 August, 1997), and his successor, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, after winning the vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha made the same pledge first in 1998 and then in 1999 (*The Hindu*: 7 April, 1998).<sup>11</sup> The past national elections of 1999 give evidence of the political factors affecting state making since the change in centre politics that has taken place under a new leadership.

### III.

This thesis attempts to illuminate the current political changes in India and understand the likelihood for new state formation in the Indian Union.<sup>12</sup> My method consists of examining a specific case study, Uttarakhand. It is hoped that by studying in detail the specifics of one state autonomy movement, conditions surrounding the growth of these types of movements will be revealed. Although this project is limited to the specifics of India, it could very well be used to explain similar phenomena in other federations globally. The recent increase in ethnic demands for separation worldwide begs for an assessment of ways in which multicultural governments can be more accommodating. Anyone concerned about the dangers of secession might consider

---

<sup>11</sup> He made the same pledge in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections to ensure that the four Lok Sabha seats went to the BJP.

<sup>12</sup> Although the term "state formation" is often times used in reference to setting up institutions in a nation, I will use the term "state formation" to describe the sub-units of a federal nation. Other words that could be used in place of "state" include provinces and sub-units.

that a process granting more states might in fact strengthen national unity. This project looks at ways of accommodating minority demands within the institutional set up as opposed to the secession solution.

The project consists of two parts. Chapter Two looks at both the formal and informal principles guiding state formation in India. This includes explaining precedents that historically determined the fate of new state movements. This portion of the project will elaborate on past as well as present principles and conditions that have motivated successful statehood demands. Chapter Three then looks specifically at the Uttarakhand case and points out the salient features guiding the movement for statehood and the role of the state and central governments in facilitating the movement. Chapter Four seeks to highlight the political conditions that were present in granting Uttarakhand statehood and to provide an analysis of why and how regional autonomy demands occur and to explain how a federation, in this political context, can accommodate regional autonomy demands.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Precedents and concerns for the political mapping of India**

A crucial feature of India's federal system is its highly centralized power structure. It was set up in this way in order to combine several vast and varied states into a unified India. Yet its implementation did not come without problems. First, there was the challenge of combining princely and British states. Then there was the problem of managing them administratively. A centralized federal system seemed the best option for a whole India. This system of a highly centralized Centre worked for a while, especially during the years that the Congress had little opposition and was able to maintain its strong hold on politics. However, since 1991 when the Congress began to show increasing signs of instability, and the growth of grassroots movements in various states began to intensify, it has become unclear whether a centralized form of federalism is what is needed to keep India together.

This chapter looks at past precedents that were instrumental in determining the outcome of new state movements in India. After pointing to the inadequacy of these precedents as the single explanation for contemporary statehood demands in India, I then turn to new political factors that are more likely to predict the outcome of today's regional autonomy movements. I will argue that explanations focusing on the contemporary political climate of India provide a better understanding for the conditions giving rise to new statehood demands. In particular, the recent change from a one-party dominated political system to one of coalition politics has created an environment that is more likely to influence the outcome of these movements.

I begin by briefly explaining why India opted for a highly centralized federal system and point to the gaps in using a strictly federal theory as an explanation for regional autonomy movements. This will then lead into an explanation of how states were created initially and then later when state autonomy demands began to threaten the unity of India. A brief overview of

India's history will help clarify the past guidelines used in assessing newer regional autonomy demands. At this point, I turn to Paul Brass's (1974) explanation for the constraints and parameters of creating new states. Brass states that determinations of provincial borders were primarily based on earnest desires, language distinction, the desire not to secede and popular support. However, as this chapter seeks to show, these guidelines explain only part of the narrative of state formation, not the entire story. I will elaborate on the shortcomings of *only* considering past precedents and attempt to explain where new considerations, along with past precedents, are key in understanding the possibility of new state boundaries being drawn within the map of India. The overall aim of the chapter is to examine state autonomy demands within a federal arrangement and to then test possible explanations for the political phenomenon of state formation within the federal institutional set up.

### **2.1: The emergence of a federal India and problems with the federal design:**

Federalism is designed to achieve some degree of political cohesion based on a combination of self-rule and shared-rule. Moreover, it is a method of dividing powers so that the general and regional governments are each, within a sphere, co-ordinated and independent. Although federalism may not entail a direct form of political integration since it allows a measure of autonomy for the various states and provinces, it holds these political bodies together through central control. Federalism may be viewed as a political device or a strategy for governance of large and/or complex plural societies. Its central significance lies in the wide scope for innovative and flexible adjustments to cope with changing configurations of ethnic and regional interests and cleavages (Puri 1998: 16). Thus it seemed an ideal political system for India, a nation full of diversity.

It becomes evident, when explaining the functions of federalism, why the system works for India. The physically large size of the nation, its multitude of cultural differences and, the

need to put several pieces into a whole, are all reasons why the federal arrangement suits India. The institutional structure was especially ideal at the time of India's independence when over 550 princely states had to be combined with British provinces. When India was ruled by the British Empire, a large part of the country never came under direct British rule. India was controlled by the British through two different forms of rule that corresponded to the two types of territorial divisions they allowed. First, the system of direct rule was utilized in the British states of India. The leaders of these areas were typically strongmen that were linked to the politics of a larger India. In contrast, princely states were small areas where local decisions were made by the "father figure" like autocratic ruler. The princes promised loyalty and surrendered all rights to conduct foreign or defense policy, while the British promised noninterference in internal affairs (except in cases of gross misadministration and injustice) and protection from external and internal enemies. Thus under indirect rule, the 'Indian India' remained under the 'traditional' governance of its native princes: maharajas, rajas, raos, sheikhs, rawuls, thakurs and desais. Through the use of deputies and Residents, the British were able to facilitate communication between the Crown and Princes, extract resources from the state and influence the internal policies of local rulers when necessary (Fisher 1991: 123). By adopting indirect rule and recognizing princely states in India, the British made the existing rulers of India major players in their colonization project.

Uttar Pradesh experienced some unique merging conditions at independence. Uttarakhand, being largely mountainous, had remained somewhat cut-off historically from the plains. During the Mughal era, "Muslim rule" in the plains affected the hills in a different manner. Many residents of the plains, who felt suffocated under the 'alien' rule for some reason or the other, migrated to the hills which were generally considered to be inaccessible, helping them to preserve their culture and religious rites. Most of those who migrated were of the higher Kshatriya-Rajput classes, thus explaining the high percentage of upper castes in the hills. Most

rulers of the plains, right since the days of the Mughals, who tried to extend their control over the Garhwal and Kumaon hills, could do so only superficially. “The local rulers, who at times accepted the suzerainty of the ‘emperor’ from the plains, enjoyed considerable freedom at the regional level, his acceptance being only formal and confined to contributions to the treasury, etc”(Kumar 1999: 2462). The state was largely under British rule (see Figure 2.1). At the time of independence, one of the major players in the soon to be formed United Provinces was the Prince of Tehri who, eventually, after much debate conceded to joining the United Provinces. However, the accession to a united India did not fully assimilate the hills people into the plains of UP. There remained a sense of distinctiveness between the hills and the plains.



**Figure 2.1 Princely States of Uttar Pradesh. Source: (Pandey 1978: 13)**



Following independence, the status of the princely states was one of the primary problems of integration for India. There were approximately 550 princely states, constituting more than a third of India's area and more than a fourth of its population. As plans for independence were underway, the status of the princely states was highly disputed. Through the

British method of direct and indirect rule, the puzzle of putting India together under one method of rule after independence became a challenge for the nation. With the firm leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel combined with diplomatic skills of V.P. Menon, the princes were persuaded to cede their territories and political authority in 1947– 1948, the time of India's independence.

However the problems of integration of the British and princely Indian states did not dissolve with the willingness of princely states to cede to a united India. Where new territorial lines would be drawn and who would govern them had much to do with politics as it did with control of resources and regional power. Individual polities had to be merged into a larger polity, India. In order to facilitate the integration of these units, a centralized federal system was administered. This allowed there to be central rule in which provincial units could maintain their uniqueness. However, this first phase of states reorganization cut across local ties that later agitated the unity of India. In some instances, states were formed out of areas that consisted of several princely states. Not only was it an administrative nightmare to merge several different political entities into one but also, this then required combining units that were vastly different and therefore forcing these entities and people to assimilate under one state setup.<sup>1</sup>

The consequences of combining resulted in creating states that were administratively convenient for a planned independent India. The convenient boundaries within India, though, did not last long. In 1952-3, the Telugu-speaking section of Madras Province began agitating for a separate Andhra Pradesh. Dominated in a primarily Tamil-speaking state, the minority status

---

<sup>1</sup> In the former province of Rajputana, nineteen princely states and three local chieftains were amalgamated into the state of Rajasthan. The combining of these different political polities created an obstacle in preparing them for a modern version of politics at the time of independence. For more on the difficulties of changing from a primarily indirectly ruled state to a directly ruled political entity see Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph, "Rajputana under British paramountcy: the failure of indirect rule," in Susanne Hoeber and Lloyd I. Rudolph (ed.) Essays on Rajputana: reflections on history, culture, and administration, New Delhi: Concept, 1984.

of the Telugu speaking population kept them grossly discontented and at bay. Because of these centripetal tendencies in the very large Madras Province, the government was forced to reconsider the nation's state boundaries. Nearly ten years after merging provinces at independence, the artificial nature of India's states was beginning to come apart at the seams.

The regional struggles for greater autonomy, control over local resources and more flexibility in preserving local cultures that occurred in India in the 1950's was to reoccur again in the 1990s. These agitations speak to the sparsely defined ideas of state fragmentation in federal theory. At the time of India's independence, the decision to implement a federal structure of government was based on the need to bring several pieces together into a whole while maintaining the distinctiveness of each part. However, federal theory, although able to explain a viable method for keeping together a vast territory, does not address the question of when and how states are to be formed. The best that federal theory offers is an answer to why such a system works. The theory explains the arrangement. However, it fails to address the drawing of political boundaries at the regional level. When questioning state demands for separation, one then has to turn to the literature on secession; however, this literature only addresses those extreme claims for self determination that seek to divorce themselves from the nation (Buchanan 1991). A turn in this direction suggests that there are no ways to accommodate regional demands.

One result of a loosely defined government arrangement, such as federalism, is that there will be agitations from state sectors. A lack of specific laws from the center regarding the day-to-day procedures of development, education and health, leaves room for discontent and resentment. Although the positive side of a sparsely defined institutional design is that it is expected to allow for individuality and diversity at the state levels, the consequence can be greater demands for fragmentation and regionalism. This may include requests upon the center for greater autonomy in the form of statehood demands. However, state agitations do not

necessarily mean the dissolution of federal regimes. Although regional demands are a challenge to the governmental arrangement, they do not threaten its existence. Demands from the state, whether fiscal, communal or linked to identity politics are likely to agitate the center but not necessarily destroy the overall federal design. Regionalism will likely impose increasing stress on the federal system as state movements seek to restore greater balance, but it does not pose a threat to the integrity of the Union. As Robert Hardgrave points out, "the federal relationship involves a permanent tug-of-war" (Hardgrave 1983: 1172). For India this tug-of-war began at independence.

For India, the decision to construct a nation based on a centralized federal format was nearly unavoidable. With over 550 princely states amalgamated into a unified nation, along with profound differences in language, culture and sense of rule, a highly centralized federal set up seemed appropriate in promising autonomy to diverse state units while maintaining a unified nation. Over the decades, regionalism has proved a challenge to the federal arrangement. Secessionist attempts, the continuing Kashmir imbroglio, and various statehood demands agitating the center, have all posed threats to the institutional design. However, federalism is not the answer to why these conditions exist nor does it say anything about why these agitations may occur. Thus, we see that federalism offers a good way to keep several pieces together and explain why these states may make demands upon the federal structure; however, it does not explain when statehood demands are likely to be met. As a result, in order to ascertain the conditions under which statehood demands are likely to succeed, it is not enough to turn to federal theory. Federal theory at best, answers the questions why states may seek greater autonomy.

## 2.2: Precedents of state formation in India:

Impelled by the successful agitation for a Telugu-speaking state in 1952-53, the government set up the States Reorganization Commission (SRC). The task of the SRC was to consider dividing the existing states into units that better reflected indigenous characteristics. The Commission stated that past states, formed on the basis of administrative convenience, economy, military strategy and security “for the purpose of imperial interests or the exigencies of a foreign government”, no longer coincided with the actual needs, wishes or affinities of the people (*Report* 1955: Section 20). With existing demands for boundaries that corresponded with natural characteristics of groups, the government was compelled to commission a group to examine the existing provincial borders of India. It was at this time that the SRC recommended that certain “other” considerations be accounted for when creating states. Thus, the Commission began to focus on local as well as administrative features that would guide the second phase of state formation in India.<sup>2</sup> Factors bearing consideration in their deliberations included (*Report* 1955: Section 93):

1. the preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India,
2. linguistic and cultural homogeneity,
3. financial, economic and administrative consideration; and
4. successful working of the national plan.

Its report was acted upon in 1956 and linguistic states were legitimized.

During the time of the SRC, it became clear that the Constitution says relatively little about state units. The Constitution details the federal design specifying how states relate to the center economically, fiscally and administratively. Roughly speaking, the States are entrusted

---

<sup>2</sup> The States Reorganisation Commission noted that although the merging of British and Princely India was impressive (having combined over 360,000 square miles inhabited by over 59 million people), the project of integration, as witnessed by regional demands, was incomplete. States Reorganisation Commission, Section 105, New Delhi: Government of India, 1955.

with the so-called nation-building activities of health and education, and with a continuing responsibility for agricultural development. State plans have to be submitted to New Delhi for approval and State policies and revenues raised from State sales taxes, agricultural taxes and grants-in-aid from Central Government mainly support programmes. Central Government, meanwhile, takes responsibility for the country's major industrial and infrastructure projects and for defense and foreign relations. When speaking about states and the central government these are the primary references made in the Constitution. However, little is mentioned regarding the creation of new states. In reference to the chance that new states would be created, it merely says that the federal government can make new states (Indian Constitution, Article Three). Unlike most other federations, the states themselves do not have to vote on the creation of the new states. Only the two houses of governments, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha must approve a Bill ratifying the new state formations. It was on this basis that the States Reorganisation Commission was created in early 1950 to examine and consider the division of larger states into smaller units.

After the recommendations of the SRC were made and implemented, the central government developed four general guidelines, formal and informal, that later statehood demands were based upon. These four rules are explicated by Paul Brass (1974: 17-19):<sup>3</sup>

1. Regional demands must fall short of secession.
2. Regional demands based on language and culture will be accommodated, but that regional demands which are explicitly based on religious differences will not be accepted.
3. Regional demands will not be conceded capriciously. That is, a regional movement must not only have a legitimate case, but it must have broad popular support in the region.
4. Demands for the division of multi-lingual states must have some support from different linguistic groups.

We can see how these principles were administered in later demands for statehood during the period of approximately 1960-1987. Secessionist attempts have been dissolved with violence in India. Both the secession attempts for a separate nation of Khalistan in Punjab, and the desire for a separate Assam nation, have both been quelled through the use of the military. Instead, greater autonomy has been given to these two regions in terms of statehood for a separate Punjabi-speaking province and in the case of the northeast, where India's largest tribal population exists, several states were carved out of a larger Assam.

When creating Punjab, the government used the justification of a separate state based on the Punjabi language as the primary reason for its separation although Sikh separation was its main motivation. Although the Sikhs' main purpose was to form a separate state based on their different religious practices, they had to promote the language difference in order to advance their demand. "The Punjabi-speaking Sikhs are a people objectively distinct in religion, though not in language, from other ethnic groups in the north" (Brass 1974: 277). Initially before partition, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims populated the region of Punjab. At this time, Urdu and English were the primary medium of linguistic exchange. However after partition, the majority of the Muslim population left for Pakistan and there were then Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab. At this time, the debate began over Hindi and Punjabi. Thus throughout, there has been a language debate in the region. An historical account of the Punjab was used to base its defense of a distinct language community that needed to be separated from Himachal Pradesh and Haryana. For the formation of Punjab, language, not religion, was the rationale used to grant it statehood.

In addition to a distinct Punjabi-speaking state being formed in 1966, there were other language motivated states formed. In 1953, Andhra Pradesh was formed to separate Telugu-speakers from Tamil speakers in the Madras Province. In 1960 Bombay was divided to

---

<sup>3</sup> These four general guidelines were reiterated in Paul Brass, The Politics of India Since Independence (second edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

accommodate both Gujarati and Marathi speakers in their respective states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. Assam, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra all provide evidence that Brass's second principle, language, has been used to justify state formation.

The third principle, that the movement must have popular support amongst its members, has been the cause of decline for many potential statehood attempts. "The rule developed out of the general reluctance of the central leadership to divide the existing provinces rather than out of any clear principle" (Brass 1994: 173). It creates an obstacle for politicians who are out to divide for their own self-interest rather than represent the will of the people. As pointed out by Paul Brass, the primary reason why the Maithili movement failed in 1954 was due to the failure of the movement leaders to successfully persuade the residents of north-eastern Bihar that they were indeed distinct (Brass 1974: 51). Brass states that the reason the Maithili movement lost momentum is because of the elite leaders who used the Maithili movement to advance their political aspirations. However, these leaders themselves were torn over their loyalty to Mithila and India. Moreover, they were not able to fully socially mobilize the Maithili-speaking people in order to fully advance their plan of a separate state. The leaders themselves had failed to fully inform the people of the ethnic values that would be emphasized if a separate state was formed. Although the Maithila state demand was primarily language motivated, it ultimately did not succeed in its aim because the leaders of the movement never had its own people convinced for the need of a separate state. This, then, did not persuade the leadership in Delhi to divide Bihar into Bihar and Maithila.

Finally, the fourth rule requires that apart from the group seeking separation, other groups see separation as necessary as well. This further prohibits any capricious dividing. That both the Telugu-speaking and Tamil-speaking groups sought reorganization aided in the expediency of the Madras Province's reorganization.



Although many of the reasons for separate statehood are the same as in the past, tribal identity (Jharkhand and Bodolands), language differences (Gorkhaland), and control over one's own resources (Chattisgarh and Uttarakhand), the requirements to be granted separate statehood have changed. In some instances language continues to define the distinctiveness of a region but, not in most cases. As the demand for an independent Telengana indicates, a common language seems no longer enough to keep a state together. Moreover, the past rules that determined whether or not a region was likely to be granted statehood, no longer seem to speak to the likelihood of groups demanding statehood today.

### **2.3: Contemporary conditions for statehood:**

Today's demands for separate statehood share several characteristics with the pre-1990 claims. Language, control of resources and, preservation of culture and identity are among the characteristics shared with both present and past demands for statehood. Like past claims, contemporary conflicts over regional control tell us that local leaders with closer ties to a locality is what the people of India are requesting. Larger states, such as Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh that currently are attempting to accommodate state separation movements, are too big and diverse and end up alienating some, or all, of their constituents. Modern day India is being asked to realign its federal system into smaller units that encourage local-based politics. However, what is different from past claims for separate state is the expected outcome of these contemporary demands. While the Indian government was more reluctant to admit new states into the Indian Union, today's government, as witnessed in early August 2000 when three new states were approved, seems to be much more likely to grant statehood demands. Why are today's petitions for new statehood more likely to succeed?

Several state agitations reflect strikingly similar demands to past statehood conflicts. The recently created Jharkhand state carved out of several districts in southern Bihar, contiguous

districts of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh highlights the continuing vitality of ethnic markers in regionalist politics—to the extent that the Jharkhand is a ‘tribal’ dominated State.<sup>4</sup> However in many more cases, center-state conflicts and inter-state tensions are now primarily focused on economic and political not cultural issues. Regions as diverse as the city of Bombay dominated by the local Shiv Sena party and, continuing conflicts in Assam, base their claims on basic ‘sons of the soil’ arguments, seeking to protect the employment prospects of ‘local people’ (or ethnic groups) against the claims of a swelling tide of migrant laborers.<sup>5</sup> In the Punjab, continued control by the Central Government on policies concerning food procurement continue to prompt doubts about the center’s sincerity about the economic interests of farmers in India’s bread-bowl (Corbridge 1995: 117). Regional movements demanding greater rights to self-determination have accused both state and national governments of discriminatory allocation of resources and undue political interference at the state level. And although each of these conflicts varies in its manifestation of religion, language and identity, or their belief that they are victims of state politics, there is a common sense of frustration and aggression.

Because so many of today’s demands for statehood are aimed at the government, the precedents that guided state formation seem to no longer fit into the jigsaw puzzle. Secessionist demands persist, though they are not as vibrant. Linguistic demands play a part in today’s demands, however they are not the driving force. The persisting Telengana movement that has been in existence for decades yet proves this and there seems to be little likelihood that it will

---

<sup>4</sup> In an interesting article by Stuart Corbridge, the idea of a ‘tribal’ policy distinguishing Jharkhand from the surrounding regions is explored. The article explores ideas of tribal economy and society that are implied in distinguishing Jharkhand as a separate region. See Stuart Corbridge, “The ideology of tribal economy and society: politics in the Jharkhand, 1950-1980,” *Modern Asian Studies*, (22)1, 1988: 1-42.

<sup>5</sup> See Myron Weiner and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, India’s preferential policies: migrants, the middle classes and ethnic equality, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

result into anything.<sup>6</sup> Popular support has always been in favor of smaller states, so to cite this as a primary reason does not work. If popular support was the main consideration in advancing statehood, then the state of Uttarakhand would have been created several years ago. And finally, Brass's last principle of state formation, that states must be formed on the basis of some rationale and not capriciously is to be questioned. These principles are useful in explaining why in the past India either opted for or against new states. However, these principles do not explain the new states that are to be formed.

The question then arises, what conditions create situations of state formation? And when are state movements most likely to succeed? With several statehood demands agitating India, the time presents itself to reconsider past rules of granting statehood. The theoretical literature on federalism allows us to examine these movements in context of the center political structure. However, it does not go far enough to answer questions as to when at the regional level state formation is likely to occur. Many of the contemporary movements are not in defiance to the Centre political structure rather, they seek to create smaller, more intimate political communities where they can develop their own social and economic structure that they feel is being neglected by the state in which they are currently located. Their agitations are mostly directed at state politics and indirectly aimed at the Center. They see the center as the only option to alter their situation and grant them their demands of statehood. Thus, although their anger is towards the state governments, they resort to targeting center politics with the likelihood that this is their avenue for change. As a result, the happenings at the center level of government highly affect

---

<sup>6</sup> The Telengana movement for separate statehood is perhaps the oldest manifestation of regionalism in India. It began prior to independence when efforts were made by the nizam of Hyderabad (princely ruler) to maintain Hyderabad as an independent state distinct from India. This though did not happen and Hyderabad was merged with the larger Madras province as part of India. Later the Telugu-speaking portion of the Madras province was separated to create the Telugu speaking state of Andhra Pradesh. This though did not pacify the separatist demands of Telangana. The desire to separate from Andhra Pradesh has persisted basing their claims of linguistic and cultural differences along with unequal development.

how local regions are going to pursue their demands. This section emphasizes that the system of coalition governments has effects that influence new state movements.

The crisis of state constituency movements is especially of importance in India where the fall of the Congress party, once dominant and reigning, has fallen leaving a large political leadership gap at both the Centre and local levels. Since the decline of the Congress, India has experienced a growth of local political parties that are dominating the political scene. For any national party to win the Centre seat, they must woo, align and have the support of regional-based political parties. Thus, when the United Front, the BJP and the Congress all lost their leadership position in New Delhi, it was due to the pulling out of state political parties that no longer wanted to support the party in power. Indian politics is defined by alliances and party building rather by center, right or left parties. Regional parties have emerged as truer representatives of the aspirations of a wider group of people—"who is to argue that the TDP is not an alternative to the Congress or BJP for the people of Andhra Pradesh, or the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam?" (*India Today*: 30 April, 1997). Thus, the need to understand the states in separation from the centre is pivotal. It no longer is the case of the centre being above and isolated from the regional levels, now the state levels directly affect political outcomes at the center.<sup>7</sup>

The most recent period of India's democracy has shown an increase in primordial group activity based on caste, religion and identity. These groups struggle to form political majorities that can advance their interests through access to Centre rule. The potentialities of social identities inspired party formation that hoped to mobilize on these constructs. The lexicon of India's current political parties is evidence to this: parties mobilized around religious nationalism (the BJP), caste and tribe (the Lok Dal), caste alone (the Bahujan Samaj Party), tribe

---

<sup>7</sup> Yogendra Yadav calls the change in electoral outcomes as well as its determinants since 1989 the "third electoral system." See Yogendra Yadav, "Electoral Politics in the time of change," *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 21-28, 1999.

(the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha), religious separatism (the Akali Dal), cultural identity (the Tamil Dravidian parties) and nativism (the Shiv Sena). Overall, the number of political parties has multiplied since 1989 when elections centered on a single party ticket (Sanghavi and Thakkar 2000: 514). Recent elections show that coalition governments win elections, not single party tickets. In 1998 an 18-party coalition formed the winning national ticket and the 1999 BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) consists of twenty-four parties.

The nature of these groups also provides evidence that conflicts of modern politics in India are unique in two ways. First they concern the central government, access to it, and to whom it ultimately belongs. Second, politically motivated ethnic conflicts in India are modern problems, not hatred carried over from ancient times. Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph in a vivid exposition of the disaster in Ayodhya in 1993 tell us that ethnic conflicts in India are modern realities, not ancient problems from the past being brought forward (Rudolph and Rudolph 1993: 28). Government is the vehicle being used to make the changes that have emerged from problems carried over from modernization.

The increase in coalition politics has meant that the gains and limitations of government are to be felt at the regional level and not the national level. In order to get to New Delhi, parties must first woo, coax and garner support of regional parties that might not have a national agenda. In order to do this, parties are more willing to make statehood promises than before. One example is the case of Uttarakhand where the Congress party for the longest time was adamantly against new state formation. As a result, the Congress lost its four Lok Sabha seat in 1991 to the BJP who vocalized and promised new statehood within 90 days. The BJP, acting as a party sensitive to local sentiments was able to secure victory in UP. By appealing to the local hill constituency, the BJP party expanded their state presence and eventually their national predominance. Thus, one reason for new statehood is because not only are parties needing to

appeal to these districts for votes but, they also want to craft constituencies where they can, in the future, count on the region for electoral support.

One result of coalition governments is that political leaders then are more apt to attend to local constituency demands in order to gain political support. Coalition politics, in which several political parties must combine in order to form a majority government, lends way to this accommodative scheme. State politicians have had an increasing role in forming the regional as well as national agenda of the country. During the early years of the Congress dominance, Nehru, Rajeev and Indira Gandhi were all seen as leaders that had more of a national presence than one where their local constituencies carried them to the national platform. They were leaders whose names were synonymous with India. Today, though, with the decline in importance of national issues, the need for a leader to identify her/himself with the image of India has dissipated. No longer do charisma and image have importance, but instead how a leader can relate to local constituencies is primary.

However, coalition governments and leadership style cannot be successfully meet regional autonomy demands unless the institutionalization process is itself accommodative. Leadership along with institutional accommodation increases the likelihood of regional autonomy demands being met. To the extent that leaders are willing to devolve power, there must be a political structure in place that accommodates regional demands. Following Atul Kohli's (1998) definition of institutionalization, as central state authority, a leader can only successfully appeal to separation movements if there is room for accommodation within the central authority.<sup>8</sup> "The degree of institutionalization of the central state then influences the

---

<sup>8</sup> Atul Kohli lists both leadership and institutionalization as factors determining the outcome of self-determination, or secessionist demands. However, I think these two factors also contribute to the patterns of state separation demands that if not contained, will in mostly likelihood result in the larger problem of secession. See Atul Kohli, "Can democracies accommodate ethnic nationalism? The rise and decline of self-determination movements in India," in Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli (ed.) *Community Conflicts and the State*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

degree to which state authorities can 'impose' their preferred vision of the political order on the societies they govern " (Kohli 1998: 12).

#### **2.4: A framework for analyzing new state creation:**

In sum, due to coalition politics, there has been a change in political context that provides a more realistic understanding for the creation of new states in India today. Whether or not statehood demands are based on cultural criteria (language, religion, caste or identity), or whether regional groups are well organized, have support from their members and are intensely pursuing their political ends, are by no means irrelevant to the fate of these movements; some of these issues are by their very nature specific to given situations and will emerge in the empirical discussions of specific cases. Yet at a general level, it is my hypothesis that the nature of the broader political context is quite important for understanding the success or failure of new statehood movements.

A study attempting to predict possible state boundary changes in India, attempting to explain the creation of new states within the Indian federation, and how the overall federal structure accommodates these types of demands would have to take in to account the larger political scene when providing an account of these changes. Such a study poses the following questions: What is the political context that determines the patterns of new statehood demands? How can we predict the likelihood or failure of these demands? And, why are today's petitions for statehood more likely to succeed? It is from this approach and with these questions in mind that I begin my study of Uttarakhand and its journey to statehood.

## Chapter Three

### Politics of separate statehood--the case of Uttarakhand

The state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) is located in north-central India. It is among the largest states of the Indian Union, with an area of 2,94,411 sq km, the size of Arizona, which gives it the fourth position among all the states in order of size. It borders five other states, Himanchal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar and Rajasthan, the capital city, Delhi, and two countries, Nepal and Tibet (China). The borders of UP are hardly in any respect natural. "On all sides, UP merges into the physical and cultural environment of its neighboring states and countries" (Brass 1968: 64). With a population of nearly 140 million, accounting for sixteen percent of the nation's population, and a density of 471 persons per square mile, UP is India's most populated state.<sup>1</sup> The state has always been described as one of India's most economically backward states, with wide disparities among its regions. Although UP ranks third in industrialization, it is generally one of the poorer states of the country (Pai 2000: 75). The economic boom that occurred after modernization did not hit UP until the 1990s. A large percentage of the state's population (72 percent) lives in rural regions spread throughout the nearly 133,000 villages in the state.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the size and general economic hardship statistics of the state, its population composition is equally as overwhelming. General well-being indicators reveal a poverty-stricken population. The state literacy rate is only 41 percent which makes it the third lowest among the states and below the national average of 52.2 percent.<sup>3</sup> The female literacy rate (with a ratio of 882 per one thousand males) of 25 percent, is also well below the national average of 39.3

---

<sup>1</sup> Census of India, 1991. Series 25, Uttar Pradesh. Government of India, Director of Census Operations.

<sup>2</sup> This number only consists of the inhabited village of UP. The Census records that there are another 12,000 uninhabited villages in the state. Census of India, 1991. <<http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable1.html>>

<sup>3</sup> Bihar and Rajasthan with literacy rates of 38.5 and 38.6 percent respectively, have the lowest literacy rates among the states (Government of India, 1991). <<http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable14.html>>



percent (Government of India, 1991). Included in UP's population is a high percentage of Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Their nearly twenty-seven percent proportion has provided the minority group a central position in state politics where caste-based mobilization and conflict are now part of the nucleus of UP politics (Pai 2000: 75).

While India is host to a plethora of linguistic and cultural groups, this is hardly the case in UP. Unlike other states that have tremendous difficulty managing linguistic diversity, Uttar Pradesh has a predominant population of Hindi speakers. The large proportion of Hindi speakers in UP (ninety percent) makes this the heartland of the Hindi belt.<sup>4</sup> Religion is a different story. Hindus are the largest religious groups while Muslims and Sikhs follow (82%, 17% and .5% respectively). Although Muslims are only the second largest religious group in UP, the state accommodates the highest percentage of Muslims in India, making Hindu-Muslim tensions very real for the region.<sup>5</sup> Prior to Partition with Pakistan at the time of India's independence, UP was the center of Muslim separatism. After the two countries were divided, UP was left with a troubled legacy and a large Muslim minority which remained in the state. The significant number of Muslims in the state has led to numerous communal tensions and has resulted in UP being the battle ground for several of the nation's most significant political debates. The national language debate over Hindi and Urdu was hotly contested in UP centering primarily along Hindu-Muslim lines. More recently, it is where the anti-Shah Bano campaigns occurred.<sup>6</sup>

As a physically large, impoverished, crowded state with cultural and religious distinctions, and host to a sensitive hierarchical social order, UP is a replica of larger India. "A microcosm of Indian society, UP has been and still is the stage for the construction of new social

---

<sup>4</sup> Other states constituting the Hindi belt include Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

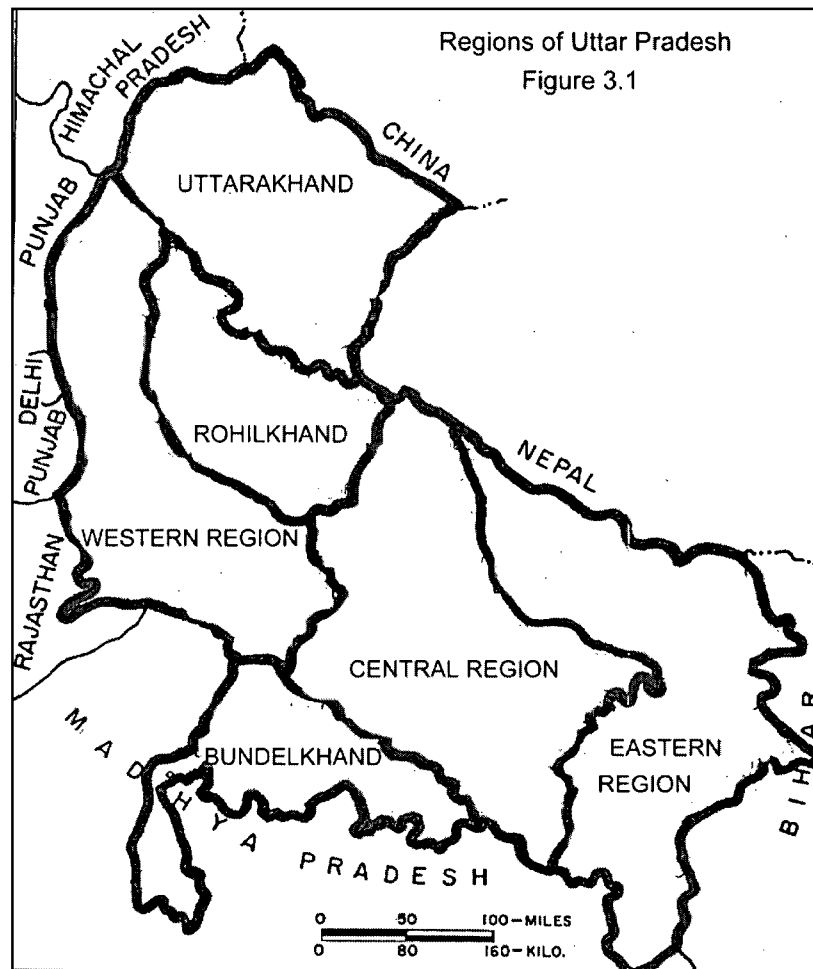
<sup>5</sup> Nationally, Muslims constitute twelve percent of India's population.

<sup>6</sup> In 1985 the Indian Supreme Court judged in favor of the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill. This Bill grants maintenance for divorced Muslim women. Muslim men saw this as an assault on Muslim personal law and movement towards a common civil law. It had two effects. First, to grant Muslim women rights after a divorce and second, it put into question India's secular state which prior to the Shah Bano decision allowed Muslim women to have separate laws.

and political designs in Indian democracy” (Hasan 1998: 18). Unlike other states that have definitive regional identities, Uttar Pradesh never bothered to define itself as distinct from its neighboring states or southern provinces. UP is India and India is UP.

In addition to its demographic uniqueness, UP has also always occupied an influential political position among the states of the Indian Union. During the national and early post-independence days, UP became the political centre of the nationalist movement and Allahabad the headquarters of the All-India Congress Committee (AICC). This secured Congress’s position in the pivotal state early on. In addition to the Hindi-Urdu language question and the anti-Shah Bano campaigns, other significant political debates originated in UP. Included in these political movements are: the agitation for the ban on cow slaughter, the Hindutva campaign, and the rise of OBCs to political power, which perhaps more than anything has changed politics in north India today.<sup>7</sup> With 85 Lok Sabha seats out of 545, the state is highly contested. The past seven out of nine Prime Ministers have come from UP including the current Prime Minister of India and, all except for the 1991 and 1996 national elections, only that party or alliance that won in UP also ruled India (Hasan 1998: 05). Thus, the tempo of politics in India is largely determined by the social and political happenings in Uttar Pradesh.

Due to the largeness of the state, UP is usually referred to in terms of six geographical zones (see Figure 3.1): western UP, eastern UP, central UP, Rohilkhand, Bundelkhand and Uttarakhand. Up to the 1980s, national parties have primarily influenced politics in UP. Opposition parties, mostly limited to regional bases, until the 1990s, had little place in the politics of UP. Their main following was mostly middle and backward castes who at that time were largely unorganized. Thus for nearly four decades, UP was one of the strongholds of the Congress party. Supported by upper castes, lower castes and Muslims, the party had a strong presence in UP.



*Uttarakhand*, meaning “northern tract” or “higher tract,” is a hill region in northern Uttar Pradesh. It borders Tibet (China), Nepal, the state of Himachal Pradesh, and the plains districts of UP. At the base of the Himalayan Mountains, the region is largely mountainous with peaks reaching as high as 8,000 meters. These peaks are still largely forested and include gurgling streams, terraced fields, floral and fauna of great diversity, and glaciers that are the source of water for the sacred Yumuna and Ganges rivers (Negi 1995: 1-2). The mountains of Uttarakhand are also home to several of Hinduism’s most sacred shrines. During the summer

<sup>7</sup> For more on the significance of OBCs in altering politics in north India see, Christophe Jaffrelot, “The rise of Other Backward Classes in the Hindi belt,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, (59)1, February 2000: 86-108.

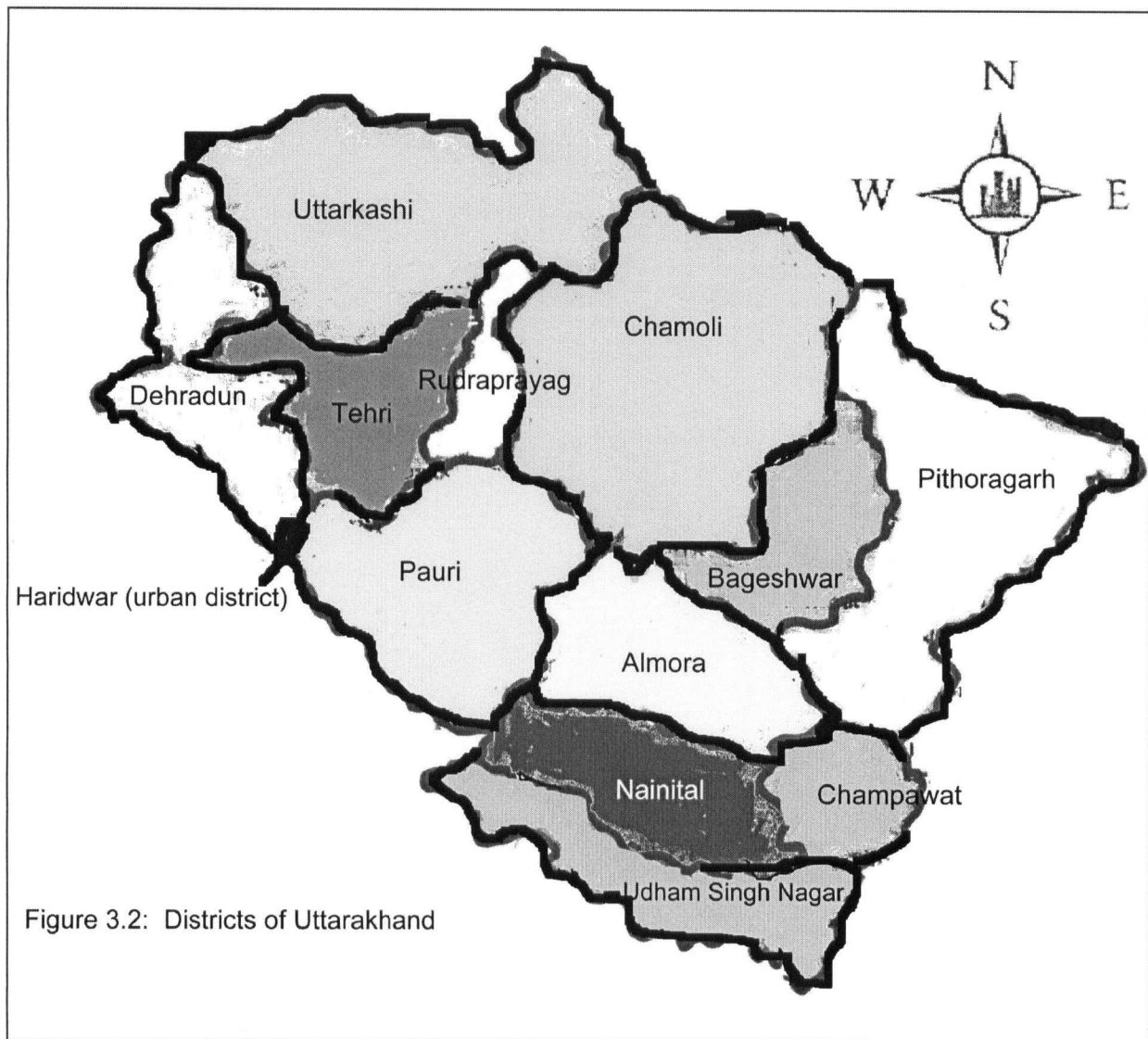
months, thousands of pilgrims flock to the Uttarakhand mountains to pay their respect in the “Abode of the Gods.” It has been a centre of pilgrimage since ancient times. Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Jamnotri are some of the most important places for pilgrims in this region of Himalaya. Shiva, his wife Parvati and her various manifestations, and Vishnu are all said to reside in these temples.<sup>8</sup>

The Uttarakhand region consists of two main linguistic and culturally distinct areas, Kumaon and Garhwal. Kumaon comprises the six districts of Pithoragarh, Champawat, Bageshwar, Almora, Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar. Garhwal includes the seven districts of Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Tehri, Pauri, Hardwar, Rudraprayag and Dehradun. These two areas with their thirteen districts compose Uttarakhand (see Figure 3.2).<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> One of the myths of Hinduism is that in Badrinath, one of the four most sacred spots of pilgrimage in India for Hindus, it was believed that Lord Vishu was to have done his penance in this village in the open. The goddess Mahalakshmi is to have witnessed him and took the form of *Badri* (a type of tree) to provide him with shelter from the onslaught of various weather patterns. The shrine is at the elevation of over 10,000 feet above sea level. To get to the temple, one must endure a treacherous climb consisting of lofty hill terrain, curves and cliffs.

<sup>9</sup> Generally speaking, the thirteen districts of Uttarakhand are called the “hill” region and the remainder of the UP is often times referred to as the “plains.”



The total population of the region is 6 million, or four percent of the total UP population. The total of the thirteen districts make up an area of 51,125 square kilometers making the population density 94 persons per square kilometer, relatively much less than the overall UP population density (Government of India 1991: Series 25, Paper 1).

One of the unique aspects of Uttarakhand is its geography. Each district of the region is at least fifty percent under forests (Gupta 1995: 29). The district of Uttarakashi alone is nearly ninety percent forested. The remainder of UP contains less than three percent forest (see Figure 3.3). The withdrawal of Uttarakhand would make UP the least green of the states (*Times of India-B*: 3 August, 2000). The large forested terrains of the region contain the rich

minerals of zinc, copper and limestone (Gupta 1995: 28). In addition, the wealth of the forest has been used to produce the commercial goods of paper, timber and silk (Gupta 1995: 29). The main occupation for Uttarakhandis is agriculture and nearly 90 percent of the population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood (Mehta 1993: 61). However, past as well as recent commercial interests have endangered the forests of Uttarakhand and ultimately the livelihood of the people. Poorly planned commercial development schemes have stressed the region's lands. One example is the problem of water scarcity. Because life in the Himalayan slopes is directly dependent on the ability of the soil and rock mantle to retain moisture through the year, when either one of these natural resources becomes imbalanced, the water supply is threatened.<sup>10</sup> Deforestation affects the ability of soil to retain water thus, threatening the overall water supply of the dwellers in this region. In response to the diminishing forests, the "Chipko" (meaning "embrace") movement formed in the 1970s. The social movement, still in existence today, was based on the need to preserve Uttarakhand's natural forests from commercial industrialization.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> For more on the water scarcity issues in Uttarakhand see Ashish Bose, "Reaching the unreached in Uttarakhand: demography, drinking water and technology," *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 17-23 2000.

<sup>11</sup> The Chipko movement has been a largely successful social movement organized by primarily village level women who have used the non-violent means of "satyagraha" to win bans on logging abuses in the region. Many of the activists have interposed their bodies between trees and industrial axes to become the first "tree huggers" of India.

**Figure 3.3 Forested versus unforested areas of Uttar Pradesh**

**Source: "Government of India: Ministry of Environment and Forests"**



The economic and ethnographic details of the region differ dramatically from the plains as well. In an already poverty-stricken state, the Uttarakhand region radically lags behind the plains in terms of household income. On the average, the per capita income in Uttarakhand is \$80 per year which compares relatively low to UP where the per capita income is \$120 per year

and to India where the average is \$330 per year.<sup>12</sup> Whereas UP overall hosts nearly 27 percent OBCs, the hills are a predominantly high caste region where Rajputs consist of 60-75 percent and Brahmins are nearly 20 percent. OBCs in the hills constitute less than two percent (Gupta 1995: 19-22). The lack of a backward class constituency makes the region less susceptible to caste politics that predominate throughout the remainder of UP and most of northern India. "It is this peculiar population composition of the region that sets it apart from the UP plains where 'backwardisation of politics' has changed the political climate of the state almost entirely" (Kumar 1999: 2461-2). Although Hindi is fast supplanting the native languages of Uttarakhand in the urban areas, the indigenous languages of Pahari, in its many dialects, persists as well as some of the Tibeto-Himalayan languages.<sup>13</sup> Most of the indigenous people are Hindus and Buddhists, while Sikh migrants from West Punjab have settled in the lowlands since 1947. A few Muslim groups are also native to the area, although most have come recently.

Political participation has always been high in Uttarakhand. Several social movements have received national attention and many have been successful in their aims. Among these movements are: the environmentalist Chipko movement working to prevent Uttarakhand's deforestation; the anti-liquor campaigns attempting to stop the influence of liquor mafias in the region, to curtail the increasing addiction of young males to alcohol and, to protect women from the abuses of their spouses that had been taken in by alcoholism (*The Hindustan Times*: 17 April, 1997); and, the anti-Tehri dam struggle to contain an "environmental disaster" and prevent the displacement of thousands of hill people of the Tehri district (*Times of India*: 25 March, 1998). Aside from being socially active, the region has contributed four Chief Ministers to the state,

<sup>12</sup> Figures are in US dollars. <<http://www.geocities.com/~karnavati/info2.html>>.

<sup>13</sup> Pahari is a dialect of Hindi. It is an Indo-Aryan language and linguistics refer to the Pahari language significant in Uttarakhand as being of the 'Central Pahari' type (as opposed to Western Pahari and Eastern Pahari, separated by rivers on each side). The shared languages in the north belonging to the Tibeto-Himalayan family and in the south mix with the differences in dialect within Central Pahari by various dialects of Hindi. Because Pahari is not an official language of India, in the 1991 Census, the majority of the residents of the hills marked Hindi as the language spoken at home (Census of India, 1991, Series 25, Paper 1). For more on the variety of the Pahari dialect, its history and distinctions see D.D. Sharma, *Linguistic History of Uttarakhanda*, Hoshiarpur, India: Dev Datta Shastri, 1983.



including UP's first chief minister after independence, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. Uttarakhand has a total of four Lok Sabha seats, out of 85, and twenty-two state assembly seats out of 424. Although they rank low in political power in the national decision making body, their major presence in the state assembly and the fact that they are a part of UP which is crucial to winning the national elections, has made their electoral votes highly competitive. Having been a dominant Congress district up until 1991, the party was surprised to see their hold on the hills diminish. (See Table 1). This was perhaps best marked in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections when the BJP made a clean sweep of all four seats with an overwhelming 40.3 percent vote share. This was the highest percent of votes garnered by the BJP throughout the state in this election cycle (Kumar 1999: 2461). The battles of the Congress to hold onto national power against the steep rise of the BJP, and the increasing significance of state and local politics over national parties is well displayed in the politics of separate statehood and the formation of the Uttarakhand state.

The overall lagging development statistics, neglect by the State government to improve the educational, health and professional opportunities for the inhabitants of the region, and a different hill identity from the plains of UP have sparked agitations for a separate state. As a reporter noted in *India Today*, "the *Phadais* (hill people or mountain dwellers) have brewed a strong feeling of being discriminated against" (*India Today*: 15 October, 1996). In 1992, worried that the 27 percent reservation quotas would be imposed, they found this an opportunity for the UP plains persons to come up to the hills to fill those seats due to the negligible percentage of OBCs in the hills. In 1996 it was reported that nearly 5,000 posts for teachers and 60 posts for doctors were vacant because the hills people were themselves not as educated to fill these posts and also because it has a bad reputation as being an area where one goes only because of no other recourse (*India Today*: 15 October, 1996). As a result, there was a mass exodus of males to the plains to take up petty jobs as waiters and chowkidars or to join the army in order to

avoid unemployment (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 23 June, 1994). The declining economic situation of the hills had induced the hill people to seek recourse through separation from UP and to establish their own home under separate rule in the form of a distinct Uttarakhand state.

Unlike other statehood movements in India, the Uttarakhand movement is rather noncontentious. The Uttar Pradesh assembly in both 1991 under the BJP-led government and in 1994 when the SP was governing the state, passed resolutions recommending to the Centre a separate Uttarakhand state. Prior to 1991, the Congress party dominated the political scene nationally, in UP, as well as in the Uttarakhand districts. Unwilling to divide states, they instead recommended decentralization of central government power in an attempt to quell the separatist tendencies (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 6 March, 1993). Uttarakhand leaders, adamant about their distinct identity, eventually withdrew their electoral support to the Congress and in subsequent elections following the 1989 state elections, began to support the BJP. By appealing to local interests, the BJP was able to win loyalty in former Congress dominated districts, thus slowly expanding their base. After several promises made by the BJP leadership to hasten the creation of Uttarakhand, it was not until August 1, 2000, that the Lok Sabha approved the bill for a new state in the Indian Union making Uttarakhand India's 27<sup>th</sup> state (*Times of India*: 1 August, 2000; *Times of India*: 2 August, 2000). With the BJP on center stage and its tenuous position with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the bill to create Uttarakhand was ratified.

Center politics, driven by the increasing participation of states, is well displayed in Uttarakhand's journey to statehood. The following two sections seek to document the creation of Uttarakhand and elaborate on the conditions fostering its state status. The first section specifically looks at the presence of the Congress party in national as well as UP state politics, and aims to elaborate on the center-oriented politics the party pursued. The final section details how the change from Center to regional and local politics dramatically altered the political scene in UP and the nation thus, allowing for a more competitive electoral scene and ultimately forcing

political parties to consider regional demands in order to secure their position of central leadership.

TABLE 1: 1991 – 1999 Lok Sabha (LS) Seats—Uttarakhand

Year	BJP LS seats	Vote %	Congress LS seats	Vote %
1991	4	40.3	0	33.5
1996	2	30.2	2	32.5
1998	4	48.2	0	NA
1999	3	NA	1	NA

Source: Data compiled from Pradeep Kumar, "Shifting political loyalties in Uttarakhand," *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 21-28, 1999, and India Map Elections 1999, <http://www.indiamap.com/elections/constituencies/uttarpr.htm>.

### 3.1: Early agitations for statehood:

P.C. Joshi, a member of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in 1952, voiced the first demand for a separate Uttarakhand state. The state movement at that time had little primacy because the countries at the international borders of Uttarakhand were at war. From 1959 to 1962 much of the agitation for separate statehood was subdued due to tensions in Tibet (China) and the India-China war. As a result of the significance of the location of this area during the battle period, the region experienced a large boom in development. Several roads were paved for military reasons and mining and timber interests were rushed into the hills. Towards the end of

the 1960s the UP government legalized the seizing of land in the hills. Industrialization took off, then, in parts of the forests of Uttarakhand in the form of large logging companies and the development of the area for tourism. Partly in response to the expanding logging industry, in the 1970s, the village women of the hills organized the “Chipko” movement. Road construction that had commenced in the mountains for the purpose of logging and mining had led to deforestation which further led to other environmental hazards of erosion, landslides and loss of soil, forest and water sources. This inevitably caused serious economic and social dislocation of the dwellers in the Himalayan region (Routledge 1993: 77). Being a primarily agricultural based society, the new industrial interests in the mountains led to vast portions of land no longer accessible and usable by locals. Not only did this drive many inhabitants out of labour, but it also forced males of the hills to migrate down to the plains in order to find jobs so that they could support their families in the hills.

In the 1950s when the nation was redrawing its internal borders as recommended by the SRC, UP was not out of consideration for realignment. Recommendations were made that certain areas of UP were both geographically and physically significantly different, and that parts of UP had been neglected by the state government (*Report* 1955: Section 597). Discussion took place amongst the members of the Commission that UP was a diverse land in which parts of the state were indeed dissimilar. The hills, the eastern portion as well as the western districts were included in these conversations.<sup>14</sup> However, the Commission concluded that although the state was large and diverse, those features had not affected the overall administration of the region. Thus, it was decided to keep UP intact. K.M. Pannikar, a member of the Commission, however, included a note stating his disagreement with the resolution of the Commission not to divide the state. Pannikar believed that the failure of the Commission to divide a state as large and

---

<sup>14</sup> Although a separate hill district in UP was not mentioned, this does not disqualify the argument that UP is too large to be administered by a single capital. Had the state been divided into two parts, then perhaps the problems of administration and lack of development it is currently being strained by would not have existed.

populous as UP went against the federal idea of evenly balanced states. Not only are large disparities likely to create suspicion and resentment, he argued, but they can also be expected to undermine the federal structure and be a threat to the unity of the country (*Report* 1955: 244). However, Pannikar's dissension had no impact on the Commission's decisions. The state was left in its original form. The political plans of UP leaders justified the existence of a large and powerful state as a guarantee of India's unity (Hasan 1998: 53). The Congress, India's national party, had begun its political career in this state, and they believed that by keeping it in its form, they would guarantee their suzerainty over all of India. Thus, the borders of the state were not altered.

It was not until the 1980s that the movement for a separate Uttarakhand got off the ground. With the formation of the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD) in 1979, the movement took a formal manifestation and persistent demands for separate statehood were to follow. The UKD was formed with the specific goal to fight for separation. Unlike other states that have struggled for statehood, the UKD remains the only regional party in Uttarakhand. However, even the existence of the UKD, a locally based political party with the goal of separate statehood as its purpose, made very little impact on the political goals of the region. The UKD did submit a memorandum to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1981, organized the first political demonstrations for a separate state in 1988 as well a series of "bandhs" in support of separate statehood. However, these efforts had little impact in furthering the goal of the movement. Although the existence of the regional party had solidified the intent of the Uttarakhandi people, it was national and state politics that determined the fate of the separation movement.

The agitations of the 1980s in the Uttarakhand region were less successful than those in the 1990s mostly due to the political climate of the nation. During the early years of the Uttarakhand separation movement, the nation was under the leadership of the Congress party. Uttar Pradesh, as the state where the nationalist party launched its movement for independence,

has always been home to the Congress party. In order to maintain their ground in this large state that wielded much political power, the Congress party continually resisted requests to divide the state physically. This then was their scheme in promoting the illusion that UP is India and resisting any regional identification within the state.

India's seventh general elections took place in 1980 and resulted in the return to power of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Having suffered a defeat in the previous elections due to her unpopular imposition of the 'Emergency,' Indira Gandhi returned to the Prime Minister position less popular and less confident of her support. She found herself in the awkward situation of having to canvass different electoral contingencies. Unlike the days when she led following her father Nehru's footsteps, Indira now had to garner popular support. In order to make up for the split of the Congress party and the loss of support from the divide, she began courting India's plural population, especially Hindu nationalists, and began railing against religious minorities especially Sikhs. After her death in 1984, her son Rajiv Gandhi found himself in a similar position. Whereas Indira had been busy appeasing the Hindu votes, her son reached out to Muslims while at the same time trying to keep India's large Hindu population content. Yet although the two courted and teased minority factions, they were never eager to give in to minority demands. Between 1980 and 1989, the Indian army was deployed in two combats to quell secessionist demands, first in Punjab (1984) and then in Assam (1990 and 1991). In the 1984 elections Rajiv Gandhi adopted the slogan 'Not Kashmir Desham, not Assam Desham, not Telugu Desham, but Bharat Desham,'<sup>15</sup> which elicited a fervent response and reached a climax creating a tidal wave of support for the Congress. This was a turning point in politics as the Congress showed the effectiveness of linking religion and nationalism. In an effort to appeal to both Hindus and Muslims, Rajiv Gandhi inadvertently brought religion into the political arena and more importantly, showed how identity politics was well and alive in India. Both of their

efforts to communalize Indian politics ultimately backfired on them when in 1984 Indira was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards, and Rajiv by Sri Lankan Tamil secessionists. Ethnic politics were at their worst in India.

The pitting of ethnic groups against each other during the Gandhi era of leadership enhanced already existing cleavages. However, although inadvertently, they raised political awareness among previously politically unmotivated groups. By recognizing minority groups, the state had reached out to former isolated groups, populist politics was developed and, politics in the form of electoral participation became indelible. New groups had entered politics as voters and as politicians: rich farmers, the poor, and the lower castes. The social and cultural backgrounds of India's political actors had changed. These new political actors sought access to the resources of the central government as an avenue for change. Not only were political resources seen as the avenue for social change but also, it was the target for every frustration, resentment and disappointment. The new political climate gave greater access to the government and also made it the central target. What was so dramatically different was that so long as most states were under the Congress party umbrella, conflict between states and Center, among states, and within states could be accommodated within the framework of the party. This resulted in the dramatic growth in political parties representing local and regional interests instead of focusing purely on national interests. "Today, regionalism increasingly manifests itself through opposition to Congress in regional parties like the AIADMK and DMK in Tamil Nadu, and in demands by opposition parties across the ideological spectrum for greater autonomy for states" (Hardgrave 1983: 1171-2).

For all states, and Uttar Pradesh in particular, the decade of the 1980s proved to be critical to the future of politics. In Uttar Pradesh, the Congress party was faced with two challenges (Hasan 1998: 37). First, Charan Singh, who left the Congress party in 1976, and his

---

<sup>15</sup> "Not the nation Kashmir, not the nation Assam, but the nation of India."

rural following, threatened the predominantly high-class support base of the Congress party. The Congress party had still by the 1980s failed to appeal to lower castes thus making them susceptible to organized middle and lower caste based opposition parties. Second, the rising urban support of the BJP and its politics of Hindu nationalism altered the political scene. Widespread economic and social discontent helped push the Saffron Wave to its heights in the early 1990s. Although minorities and religious fundamentalism were beginning to take part in the political process, the Congress party itself was largely to blame for its own demise. The party continued to isolate itself from local issues and concerns thereby alienating itself from the mobilizing forces and constituencies that were emerging. "They displayed a clumsy handling of social diversity and plurality, thus increasing the political salience of caste and communal strategies" (Hasan 1998: 37). And at the same time that the gap of political participation was widening, so too was social inequality and underdevelopment.<sup>16</sup> These factors fed into the hands of minority groups who in the past sought to utilize the Center's political machinery to mobilize their own interests. At times they have viewed the Center as against their political interests and have therefore come to use the electoral structure as a primary resource to get the political, economic and social outcomes that they want.

The political events of the 1980s set the stage for an opening of political change. With past disappointments from the national party and the slow rise in grassroots political participation, there was a sense of change brewing. Previously, the Congress party dominated the political scene in Uttar Pradesh and in India as well. However, with the assassinations of both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, along with the lackluster performances of Narasimha Rao, there was a strong sense of political change coming in Uttar Pradesh and in India. For Uttar Pradesh, where politics was central, the growing discontent was to be successfully exploited by

---

<sup>16</sup> For more on how economic and social underdevelopment played a role in the rise of communal tensions in Uttar Pradesh, see Susanne Hoeber and Lloyd I. Rudolph "Modern hate: how ancient animosities get invented." *New Republic*. March 22, 1993. 24-29.



caste and communal parties. Uttarakhand, tired of trying to be appeased and having their statehood issues always swept under the table for the larger national agenda, began to reorganize. With states and localities pushing political parties to focus on regional issues over national issues, the 1990s turned out to be dramatically different from the first four decades of independence when the concentration was India's national issues. India, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand began to experience politics differently.

### **3.2: The recent years:**

Since the 1990s, the central government has seemed far more willing than previously to grant demands for regional political entities within states, acceding to more demands and doing so after less agitation. This change may be part of a wider willingness to decentralize which has manifested itself in the recent trend of serious support of *panchayati raj*, granting more taxing, legislative, and development powers to *panchayats* at various levels and holding long-delayed elections to them. However a more likely explanation is the change in political leadership at the center and the growing participation of regional groups and their demands in politics. This change altered and influenced politics in UP as well as the creation of an Uttarakhand state.

The large physical size of Uttar Pradesh had made it difficult for opposition parties in the past to canvass votes throughout the state. Although opposition parties to the Congress did exist, they were limited to distinct localities. In the mid-1980s, major political parties had carved out fairly distinct regional bases for themselves (Pai 2000: 59). The Jan Sangh (JS) existed mostly in the northern tier districts stretching from Bahraich to Gonda, and in the central plains from Sitapur to Hardoi. The BKD/BLD had its base mainly in western UP and in parts of eastern UP. The BJP, which emerged from the Janata party in the 1980s, was limited largely to Jhansi and Lalitpur districts in Bundelkhand. These patterns of localized political bases disappeared in 1991

with the large-scale communal-based mobilization of the BJP and the steep decline of the Congress, though parties such as the JD, SP and BSP retained their base in parts of the state.

The most dramatic change in UP politics and in the nation occurred with the emergence of the BJP. The BJP's politics of communal mobilization underlie its meteoric rise in UP. In 1989 they had captured only eight Lok Sabha seats; however, by 1996 they won 52 seats with 33.43% of the votes. They captured state power in UP in 1991 by gaining 211 seats and 33% of the votes, compared to 7% in the 1989 Assembly elections (Pai 2000: 60). Scholars credit this change to two things: the decline of Nehruvian secular politics and the rise of religious identity (Hasan 1998; Pai 2000). From 1989 onwards, the BJP based its electoral strategy upon the ideology of Hindutva and its sustained campaign in November 1989 culminated with destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992. Many of its candidates in the 1991 election were closely associated with religious personalities involved in the Ayodhya issue, some of who were "Sadhu Sants."<sup>17</sup> Sadhu sants are religious devotees that have vowed to distance themselves from all worldly pleasures and instead, devoting oneself to matters pertaining to religion. Virginia Van Dyke (1997: 3149) deciphers three explanations for the way Sadhu Sants can be used in the political arena: politicians having been drawn unwillingly into the impure and degrading sphere of politics because the state has strayed so far from where its position should be and therefore there is a need for Sadhus to be a part of the political scene in order to be 'advisors to the kings' and bring them back to their proper place; second, that sants are attempting to reassert a 'traditional' type of authority and power which has been eroded by the dynamics of the state; and third, naturally politics will percolate down to religious figures in order to promote political agendas.

---

<sup>17</sup> Although religious figures were used vastly in Uttar Pradesh for the 1991 elections, the limitations of their effectiveness later became evident in the 1996 election period when the BJP tried to distance itself as a purely Hindu based political party. For more on the limits of religious mobilization and the use of sadhu sants, see Virginia Van Dyke, "General Elections 1996: Political Sadhus and Limits to Religious Mobilisation: *Economic and Political Weekly* December 6, 1997: 3149-58.

As a result of their strategy to mobilize religious sentiments, the BJP performed well in all the five regions—in none of which, apart from Bundelkhand, it had a base earlier—and successfully mobilized a large section of the upper caste Hindu vote across the state based upon the Ayodhya issue. In the Uttarakhand region, they secured four seats of which none in 1989 belonged to the BJP (See Table 1). Although the Ayodhya issue was not as pertinent in the hills of UP, the BJP was able to mobilize the higher caste population that resides in this area (Pai 2000: 61). In addition, for the first time, the party placed the issue of new state formation on their platform, thus luring the voters of the UP hills. Their strategy of tapping into a higher caste Hindu constituency and placing the issue of statehood on their election platform resulted in their overwhelming defeat of the Congress party in the UP hill constituencies. “Uttarakhand had the distinction in 1991 of being the only region in UP to give a very high percentage (40.3) of votes to the BJP, which made a clean sweep of all the four parliamentary seats” (Kumar 1999: 2461). 1991, then, signified the Uttarkhand statehood issue’s national debut and, marked the critical year of the BJP’s rise in politics, both regionally as well as nationally. The successful choreography of appealing to the high caste hill constituency and supporting a separate state opened a door allowing the BJP to make the hills one of their strongest state bases.

Congress in 1991 was certain it would win the districts of the Uttarakhand region. Traditionally, the region was a Congress stronghold. They had placed N.D. Tiwari on the ballot, a former state Chief Minister and a popular figure, and they were confident he could carry the districts. However to their own surprise, he was defeated by the BJP. The Congress party miserably flopped in Uttar Pradesh. In Nainital, Almora, Garhwal and Tehri, the BJP captured all four parliament seats where previously they had none. In fact, the Congress had trouble winning any of the nineteen State Assembly seats in the region. With the combination of economic developmental stagnation, emphasizing the need for a separate Uttarakhand state and, the beginning of the Ramjanmabhoomi issue, the BJP was able to carry the districts of

Uttarakhand. Their victory in the hill districts sent out two loud messages: first, that the BJP was strong and vibrant and a party to be contended with, and second, that the Uttarakhand issue was alive and kicking. Nationally, the defeat of the Congress party in UP was evidence of their inevitable decline in power. Although the Congress had won the national elections, their poor performance in the critical states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh was evidence of their uncertain power position. The failure of the Congress party to win the critical state of UP showed signs of its weakness. Prior to 1991, no party made it to New Delhi that did not win UP. As one newspaper commentator put it, “this too is significantly unusual, for so far no party had formed the government at the Center that had performed so poorly in the heartland” (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 26 June, 1991).

In addition to the eventual decline of the Congress party, what was more evident from the 1991 elections was the increasing significance of marginal groups in the political process. Prior to the 1990s, politics in UP and in India centered around a national party that administered politics from an isolated level. However, the elections of 1991 witnessed the increasing importance of localized groups, regional identities and new social constituencies that changed the terms of political discourse (Hasan 1998: 02). The largest indicator of this shift in power was in the prolific growth of political parties that had formed. In 1991, there were as many as 55 parties represented in the Lok Sabha (Sanghavi and Thakkar 2000: 516). The striking factor in all these parties was their desire for a greater voice in public policy and political processes—processes that excluded aspiring groups from the centralized power structure fashioned by the Congress since the early 1970s.

With the BJP heading the state government, it was hoped that the chances for a separate Uttarakhand state would be improved. In 1991 the Uttar Pradesh legislative assembly and then Chief Minister Kalyan Singh passed a resolution supporting the creation of a separate Uttarakhand state (*National Herald* (Lucknow: 27 June, 1991). This was considered a historic

day as it was the first time the UP assembly voted to pass on to the Central Government a recommendation for the creation of Uttarakhand. At that time, the decision to recommend the hills as a distinct state from UP was not, however, widely popular. Students at Lucknow University held a rally to criticize the UP government for wanting to create a separate hill state. Their demonstration was in opposition to what they saw as the BJP's willingness to "divide and disintegrate UP" (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 15, August, 1991). The BJP was new in the position of power in UP and thus, had to carefully plan its steps. In order to avoid conflict, the BJP backed down from its original promise for new statehood and instead recommended to the Central government that a new States Reorganisation Commission be convened to consider a second re-mapping of India (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 22 September, 1992). Although a second Commission was not formed to consider the emergence of statehood demands, this move allowed the BJP to stall the issue.

Recognizing the value of supporting Uttarakhand statehood, the Janata Dal (JD) began to encourage new statehood and placed it on their election platform. Later the SJP as well voiced support for a separate hill state and criticized the BJP for not implementing their promise to have the state carved out within 90 days of winning the elections (*National Herald* (Lucknow) 29 June, 1992; *National Herald* (Lucknow): 30 September, 1992). Statehood became a major political issue. At this point, other sections of Uttar Pradesh became hopeful that a second round of state reorganization would commence and the state, then, began to experience a series of new statehood agitations from other districts as well. Most notable was the Purvanchal region in eastern UP consisting of seventeen districts.<sup>18</sup> Reiterating the BJP's proposal for smaller states, the leaders of the Purvanchal movement also said that they could be better managed as an independent unit (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 25 August, 1992). Pointing out low economic

---

<sup>18</sup> Purvanchal would have consisted of the following eighteen districts in eastern UP: Bahraich, Gonda, Basti, Siddharthanagar, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Azamgarh, Mau, Ballia, Faizabad, Sultanpur, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur, Varanasi, Ghazipur, Mirzapur and Sonbhadra.

growth indicators, they too appealed to local development needs as the most serious political issue. The possibility of state fragmentation and new state formation revealed itself in the form of political victory or defeat for parties contesting the state and, marked the need to appeal to a varied populace throughout the state.

The turning point in the movement occurred in 1994 when Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav decided to extend the Reservation Bill requirements to the state of UP. This marked the climax of caste politics in north India and enhanced the vitality of the new state movement. In 1990, under the minority coalition government led by the Janata Dal (JD) and V.P. Singh, there was a strong movement to implement the 1990 Mandal Commission Report. The Mandal Commission had submitted a report on December 31, 1980, identifying 3,743 backward castes and making far-reaching recommendations in respect of them (Hasan 1998: 148). However, by 1980, the Janata party had lost power, Indira Gandhi had returned to power and placed the Mandal Report on the back burner. In 1990 when the Janata Dal returned to power, they announced their intent to fully implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. These recommendations included setting aside twenty-seven percent of government jobs and seats in universities and colleges for OBCs. For Uttar Pradesh, a state with a very high proportion of OBCs, this possible policy became quickly politicized and culminated into mass support for reservations for OBCs and other marginalized groups. Other states with lower percentages of OBCs had previously succeeded in grouping their lower caste populations into effective interest groups.<sup>19</sup> However, Uttar Pradesh, with its large twenty-one percent OBC population was to experience virulent caste politics in 1994 and ultimately permanently altering caste and politics in north India.

---

<sup>19</sup> For example, in Maharashtra, Bihar and Tamil Nadu (11 %, 14.5 % and 19% respectively) they have already succeeded in changing the tone of politics. Sudha Pai, "Elections 1999: Uttar Pradesh: BSP's new electoral strategy pays off," *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 30, 1999.

In 1993, with the Samajwadi Party (SP)—BSP combine in power in UP and Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav leading, the opportunity to fully exercise caste consciousness had come. Mulayam Singh was a strong supporter of reservations and he spearheaded a campaign for implementing the Mandal Commission's recommendations in UP. Even prior to the announcement of the central government's reservation plan, he had already announced a fifteen percent quota in government service jobs to OBCs (Hasan 1998: 149). He was adamantly opposed to any type of high caste favoritism and thus openly advocated the empowerment of lower castes. He appealed to both OBCs, Dalits and Muslims thus broadening his support base. "Thoroughly disillusioned with the Congress failure to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations, the OBCs rallied behind the chief minister who forged a new coalition of OBCs, Dalits and Muslims to counter the BJP's efforts to build intercaste unity within Hinduism" (Hasan 1998: 49-50).

The decision to implement reservations did not sit well with the residents of the UP hills where the population consisted primarily of upper caste persons and less than two percent OBCs. They viewed this as further neglect by the UP government of the economic and social situation of the hills and as the political happenings in the region (Gupta 1995: 107-8). Throughout UP there were widespread protests that were incited due to the threat of increased reservations leading to tragic acts of self-immolation by scores of high school and college students occurred all over UP. The protests were intensified in the hill districts where the low percentage of OBCs threatened the livelihood of the majority population. In comparison to the percentage of OBCs in the total of UP, the decision to extend the Reservation Bill requirements to Uttarakhand would have been damaging. The UP state average of OBC is twenty-seven percent, while the Uttarakhand percentage of OBCs is less than two percent (Gupta 1995: 19). In addition to the lack of jobs proposed through the Reservation Bill, the hill people had already been complaining

of the exodus of youth from their home into the plains in order to gain employment (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 23 June, 1994).

In October the Uttarakhand Samyukta Sangharsh Samiti (USSS), an umbrella organization consisting of several leftist parties promoting the Uttarakhand separatist movement, organized a rally. Thousands of demonstrators planned a peaceful march to New Delhi to call for a separate state. However, as they approached Muzzafarnagar, violence erupted. Violence spread on both sides, with attacks on police, police firing on demonstrators, and rapes of female Uttarakhand activists. At least ten protestors were killed, dozens of women were raped and several hundred people were injured (*The Independent*: 3 October, 1994). The Muzaffarnagar police as well as the UP state government refused to take responsibility for these incidents until 1996 under pressure from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) (*India Today*: 30 June, 1995). It was at this time that the movement gained publicity as well as renewed momentum. The UP and Central government's failure to accept responsibility for the violent incidents of the rally further proved the claims of neglect and alienation made by the separation movement participants. The result of the 1994 October demonstrations was only feeble promises made by politicians. Although the brutalities of the rally were highly publicized, they did little to foster anything other than publicity for the movement.

In 1995 the agitation was renewed, mostly peacefully, by a reformed Uttarakhand Kranti Dal coalition. The Bharata Janata Party (BJP), which continued to see the appeal of statehood to its high-caste constituencies, also supported the movement, but in order to reinforce its national platform, wanted to act on its own. In order to be different, they renamed the Uttarakhand movement as "Uttaranchal." This further aggravated promoters of the separate state and led to wariness regarding the intentions of the BJP. Past promises made by the ruling party were never fulfilled and the desire to change the name of the state brought about more suspicion of possibly curious intentions of the party. As for the BJP, they needed to distance themselves from their



prior image as a high caste, zealous Hindu group and expand their political base nationally. They therefore sought to create a distinct political identity that was more in line with national over regional issues. By the 1996 election phase, they had realized the limitations of religious mobilization and no longer supported sadhu saints who were the cornerstone of their 1991 election victory in UP (Van Dyke 1997: 3151). The use made of political sadhus by the BJP underwent a change as the party changed its strategy, consciously distancing itself from the Hindutva ideology. Instead the party had replaced Hindutva with 'swadeshi' (economic nationalism), Article 370, infiltration of foreigners and, a uniform civil code. Although the Ayodhya issue remained on their platform, it was now a low priority. The party went to great lengths to project itself as a "responsible" national party as opposed to a religious nationalist party (Pai 2000: 62). The all-national campaign manifesto, though, did not exclude local issues. The BJP, as well as other parties that wanted a real shot at winning the national elections had to continue to appeal to local sentiments in order to prevail in politics. Because state-level voters continued to be skeptical about national incentives, parties were forced to appeal to regional ties. Thus, parties vying for center stage gained their support from regional localities. As Sudha Pai points out in her article, the eleventh Lok Sabha elections not only point to the demise of the one-party dominant system, but "also of a gradual transition toward a new "region-based" multi-party system in which the major all-India parties—the BJP, Congress, and Janata Dal (JD)—compete for power at the center" (Pai 1996: 1170). None of these parties today has a base in a majority of the regions of the country such as the Congress had during the Nehruvian era.

In UP, the absence of the Ram Lahar (wave), local level developmental concerns and caste-based issues assumed importance. Because Uttar Pradesh had never seen itself as anything other than the manifestation of India, it was never wooed by large, national interests. "During the 1996 campaign, for example, local issues and appeals along narrowly defined ethnic and caste lines were found more effective than broad national slogans like Hindutva or *Garibi Hatao*,

a sign that the future of Indian politics was to be formed by hard headed conflicts and bargaining over allocation of resources than by polarization along abstract slopes of hindutva" (Kantha 1997: 3090). The BJP, then, although intending to secure the Lok Sabha, had to continue to appeal to local issues in UP that swayed the voters.

In 1996, caste continued to play a role in the politics of UP. However, although caste had been a predominant theme in the politics of the plains, it was a nearly excluded consideration in the hills. Since the backward castes are negligible in the region, appeals to these constituencies in the hills were meaningless. The main political parties in the hills were the BJP and the Congress, two groups that appealed to higher castes. Thus, the plains voters mobilized around Ayodhya and the politics of Hindutva, these issues could be important in the hills as well, but voters in the later were more concerned with parties which would grant them statehood (Kumar 1999: 2462). By the time the 1996 elections rolled around, 'mandal and kamandal' were irrelevant and statehood was imperative. As a result the BJP had to forge new ground in the hills and show a greater sincerity toward statehood than before.

Having been angered by the BJP's slow progress in the creation of Uttarakhand, as well as the fear of extending the reservation bill requirements, hill residents became largely skeptical about the political plans of the major political parties. There was enough resentment among the people to boycott the polls to protest against the lackadaisical attitude of the center. The UKD, themselves, boycotted the Lok Sabha polls in 1996 and were encouraging hill voters to boycott the state elections as well. This left those in the hills who were voting with the option of the two national parties, Congress and the BJP. As a result, unlike the BJP's clean sweep in the 1991 elections, this time they only gained two seats and the Congress gained the other two. The BJP had lost half its seats in the 1996 elections in the Uttarakhand area.

By 1996, two parliamentary elections and four assembly elections had been held and, four chief ministers had come and gone in seven years: veritable proof of the endemic instability

and churning going on in Uttar Pradesh. In 1993, the SP-BSP combine formed the state government under SP Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. This alliance soon gave way to the BSP-led and BJP supported Mayawati government. Mayawati, grossly insecure in her position of power, used several tactics to extend her support base. In order to gain Dalit votes, she carved five new districts out of the previous eight districts of Uttarakhand.<sup>20</sup> This she hoped would gain her votes in future state assembly seats. However, her attempts failed as the largely upper caste population protested against her anti-Uttarakhand measures. At a speech she delivered on August 18, 1997 in Dehradun, pro-Uttarakhand activists held up signs demanding early formation of the hill state. She was so infuriated by this that she had sixteen members of the Mahila Manch arrested (*The Hindu*: 19 August, 1997). The arrests of protesters angered the pro-Uttarakhand supporters, causing them to withdraw their support for the BSP-BJP combine. Mr. Ranjit Singh Verma, ex-MLA and president of the USSS, said that the outburst of the Chief Minister against the activists spoke of her dictatorial ways and that by hurling abuses at the activists she had lowered the status of the Chief Minister's office (*The Hindu*: 19 August, 1997). Eventually, like its predecessor, her coalition government could not last long and eventually the BJP pulled out its support. All of these alliances and failed alliances were largely based on communal politics. By 1993, neatly carved-out electoral support bases defined UP state governments. The SP was largely formed of upward mobile backward castes and the Muslims. The BJP membership came from largely upper castes. And the BSP concentrated on the Dalit votes. This all pointed to the growing evidence that politics was decided locally, not nationally.

Nervous about losing its stronghold in the hills, the BJP returned in 1998 to a platform where higher castes were primary. By appealing to the higher castes, the BJP won all four Lok Sabha seats and 18 out of 22 state assembly seats. The BJP's clean sweep of the elections in

---

<sup>20</sup> With the division of the eight districts of Uttarakhand into thirteen, the number of State Assembly seats increased from nineteen to twenty-two.

1998 seems startling. Continual failure promises of the BJP to grant Uttarakhand statehood, and their repetitive play with the Uttarakhand card, makes it alarming that voters would cast their votes in favor of a party that has been anything but sincere. More surprising is that N.D. Tiwari, from the Nanital constituency, had put himself on the ballot. The decision of the Uttarakhandis to vote for the BJP hinge on the fact that during the campaign period in 1998, the Congress party made associations that did not settle well with the residents of Uttarakhand. Congress had associated itself with the party (Mulayam Singh Yadav and SP) whose government in October 1994 was responsible for the 'humiliation' of the Uttarakhandis. A straight answer to the question from the Uttarakhand activists about why they voted for the BJP was the absence of any 'choice' before the hill dwellers (*Indian Express*: 19 July, 1998). The only other choice would have been the UKD, however they themselves were divided and thus not able to present any unified leaders. Once again, the UKD was unable to translate its aims of separate statehood into electoral gain. The BJP did stand terribly discredited; however, the people felt that it was the only party committed to the formation of a hill state (*The Hindu*: 25 December, 1998).

By 1999, the BJP was in an ideal position. It had gained a majority in Uttar Pradesh and in September 1999, the BJP won the national elections bringing Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee into the Prime Minister seat. Coming from Lucknow, it was hoped that UP would be on the top of his agenda. The BJP did win the seats in the 1999 elections. Included on their list was the creation of a new state. However, by December 1999, there was growing discontent in Uttarakhand. The leaders of the BJP in the region then told the Central government that there was growing discontent in the region over the lack of expediency in making a new state. "It seems promises are made only to be soon forgotten" (*The Hindustan Times*: 8 December, 1999). Opposition groups then began to feed off of the growing discontent and declaring that the BJP had failed in its promises.

At this time, in the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP once again won three out of the four seats and the Congress won one seat in the Nainital constituency with the running of N.D. Tiwari. They were in part able to keep the seats in the hills because the elections came at a time when the BJP was able to cash in on Uttarakhand's martyrs. Eight defense personnel who laid down their lives in the Kargil conflict were used as a reason to vote for the BJP in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. UP chief minister Kalyan Singh announced relief of Rs. 20 lakhs to the families of soldiers killed in Kargil, and local leaders vied with their rivals to attend the funeral ceremonies of the dead heroes (*India Express*: 2 August, 1999). However, despite the national attention given to Kargil, past elections had proven that in the hills it is regional issues that sway voters. The BJP won by a small margin.

It was not until the summer 2000 sessions that the bill for separate statehood was debated in parliament. Even at this time, opposition parties began to stall the passing of the bill. The RJD opposed the bill saying that parties were seeking political mileage out of creating new states (*Times of India*: 23 July, 2000). Instead, they recommended that a states reorganization commission be formed. With the proposed bill asking that Udham Singh Nagar be included, they too began to oppose the bill. The Akali Dal, in a crass move to interfere in other state politics outside of their base of Punjab, spearheaded this movement. The Chief Minister of Punjab, Prakash Singh Badal, reiterated his stance against the inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar in the new state. The district, crafted in 1997 by former Chief Minister of UP Mayawati, has a large percentage of Sikh settlers. It is also known as the granary of the region. Its large farms, owned by Sikh settlers, include both legal and encroached lands and many Akali Dal leaders have real estate interests. A new State could mean that the authorities might implement land ceiling laws and take back the encroached lands converted into prime agricultural tracts. With the economic interests of Sikh settlers threatened, the Akali Dal, a member of the BJP coalition

at the center, became interested in the politics of the proposed state and began threatening the BJP with the withdrawal of their support.

In addition, the Lok Tantrik Congress (Congress (LCP) was also opposing the inclusion of Haridwar in the proposed state. It is the only region where there is a Congress presence, and they feared that once the district was merged with Uttarakhand, it would have no chance of surviving as a Congress district.

On March 16, 2000, the state Cabinet unanimously approved the draft Uttar Pradesh (Re-organization) Bill for an Uttarakhand state. The Bill provided for the inclusion of Hardwar city in the proposed State. The argument given in this move's favour was that Rishikesh and Hardwar form the twin cities that house the Kumbh Mela and have to be in the same state for better administrative and logistic reasons.<sup>21</sup> The BJP and SP are in favour of this; however, the Congress (LCP) opposes it. The Vajpayee Government's strategy was, apparently, to introduce the Bill on the last day of the Budget session of Parliament and alleviate, at least for the time being, the mounting pressure to redeem its electoral promise, and, in the process, gain more time. However, even in the fag end of the session, the bill was not passed. Thus, in July 2000, the USSS called a 'bandh' to protest the decision to reintroduce the bill in the monsoon session of parliament (*Times of India*: 26 July, 2000).

Finally on August 1, 2000, the Lok Sabha passed a resolution to create the new state of Uttaranchal including the 13 districts. Home Minister L.K. Advani said that new states would be formed based on recommendations sent by state assemblies (*Times of India*: 1 August, 2000). He said the parliament would be willing to consider future proposals for new states, provided that the assembly of the "mother state" passed a resolution to that effect. Ultimately, the BJP, the Congress, the CPI, the NCP and most of the NDA partners supported the bill. The Akali Dal

---

<sup>21</sup> The mythological story surrounding the Kumbh Mela (Kumbh fair) is that the ambrosia of immortality was spilled in the primeval tug-of-war between the gods and demons. When the gods and demons were struggling over the pitcher of nectar, drops of the sacred liquid were spilled in four places: Hardwar, Allahabad, Nasik and Ujjain.

members from the Punjab walked out of the session when it was decided that Udam Singh Nagar was to be included in the new state (*Times of India*: 2 August, 2000).

There are several effects of having carved a new state out of Uttar Pradesh. The worst impact will be felt in the state assembly where the UP seats will be reduced from 424 to 402. The number of MLAs lost is 22, including three from the Hardwar district. The BJP will lose some of its strength (153 seats) in the House where it currently has 175 seats, giving it a comfortable majority of 227 (*Times of India-C*: 3 August: 2000). However, although the BJP's strength in UP will lessen, the new state of Uttaranchal is expected to initially set itself up as a BJP dominant state. Currently, 17 out of the 22 MLAs are from the BJP party. This was to be expected as the BJP supported the new state so that they could carve out a constituency in their favor. Although the BJP is expected to govern the new state of Uttaranchal, it is uncertain if their dominant presence in the state will last long. In the past the new statehood issue has driven voters to the polls in Uttarakhand. However, with the new state formed, it is uncertain if the BJP will be able to maintain their base here. Through the 1990s's the voters of Uttarakhand showed skepticism over the waning loyalty towards the interests Uttarakhand. They had done a sloppy job in granting aid to victims of the Chamoli earthquake in 1998 and the majority of the residents of Uttarakhand are still angered by the development of the Tehri Dam project. Whether the BJP will stand behind the desires of the people is yet to be seen. Currently the BJP's position in UP is quite tenuous not only among the people of Uttaranchal but, also with its allies, some of whom opposed the new state bill. The Akali Dal continues to be angered and "betrayed" with the NDA over the inclusion of Udam Singh Nagar in the new state and although they have not yet pulled out their support from the NDA, they could prove to be a critical player in the alliance in future elections (*Times of India-A*: 3 August, 2000). In addition, the Loktantrik Congress Party Congress (LCP), a state alliance member of the BJP contributing 20 members to the coalition government, continues to be agitated by the inclusion of Hardwar in Uttaranchal and could also

pose a challenge to the unity of the Uttaranchal state (*Times of India-F*: 3 August, 2000). The BJP, already surviving on the crutches of coalition parties, could be shaken if any of these parties withdraw their support.

Finally, the people of Uttarakhand also have a huge task before them. Amongst themselves, they need to decide on a new capital city, not an easy task in a region that is divided both culturally and geographically between Garhwal and Kumaon. Both the cities of Dehradun and Nainital have been proposed; however, they are two cities grossly inaccessible by the people in the rugged mountains. Other possible cities mentioned are either in areas where water availability is limited, or in localities that are underdeveloped (*Times of India*: 4 August, 2000). Aside from the thorny issue over the location of the new state capital, it is uncertain how the state will develop. With little development initiative already in place, it is uncertain how the state economy will change. In addition, there is uncertainty about regulating water and how it will be allocated. Whether political parties will work to better satisfy the interests of the new state is yet to be seen. For a state that was created out of political interests for a ruling party that is nervous about its coalition partners, it remains to be seen if they will indeed aim to appease their constituencies.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Understanding the creation of Uttarakhand**

India's decision to set up a federal system of government at the time of independence was based on two predicaments. First, the difference in governance of princely and British provinces required a method that would allow autonomy to two distinctive types of polities. Although the princes acquiesced to amalgamating into a larger India, they did so with the belief that they would be given some autonomy at the local levels. Second, the division of Pakistan and India was a traumatic experience. Over a million people were killed at partition: Muslims being killed as they headed to West Punjab and East Pakistan, and Hindus being slaughtered as they escaped a new country that would be run by Muslims. The aftermath of partition, along with later events including the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Hindu militants who believed Gandhi had caved in to Muslim demands by dividing India and Pakistan. The Kashmir imbroglio, the secessionist threat by the Naga tribals, and the possible emergence of centrifugal forces at the state level changed the perceptions of the framers to have instead a centralized federal system over a classical federal pattern (Rajashekara 1997: 245). Amidst this gloomy, divisive and unpredictable background, the leaders of a newly independent India sought to create a nation in which modern ideas of secularism and economic development would take place. The federal state was then created in which it was hoped that "the consensual management of India's many ethnic groups and sub-nationalities according to an agreed set of legislative and financial principles," could be implemented to begin the nation building process (Corbridge 1995: 104). This institutional arrangement was expected to accommodate India's diversity while still preserving allegiance to the greater idea of a nation unified in diversity. The federal format of India was then implemented and Indian states were merged and reorganized over a period of several years in which the current context of 28 states and seven Union Territories exist.

The federal system worked for several years, and even today amidst the tug-of-war by provinces, it has withstood its many challenges. Nevertheless, regional demands for greater autonomy continue to agitate the federation. Today's demands for regional autonomy aim for the Center but actually seek recourse due to state tensions. Unlike past demands, current requests for statehood are not appealing primarily to differences based on language and religion, although to some extent these do play a part. Instead, the demands are more often based on economic and social inequality and ultimately seek greater political and administrative autonomy in the Union (*India Today*: 15 October, 1996). Now with three newly created states, the question is why have these states been approved after years of protest? What is the political context determining the fate of statehood movements? Requirements from the earlier period, as outlined by Paul Brass (1974 and 1994), had very little to do with the approval of the new states. These principles were at times tested by various statehood demands from 1956 to 1990. The creation of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh were justified based on linguistic diversity. However, Goa, a former Union Territory was unable to use language as a primary reason in its elevation to state status. The rise of Goa from Union Territory to state status instead had more to do with national politics than local needs.<sup>1</sup> This signaled new conditions and prompted new demands for new statehood. It was becoming clear that the government, after several decades of resisting political divisions of the Indian map, was now willing to re-examine the possibility of new states. Moreover, what was becoming apparent in the governments' renewed interests in expanding regional autonomy, was that past precedents of language, national unity, popular support and will, were no longer the only considerations that were going to be taken into account when seriously considering statehood requests. New factors were to be instrumental in dividing India among 28 states.

---

<sup>1</sup> In an article detailing the struggle for Goa's state status, Arthur Rubinoff argues that it was politically motivated selfish objectives by the Congress party that eventually secured statehood for Goa. In order to secure Congress presence in the South, Goan statehood was seriously considered (Rubinoff 1992: 485-6).

The states created in India in early August 2000 were not unpredicted events. Many of these agitations had persisted since pre-independence and independence times.<sup>2</sup> However what is unusual about granting these areas state status is explaining why it happened now. *Why Uttarakhand now? What factors contributed to the creation of Uttarakhand? And moreover, is this evidence that federalism can accommodate regional demands?* The answer to these questions cannot be understood by looking at past guidelines formulated through the decisions of the SRC in the 1950s. Explanations based on language, national unity and popular support in the region and by the area to be divided, do not account for the government's action in creating the state of Uttarakhand. Language was hardly a factor in Uttarakhand where Hindi is spoken both in the hills as well as in the Uttar Pradesh plains. Although Pahari, a dialect of Hindi, is widely common among the people of Uttarakhand, it is not a major feature distinguishing the two types of people. The proportion of the population that speaks any of the Tibeto-Himalayan dialects is minimal and did not play a part in the demands for separate statehood. Second, the UKD never intended to secede from India, thus secession was never part of the dialogue. A separate Uttarakhand state never posed serious threats to the dis-unification of India. Third, the movement had popular support since its inception. As early as 1952, P.C. Joshi, a member of the CPI Communist party, voiced a demand for a separate state. The request for separate statehood at that time had little weight as India was embroiled in warfare at the borders of the Himalayan region. And finally, the Uttar Pradesh state government, since 1991, has made numerous recommendations to the Central government for division. So having satisfied all these criteria that guided state formation from the 1950s to the early 1980s, then why is that in the new millennium, the Uttarakhand movement was finally granted its wish to be its own separate state?

---

<sup>2</sup> For example, the modern Jharkhand movement dates to the early twentieth century. In the 1930s, Jharkhand leaders made requests to the British requesting a separate state. In 1949, the Jharkhand Party under the leadership of Jaipal Singh appealed to the States Reorganisation Commission for a separate state but with no avail. Political agitations continued from this time to present and the new state of Jharkhand was ratified although not with all of its original districts included.

The answer to the above question lies in the change in political climate since the demise of the Congress and resulting growth in political parties since the 1990s. In Chapter Two I argued that within the political context of coalition governments and the result of accommodative leadership and institutionalization, there was a greater likelihood that new state movements would succeed. Other Indian scholars have also identified these characteristics as altering the political outcomes of the nation. Although some of the authors have cited these factors as determining the fate of other types of political movements (for example, secession), they are equally as valid when discussing state borders in India. The primary factor, coalition governments, along with its two by-products, leadership and institutional accommodation are defined as follows:

A. Coalition politics—no longer is there a center, right and left party. Instead, the national party is formed through a combination of larger and smaller parties resulting in an alliance. As a result of this leadership coalition, alliances are appealing to local issues and harnessing regional groups in order to capture national power (Yadav 2000; Gould and Ganguly 1993).

A1. Leadership—leaders must now seek to please local concerns over national concerns. Without appealing to constituencies, they can no longer be guaranteed the electoral support that motivates the voter at the polls (Kohli 1998).

A2. Institutional accommodation—the central strategy must be willing to institutionally accommodate regional demands at the state level. Past leaders have only acknowledged that India is a federally designed society but have not been willing to devolve their power by conceding to state demands

This chapter seeks to explain how the factors identified above, *coalition governments* resulting in *accommodative leadership* and *institutionalization*, were instrumental in fostering the creation of

Uttaranchal. It shows that past precedents no longer solely dictate the viability of new states. Instead, new political conditions are more likely to determine the success or failure of contemporary and future demands for statehood. Whether or not federations can sustain the challenge of regionalism, I argue hinges, in part, on the political context of the center government.

## I.

Prior to the emergence of the BJP in 1991, the Congress party dominated the hill area of Uttarakhand. Having contributed past Congress Chief Ministers from the hills and being a largely high caste constituency was evidence that the region would be a place where the Congress could politically dominate. There had never been regionally based parties in the area until 1979 when the demands for a separate state took salience and the UKD was formed. However, even at that time; statehood demands, due to the Congress party's primarily national agenda, were left on the back burner. Throughout the Congress era, the party was continually challenged by factions from within as well as other forming parties: the Janata Dal and later the BJP. Multi-party competition, though, was hardly thriving; instead, Congress had more to fear from within than from outside. "Although the Congress had competition from other political parties from the 1970s onwards, by the 1980s these differences seemed to be insignificant—real conflict seemed to be between one bloc of privileged groups and another of non-elite social groups who were challenging the former with considerable political energy" (Hasan 1998: 07). Eventually, the Congress split, along with emerging political parties, culminated in the terminal decline of the Congress, the disappearance of the Janata Dal, and the unstoppable growth of the BJP. And eventually the true decline of the Congress in the UP hills was to become evident. Statewide, the Congress won five of the 85 UP Lok Sabha seats in the elections of 1991, two in

1996, and none in 1998. For the 1996 state assembly elections, the Congress was a minor player in an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

The BJP's presence in the hills of UP had much to do with the increasing competition in UP politics that began to arise. The growth of second and third parties made it clear that voters had more of a choice than simply the Congress party. In addition, the 1989 and 1990 elections, the Congress' stance on the Mandal report under then Prime Minister V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav's decision to implement the Mandal recommendations hardened cleavage lines in UP. Throughout UP, there was resentment from the population towards the large percentage of educational seats and jobs being proposed for OBCs. Demonstrations by students and students burning themselves in the streets of Lucknow made national headlines. In the hills, this was significantly threatening where OBCs constitute less than two percent of the total hill population. Already losing out jobs to people from the plains due to lack of education, the people of Uttarakhand were outraged by possibly losing more education and employment opportunities. This, in part, prompted voters in the hills to withdraw their support for parties courting backward castes and instead, started backing the BJP who was soliciting forward caste voters. Losing support from the forward castes, created a window of opportunity for other parties to capture voter support. The BJP was able to garner the support of the forward and backward castes while Congress continued to make efforts to placate both sides (Chhibber 1999: 136). By this time, the UKD which was the primary party supporting the new state, began to show displeasure with the Congress and instead campaigned for a party that was supporting the new state. In a dramatic leap, the hill constituencies voted for their regional concerns over the national party. As a result, in the 1991 election, the BJP swept all four Lok Sabha seats in the hills. Since 1991, electoral politics in the hills have been dominated by which party opts to support the new state.

From 1991 onwards, political parties seeking to win in the hills have had to place the Uttarakhand issue on their campaign platform. Acknowledging this strategy, several other

parties then followed the lead of the BJP (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 29 June, 1992; *National Herald* (Lucknow) 30 September, 1993). The Congress party, which previously encouraged decentralization as a solution to regional agitations, began to advocate a separate Uttarakhand state (*The Hindu*: 22 July, 1997). It became clear that political dueling in the hills was based on which party toted their approval for a separate state. Why the BJP was able to successfully capture these seats repeatedly is because they were seen as the only party that actually made efforts to promote the state. With their decision to forward to the Center the need for a separate state, they repeatedly were able to win the Lok Sabha votes as well as a majority of the state assembly seats in this area.<sup>3</sup>

The BJP was interested in the hill constituencies for two primary reasons. First, with the high caste population in the area, they knew that they could corner these votes through their Hindutva campaign. It was a place where they could stake state control. This made an easy opening for their presence. Second, by capturing the hill seats, they would then be able to go on to win the rest of UP, a crucial state in national politics. For the BJP, the hills proved to be a winning plan. The constant stronghold in the Lok Sabha seats since 1991 shows that the BJP is the dominant political party in the area (see Table 1). The party has been able to capture voters in this area through appeals to local concerns. Even in 1998, when their popularity was relatively low due to their clumsy handling of the Chamoli earthquake aftermath and the bloody Kargil battle, by playing up patriotic sentiments for those who sacrificed their lives in the Kargil crisis, the BJP was able to maintain their Lok Sabha seats in an election that was expected to be a struggle for the BJP (*Indian Express*: 3 August, 1999).<sup>4</sup> The BJP's ability to claim victory to UP was critical in their ability to prove national dominance. Thus, by aligning themselves with

---

<sup>3</sup> The BJP begin advocating a separate hill state in June 1991 (*National Herald* (Lucknow): 27 June, 1991). In December 1991, they finally passed a resolution in the UP state assembly to recommend to the center a new hill state. The BJP then made successive recommendations in 1998 and 1999 (*The Hindu*: 20 February, 1998; *The Hindu*: 22 September, 1999).

the political interests of the local parties and local interest, the BJP was able to extend their reach to claim national power.

With the formation of a new state, the BJP is assured, at least for the time being, a BJP governed state (*Times of India*: 5 August, 2000). The BJP already has 17 out of the 22 assembly seats and they expect that this will form a majority in the new, soon-to-be Uttaranchal state assembly. Once the state is officially notified, it will have a seventy-seat assembly, and five parliamentary seats.<sup>5</sup> Although Home Minister L.K. Advani stated that the reason these new states were being formed is because the home provinces had approved them, it is doubtful that this is the main reason they were approved. Uttaranchal was created during the tenure of a BJP-led coalition. Moreover, in order to secure their tenuous position in the alliance as well as in future national elections, a newly created BJP dominated state works well in their larger plan for national dominance. Moreover, if we look at other states that were created in the recent sequence of events, more evidence points to the fact that coalition-based governments must be creative in constituency planning. The creation of Chattisgarh will most likely weaken the Congress's position in Madhya Pradesh giving the BJP and other parties an opportunity to explore political possibilities in the state (*Times of India-D*: 3 August, 2000). The recent creation of Jharkhand will also have a similar effect where Rabri Devi's government's dependence on the Congress will likely decrease. According to a senior Bihar MP, "The Congress will not enjoy the same bargaining power as now" (*Times of India-E*: 3 August, 2000). If there are any institutional measures that are going to quell minority demands then it seems like the method of electoral carving is what is happening in India. These are without a doubt preconceived ideas of accommodation that are meant to keep the power structure in the leadership's favor.

---

<sup>4</sup> Uttarakhand traditionally has been a central recruiting ground for the military. During the 1998 Kargil battle, 80 defense personnel from Uttarakhand laid down their lives (*Indian Express*: 03 August, 1999).



The increasingly competitive electoral arena and a politics of the Centre that is better classified as alliance formation and coalition building rather than center, left and right politics, have made the viability of new state formation more likely. The number of political parties has multiplied and the tenor of electoral politics has changed dramatically. The outcome of this change in electoral politics has been quite predictable. New possibilities have emerged for regional political parties to make their mark in opposition to New Delhi, and the complexity of the political map of India continues to become even more complex. Regional parties and not national parties govern states. The state of Maharashtra is firmly under the control of the Shiv Sena party. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are under the control of the Janata Dal and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)—Samajwadi Party (SP) combine respectively. And in the South, legislative assemblies continue to be directed, if not dominated, by regionalist parties like the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu. These parties often survive and rule in tandem with a national party, however the past national elections have proven that the Centre is more likely to be run by a coalition of parties, and none of these parties can rely on the support of these and other regional parties. Evidence to this is the victory of the National Democratic Alliance in the 1999 national elections. The coalition government, led by the BJP consists of a 24 party-member sum. Yet even earlier, the change in electoral politics was identified. As stated by Nagindas Sanghavi and Usha Thakkar, there were two main significant features of the 1996 elections (2000: 514). First, it marked the final rejection of the single party dominance model. And second, the most important feature was that it was a contest not between the parties as such but between fronts and alliances. The multitude of parties it now takes to create a center alliance creates a political context that is likely to be more accommodating to regional autonomy movements.

---

<sup>5</sup> At present Uttarakhand has four Lok Sabha seats. With the inclusion of Hardwar in the newly formed state, it will have a total of five out of the 85 UP parliamentary seats.

The need to appeal to locally based issues and solicit the support of state-based political parties has prompted a change in leadership style as well. At the center level, where previously leaders were reluctant to accommodate ethnic and regional demands, the 1990s proved to be different. Although past Congress leaders, Indira and Rajeev, appealed to minority groups, they were reluctant to actually accommodate any of their demands. While factionalism had increased in the Congress party since 1977, there was no reason for elite politicians to actually marshal support from subordinate ethnic categories. The era of the Gandhis had kept the government at an isolated upper level while flirting with India's diverse populace. Under Indira Gandhi and Rajeev Gandhi, the idea of governance that seemed to hold India together in the early years of independence began to unravel. Much of the unraveling was due to the leaders themselves, who were anxious to find new ways of appealing to an electorate faced with a choice of political representatives.

In 1991, the opening created by weakened the Congress allowed new leaders to enter and to compete in the political arena. It was in this year that the BJP pressed upon the UP state assembly to forward a recommendation to the center for a new Uttarakhand state. In December 1991 when the recommendation was passed in the state assembly and forwarded to the Lok Sabha, it marked the first time a resolution on the proposed separate hill state was passed on to New Delhi. Previous Chief Ministers and ruling parties in UP were never interested in the local demands of the hills. Instead, they were more concerned about national agenda issues thus blurring the line between state and national interests. By 1996, India's eleventh general election, we really began to see a change in leaders and their approaches to minority demands. The BJP took control of New Delhi for a short period (13 days) and then the United Front took control with the Janata leader, H.D. Deve Gowda. The 1996 elections revealed that India was more about leaders who spoke to the localities and not about charisma and style. Former Prime Minister Deve Gowda promised a separate Uttarakhand state when he saw that the United

Front's stability was in danger. And likewise, succeeding prime ministers also made similar promises for an expedited new state in the Himalayan region of India

With the increase in political parties and leaders seeking to appease constituency demands, the pattern of statehood demands, and other regional agitations, cannot be predicted to succeed unless a method of institutional accommodation is in place. One worry is that the growth in political parties and intense electoral competition, along with the 'over' accommodating leadership tendencies of current India, point towards a weakening of the institutional framework. These tendencies to accommodate more regional demands, while encouraging diversity and political participation, it is feared can also eventually tear India apart, leading to various secessionist demands. However, in order for a federal system to survive, it must recognize its internal state boundaries as legitimate. In addition, it must also recognize the promotion of social change and economic development as a legitimate reason for changing territorial boundaries (Khan 1973: 37). When the SRC convened in 1953 to reorganize state lines based on language, there was fear that this would tear the nation apart. However, once the reorganization took place, the states were formed and there was hardly any further agitation regarding the lines drawn. This shows that when institutions can accommodate regional demands, there is likelihood that it strengthens the overall system. Given scarce political power and economic resources, it is inevitable that separatist tendencies will emerge, but just as inevitably they will decline if they obtain substantial concession from the state.

In addition, the Indian government has been flexible when accommodating new statehood movements. However, they have not been "too flexible." Some movements, such as the Telengana and Bodolands movements continue, however, they show no signs of changing the state political boundaries of India. This shows that the change in political climate is not over accommodating and that constraints are still in place to prevent a domino effect of state boundary changes.

Clearly, we can see that in the case of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the demands to redraw state borders accommodating the state demands did not occur until there was a government in power that sought to fulfill these demands for their own selfish purposes. The BJP, once in control of the state as well as the central government was more in a position to fulfill the statehood promises that they had made in both 1991 and 1994. Whether their initial intent to grant statehood was ever really sincere, is unknown. However, once they realized that their votes in the region mattered, they were then more ready to grant statehood. If one looks at the Lok Sabha results, then it becomes apparent that the fluctuations in votes during the years from 1991 to 1999 were dependent upon how political groups campaigned in the area. If parties put the statehood demand on their campaigning platform, then their chances of winning votes in the hill constituencies increased. The political context, then, in which statehood movements can be expected to succeed depends largely on who the central players are and whether or not the newly proposed area is pivotal to their political agenda. When assessed within the federal structure, state boundaries can readily be provided for. Whether or not the institutional design is reshaped to accommodate these demands then hinges on those in control. It is up to the actors to either accommodate or ignore their constituency. However, as is currently the case in India, there is a larger likelihood that primary political players will concede to local demands in order to boost their own political position.

## II.

The aim of this project has been to follow one political movement for state autonomy and to decipher what conditions are necessary for the success of similar movements. I have argued in this thesis that the likely conditions conducive for successful contemporary statehood demands are created by coalition governments which then gives rise to accommodative leadership and institutionalization. By following the journey to statehood of Uttarakhand, these three conditions

become evident. Although the thirteen districts of Uttarakhand prior to 1991 experienced Congress dominance, the latter party was unable to maintain their power in these districts due to its lack of attentiveness to local and regional concerns. The Congress party's isolated leadership and its emphasis on an all-India agenda, caused it to eventually lose its political stronghold in these critical districts of Uttar Pradesh. Moreover, even though the leaders of independent India initially proposed a federal arrangement of government, the later leaders of the Congress party, never exercised flexibility in institutionalizing regional demands. Instead, when agitations were threatening to disrupt the unity of India, extreme tactics were used to quell these disturbances. In order to deal with secessionist attempts, they sent in the army and in order to appease state autonomy movements the Congress merely advocated a decentralized government, one that they never intended to decentralize. All of these clumsy handlings by the Congress party led to their eventual decline.

The entrance of the BJP into Uttarakhand politics came as no surprise. The Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD) was formed in 1979 based on the desire for a separate state. However, as a small regional party, with only the potential to win 22 state assembly seats, they needed the backing of major state and national parties in order to fulfill their aim. The rise of the BJP into politics in the hills then came in 1991 a time when the UKD was reorganizing and the voters were looking for an alternative to the Congress party. The BJP, in order to win the Uttar Pradesh state elections tapped into local politics and placed the Uttarakhand issue on their election platform. It was the first time a political party had given significance to the issue of statehood in the hill region. As a result, the voters enthusiastically supported the BJP giving the party 40.3 percent of the votes (Kumar 1999: 2461). This was the largest percentage of votes the BJP received in the 1991 UP state elections. After 1991, it became evident that political parties, in order to win constituencies, must appeal to local not only national issues. Although other features of the BJP strategy played a role in the BJP's victory in the hills, the high caste

constituency and the Hindutva campaign, later elections (1996 and 1999) signaled the decline of significance in national concerns, and that separate statehood was the primary concern for voters in the hills. The newly constructed trend to local over national politics was solidified in the 1996 election and is predicted to most likely persist in future election phases of India (Sanghavi and Thakkar 2000).

What does this mean for future demands of statehood and the unity of India? Although there has been a tendency to view regional autonomy demands as threatening the unity of India, this really is not the case. When these types of demands are made within the context of center governments seeking support from a wide base, such as coalition governments, and when the leadership along with the institutional set up of the nation seeks to accommodate these demands, then the result can be quite positive.

Due in part to the federal set up, there will almost always be demands for greater regional autonomy. This however, does not necessarily point to the inevitable demise of the country. Because there is no specification regarding the terms for new states to be created, we can expect groups to in some instances, take advantage of this loophole, or in other cases to utilize this loophole for greater autonomy. Such demands are to be expected, and more so in a nation such as India that is created out of diversity. Second, it is a healthy sign when we see such demands. Regional demands are evidence that the political machinery of a nation is being utilized. The active political participation along with the overall system being challenged, points to the re-oiling of the political structure as well a check upon its validity. The growth in numbers of political parties can also be seen as a reach downwards to grassroots politics where local levels are organizing based on their own unique local and state interests. The institutionalization of regional demands we are witnessing today may indeed encourage more state movements but this is so only because of the accommodating nature of the institutional design. And because of the

accommodating nature, statehood demands are being met. It is in this political context that federal states, such as India, can sustain the challenge posed by regionalism.

Finally, the enlarging of local over national issues and the decline of a national party over an India governed by alliances and coalitions has left some weary. One of the results of this type of politics is that the lines of distinctiveness have hardened. Political parties are now formed on the basis of identification and loyalty to region. The growth in regional political parties is evidence to this. Most students of Indian politics would view this development pessimistically. Deeper cleavage lines based primarily on identity typically results in more conflict and possible disintegration. Moreover, the proliferation of political parties based on the lines of caste, religion and identity signals to the failure of a national party that, like the Congress, was able to provide an umbrella for these differences. As pointed out by Hardgrave, "so long as most states were under the Congress party umbrella, conflict between states and Center, among states, and within states could be accommodated within the framework of the party" (Hardgrave 1983: 1171). So far, however, although the lines of difference have hardened, the political necessity of alliance building between two or more parties has prevented the hardening of identity from being translated into conflict. The moderating constraints exerted by ethnically heterogeneous constituencies that make it impossible for one narrowly-based party to win without the help of another may, in the long run, be a far more effective check on the escalation of social conflict than the dominance of the Congress party (Chandra 2000: 58).

Although this project has used India as its laboratory, it is very feasible that other federal nations can have similar situations occur. In fact, in a federation where there are not strict guidelines for when new units are to be crafted, it is very likely that we will see similar agitations. After all, the federal structure is designed so that individual units can be autonomous. However, what is most important for this study is that it identifies factors where these demands may rise so that they can be recognized before they turn into movements for secession, thus

fragmenting the entire whole, rather than rearranging the parts of the whole. The traditional worry about further divisions of or within states was that they would be “antinational,” weakening national unity. Although most regional demands should be initially scrutinized as possibly threatening the cohesion of a nation, they should not be shoved under the carpet as invalid claims. As was witnessed with regional movements in India, those that were readily accommodated eventually subsided (for example, Andhra Pradesh) and those that were met with gross resistance have persisted (for example, Assam and Kashmir). The regional movements that I have dealt with in this project have mostly preached, with apparent sincerity, their attachment to the nation; their complaints have rather been with state apparatuses. Thus, for anyone studying the possibility of disintegration or secession, a research agenda, such as this one focusing on processes granting more regional government as a method to strengthen national unity, becomes highly relevant.



## Bibliography

- Bose, Ashish. "Reaching the unreached in 'Uttarakhand: demography, drinking water and technology." *Economic and Political Weekly*. June 17-23, 2000.
- Brass, Paul. "Uttar Pradesh." In Myron Weiner (ed.) State Politics in India. Princeton: Princeton University, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Language, religion, and politics in North India. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Summary of World Broadcasts. October 5, 1996.
- Chandra, Kanchan. "The transformation of ethnic politics in India." *Journal of Asian Studies*. May 2000.
- Chhibber, Pradeep. Democracy without associations: transformation of the party system and social cleavages in India. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Corbridge, Stuart. "The ideology of tribal economy and society: politics in the Jharkhand, 1950-1980." *Modern Asian Studies*. (22). Fall 1988: 1-42.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Federalism, Hindu nationalism and mythologies of governance in modern India." In Graham Smith (ed.) Federalism: the multiethnic challenge. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1995.
- DasGupta, Jyotindra. "Community, authenticity and autonomy: insurgence and institutional development in India's North-East." In Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli (ed.), Community Conflicts and the State in India. New Delhi: Oxford University, 1998.
- Fisher, Michael H. Indirect Rule In India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764 – 1858. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Gould, Harold A. and Sumit Ganguly. India votes: alliance politics and minority governments in the ninth and tenth general elections. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993.
- Government of India. Census of India, 1991. Series 25, Uttar Pradesh. Paper 1 of 1991 Provisional Population Totals. Government of India. 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India. "The Census of India Website". July 10, 2000. <[www.censusindia.net](http://www.censusindia.net)>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Ministry of Environment and Forests. "Forest survey of India." Map. July 25, 2000. <[http://envfor.nic.in/fsi/ifc/up\\_fc.gif](http://envfor.nic.in/fsi/ifc/up_fc.gif)>.
- Gupta, Shanti S. Uttarakhand: past, present and future. J.C. Aggarwal and S.P. Agarwal (ed.). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1995.

- Hardgrave, Robert L. Jr. "The Northeast, the Punjab, and the regionalization of Indian politics." *Asian Survey*. (23)11. November 1983: 1171-1181.
- Hasan, Zoya. Quest for power: oppositional movements and post-Congress politics in Uttar Pradesh. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Jaffrelot, Christophe. "The rise of Other Backward Classes in the Hindi belt." *The Journal of Asian Studies*. (59)1. February 2000:86-108.
- Kantha, Pramod K. "General elections, 1996: BJP politics—looking beyond the impasse." *Economic and Political Weekly*. November 29, 1997.
- Khan, Rasheeduddin. "The Regional Dimension." *Seminar*. (164). April 1973: 33-45.
- Kohli, Atul. "Can democracies accommodate ethnic nationalism? The rise and decline of self-determination movements in India." In Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli (ed.), Community Conflicts and the State in India. New Delhi: Oxford University, 1998.
- Kumar, Pradeep. "Shifting political loyalties in Uttarakhand." *Economic and Political Weekly* August 21-28, 1999. 2459-2464.
- Majeed, Akhtar. "*Maldevelopment and regional conflict: a general framework.*" In Akhtar Majeed (ed) Regionalism: Developmental Tensions in India. New Delhi: Cosmos Publications, 1984.
- Mehta, Pratap B. "India: fragmentation amid consensus." *Journal of Democracy*. (8)1. 1997: 56-69.
- Menon, V.P. The story of the integration of the Indian states. New Delhi: Orient Longmans Limited, 1961.
- Pai, Sudha. State politics: new dimensions. New Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Elections 1999: Uttar Pradesh: BSP's new electoral strategy pays off." *Economic and Political Weekly*. October 30, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Transformation of the Indian party system." *Asian Survey*. (36)12. December 1996: 1170-1183.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Towards a theoretical framework for the study of state politics in India: some observations." *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. (50)1. January-March 1989: 94-109.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. The ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh 1926-1934: a study in imperfect mobilization. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- "Possible new states." Map. Uttarakhand: Indian Himalayas and a land of struggle. June 15, 2000. <[http://www.geocities.com/~karnavati/maps/map-newindia\\_m.gif](http://www.geocities.com/~karnavati/maps/map-newindia_m.gif)>.

Rajashekara, H.M. "The nature of Indian federalism: a critique" *Asian Survey*. (37)3. March 1997: 245-253.

Report of the States Reorganisation Commission. New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1955.

Rubioff, Arthur G. "Goa's attainment of statehood." *Asian Survey*. (32)5. May 1992: 471-487.

Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber and Lloyd Rudolph. Essays on Rajputana: reflections on history, culture, and administration. New Delhi: Concept, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Modern hate: how ancient animosities get invented." *New Republic*. March 22, 1993: 24-29.

Sanghavi, Nagindas and Usha Thakkar. "Regionalisation of Indian politics." *Economic and Political Weekly*. February 12, 2000.

Van Dyke, Virginia. "Political Sadhus and limits to religious mobilization in north India." *Economic and Political Weekly*. December 6, 1997: 3149-3158.

Vanaik, Achin. The painful transition: bourgeois democracy in India. London: Verso, 1990.

"Vital Statistics series: demographic information." Online posting. Uttarakhand: Indian Himalayas and a land of struggle. June 11, 2000.  
<<http://www.geocities.com/~karnavati/info2.html>>.

Wood, John R. "British versus Princely legacies and the political integration of Gujarat," *Journal of Asian Studies*. (4)1. November 1984.

### Newspaper articles:

"Akalis to oppose Uttaranchal Bill in RS." *Times of India-A*. 03 August, 2000. 03 August, 2000. <<http://www.timesofindia.com/today/03india1.htm>>.

Banerjee, Biswasjeet. "Uttaranchal to leave UP with little green cover." *Times of India-B*. 03 August, 2000. 03 August, 2000.  
<<http://www.timesofindia.com/030800/03mlkn5.htm>>.

Bharat, Swatantra. "Uttarakhand: far from mandal and kamandal." *National Herald* (Lucknow) 04 May, 1991.

Bhargava, Arti. "BJP leader cautions PM against people's resentment in UP hills." *The Hindustan Times*. 08 December, 1999. 25 July, 2000.  
<<http://www2.hindustantimes.com/nonfram/081299/detCIT08.htm>>.

"BJP to cash in on Uttarakhand's martyrs." *Indian Express*. 03 August, 1999. 24 July, 2000.

<wysiwyg://22/http://www.expressindia.com/ie/daily/19990803/ipo)3072.html>.

"BJP MLA's move for Uttaranchal state." *National Herald* (Lucknow). 27 June, 1991.

Bishet, Arvind Singh. "Uttaranchal will reduce UP House's strength." *Times of India-C*. 03 August, 2000. 03 August, 2000.

<wysiwyg://11/http://www.timesofindia.com/today/03indi14.htm>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Capital for Uttaranchal will be a thorny issue." *Times of India*. 04 August, 2000. 04 August, 2000. <wysiwyg://3http://www.timesofindia.com/today/04mlkn1.htm>.

Chandramohan, C.K. "India—Uttar Pradesh people feel cheated." *The Hindu*. Editorial. 25 December, 1998.

"Cong, BJP lock horns over Uttarakhand bandh." *Times of India*. 26 July, 2000. July 26, 2000. <wysiwyg://3/http://www.timesofindia.com/today/26mlkn1.htm>.

"Creation of separate hill state: SJP to intensify stir." *National Herald* (Lucknow). 30 September, 1992.

"Creation of two new states demanded." *National Herald* (Lucknow). 06 March, 1993.

Dutt, V.P. "The 1991 elections: implications and dangers." Editorial. *National Herald* (Lucknow) 26 June, 1991.

Gupta, Smita. "Chhattisgarh may weaken Congress in MP." *Times of India-D*. 03 August, 2000. 03 August, 2000. <wysiwyg://13/http://www.timesofindia.com/today/03indi10.htm>.

"India Cong. Hopeful of regaining base in Uttarakhand." *The Hindu*. 22 July, 1997.

"India Hair's breadth margins likely in Uttarakhand." *The Hindu*. 20 February, 1998.

"India resentment over Mayawati's action." *The Hindu*. 19 August, 1997.

"India U.F. in a fix over Uttarakhand." *The Hindu*. 26 August, 1997.

"Indian troops kill 10 at rally." *The Independent* (London). 03 October, 1994.

"JD(A) for creation of Uttarakhand." *National Herald* (Lucknow). 29 June, 1992.

"Govt. decision on Uttaranchal flayed." *National Herald* (Lucknow). 15 August, 1991.

Joshi, Charu Lata. "Uttarakhand rapes: unraveling a cover-up." *India Today* 30 June, 1995: 30-33.

Katyal, Anita. "Jharkhand may spell loss of clout for Congress." *Times of India-E*. 03 August, 2000. 03 August, 2000.

<wysiwyg://9http://www.timesofindia.com/today/03indi2.htm>.

Kumar, Vinay. "India Home Ministry processing bill on Uttarakhand." 7 April, 1998.

Kazmi, S.M.A. "BJP to cash in on Uttarakhand's martyrs." *Indian Express*. 03 August, 1999. 25 July, 2000.

<wysiwyg://22http://www.expressindia.com/ie/daily/19990803/ipo03072.html>.

"LCP demoralized over inclusion of Hardwar in Uttaranchal." *Times of India-F*. 03 August, 2000. 03 August, 2000.

<wysiwyg://66/http://www.timesofindia.com/030800/03mlkn3.htm>.

"Lok Sabha okays Chhattisgrah state." *Times of India*. 01 August, 2000.

01 August, 2000. <wysiwyg://3/http://www.timesofindia.com/today/01home5.htm>.

"Lok Sabha gives green signal to Uttaranchal." *Times of India*. 02 August, 2000.

02 August, 2000. <wysiwyg://5/http://www.timesofindia.com/today/02home2.htm>.

"Lok Sabha gives green signal to Uttaranchal." *Times of India*. 02 August, 2000.

02 August, 2000. <<http://www.timesofindia.com/today/02home2.htm>>.

"New govt. to recommend 'Uttaranchal.'" *National Herald* (Lucknow). 27 June, 1991.

Nagchoudhury, Subrata. "Remapping the country." *India Today*. 15 October, 1996: 50-56.

Nailwal, R.P. "BJP may form the first Uttaranchal Govt." *Times of India*. 05 August 2000. 05 August, 2000.

<[www.wysiwyg://74/http://www.timesofindia.com/050800/05indi4.htm](http://www.timesofindia.com/050800/05indi4.htm)>.

"Parliamentary Pretensions." Comment. *India Today*. 30 April, 1997: 05.

"'Paying guest' scheme for Kumaon region." *National Herald* (Lucknow). 23 June, 1994.

"Redraw political map of India: BJP." *National Herald* (Lucknow). 22 September, 1992.

"RJD to oppose introduction of statehood Bills." *Times of India*. 23 July, 2000.

23 July, 2000 <<http://www.timesofindia.com/today/23indu5.htm>>.

Singh, N.K. "New States: divide but rule." *India Today*. 13 July, 1998: 18-21.

Verma, Amita. "Fresh impetus to demand for Purvanchal." *National Herald* (Lucknow). 25 August, 1992.