1 The colonial legacy in India and Pakistan

Few political decisions in the twentieth century have altered the course of history in more dramatic fashion than the partition of India in 1947. To be sure, the end of formal colonialism and the redrawing of national boundaries was a tumultuous event, sending tremors throughout much of Asia and beyond. Yet perhaps nowhere was the shock felt more intensely or more violently than in the Indian subcontinent. Economic and social linkages which over the millennia had survived periods of imperial consolidation, crises and collapse to weld the peoples of the subcontinent into a loosely layered framework of interdependence were rudely severed. Political differences among Indians over the modalities of power sharing once independence had been won sheared apart the closely woven threads of a colonial administrative structure that had institutionally integrated, if never quite unified, the subcontinent. That the culmination of some two hundred years of colonial institution-building should have sapped the subcontinent's capacity for accommodation and adaptation is a telling comment on the ways in which imperialism impressed itself on Indian society, economy and polity.

A rich and complex mosaic of cultural diversities which had evolved creative political mechanisms of compromise and collaboration long before the colonial advent, India through the centuries had managed to retain its geographical unity despite the pressures imposed by military invasion, social division and political conflict. There was little agreement on the basis of this unity or on its precise boundaries. Yet the idea of India as a distinctive geographical entity largely escaped the rigours of searching scepticism. Tracing its origins to the epic period in ancient Indian history, the concept of Bharat or Mahabharat had come to encapsulate a subcontinental expanse of mythical, sacred and political geography. Later the Arab and Persian exogenous definitions of Al-Hind or Hindustan, as the land beyond the river Sindhu or Indus, became readily internalized and identifiable in the geographical lexicon of Indo-Islamic culture and civilization. By and large the fluidity of the boundaries of geographical India were matched in the pre-colonial era by the flexibilities of political India.

Even in periods of imperial consolidation empire-builders generally aspired to a loose form of hegemony over diverse and autonomous constituent units.

Before the British stepped into the breach, a succession of empire-builders had sought to bring the contours of political India into conformity with those of its vast geographical expanse. Only for fleeting moments in the pre-colonial era did India's geographical unity correspond with its political unity. An overarching geographical identity contrasted sharply with a political unity that had constantly to be negotiated and renegotiated between diverse peoples inhabiting the domains of sovereign or quasi-sovereign regional rulers. What made the colonial period unlike any other in history was the British attempt to turn the bare facts of geographical India, variously and imaginatively construed, into defining principles for a centralized political unity based on the notion of a singular and indivisible sovereignty. This conflation of categories had large implications, not only at the level of the colonial legal system and institutional structures but also of Indian ideology and politics. It is in the dialectical interaction of these two levels that the seeds of partition and, by extension, of the colonial legacy itself can be identified and assessed.

To the extent that the British effort to stretch the ambit of imperial control through rule-bound institutions based on Western concepts of contractual law and impersonalized sovereignty rather than on the personal patronage of rulers was without historical precedence in the subcontinent, so too were the consequences. A political unity conceived and constructed in cold-blooded fashion and frozen in the impersonal rationality of bureaucratic institutions could neither reflect, nor capture, the internal dynamics of a society accustomed to direct, personalized rule. Although the British succeeded in giving a semblance of institutional coherence to much of geographical India, the integrative process never qualified as political unification. The gap between the integrative institutions of the colonial state and the myriad distinctions and divisions within Indian society proved unbridgeable. With the spread of Western education a small elite could work the institutions of the colonial state to their own advantage. But access to these institutions, though competitive, was limited to the select few. For the vast majority of Indians, local bureaucrats such as the district collector – a quintessential creation of the British administrative system – disbursed a personalized form of patronage and judicial arbitration within the overall context of a rule-bound, indirect and impersonalized institutional structure. Except for a brief period in the early nineteenth century, the British avoided assertive interventions in the cultural domain, conceding a measure of autonomy to India's social diversities while exerting control over its politics and economy. Anomalies arising from the co-existence of rationalistic colonial laws and the customs of Indian society afforded some limited scope

for a subject people denied individual rights of citizenship to avoid the legal domain and instead seek redress within an attenuating arena of communitarian self-expression. The steady advance over time of a public sphere defined in colonial terms eroded, though never eliminated, the social space which could nurture the reciprocal rights and responsibilities that had characterized pre-colonial community. So while maintaining a distinction between the public and private spheres for its own purposes, the colonial state remained unconcerned about separating the legal aspects of individual subjecthood from its social manifestations in communitarian identity.

Discrepancies between colonial theory and practice were to have grave ramifications for the nationalist struggle whose promise of individual citizenship rights after the winning of independence had to contend with an assortment of communitarian forms of social organization and expression. Although the very character of Indian society forced a dilution of the purely rule-based logic of colonial institutions, constitutional control over them remained a primary objective of nationalist ambitions. The contradiction between a personalized Indian society and, in theory if not always in practice, an impersonalized colonial state apparatus became more acute after the introduction of the elective principle. The prospect of an increasing measure of self-government intensified the scramble for power and resources along religious, caste and regional lines. By the closing decades of the raj the conflicting aspirations of Indians, erroneously viewed in terms of the great religious divide between Hindus and Muslims, appeared to have become irreconcilable. With rival strands in Indian nationalism claiming sovereignty, whether whole or in part, keeping intact the unitary and centralized administrative structure demanded a modicum of compromise and political accommodation over and beyond the dominant idioms of colonial rule.

By collapsing the meaning of geographical and political unity, by insisting on defining unity solely in terms of the centralized institutionalized structures of the British raj, and by scorning the principles of accommodation and compromise that had earlier enabled the subcontinent to sustain itself as a unified if politically disparate geographical entity, Indian leaders demonstrated the extent to which their thinking had been coloured by the ideas and institutions of Western colonialism. Drawing upon India's pre-colonial past and imaginatively devising mechanisms of power sharing capable of accommodating the aspirations of diverse peoples and regions may have seemed impracticable. Yet a notion of unity which was to be preserved through a continuation of the same institutional rigidities and legal niceties that had been the bane of nationalists during the colonial era was hardly a fitting start to the subcontinent's independent future.

Partition then did not destroy a political unity forged by Indians through

processes of negotiation, compromise and accommodation; it merely replaced a constitutionally unified centralized institutional framework with two mutually exclusive and independent sovereignties – India and Pakistan. Part epitaph and part antithesis of British rule, partition left an indelible mark on all the legacies of colonialism in India – institutional, strategic, economic as well as ideological. The continuities and discontinuities between the colonial and post-colonial periods in both India and Pakistan are, therefore, best grasped through the refracting prism of the partition process that accompanied the British transfer of power in the subcontinent. Yet insofar as partition itself was a product – albeit unintended – of British rule, the broader historical context is a necessary point of reference in unravelling colonialism's differential legacies for states and societies in subcontinental South Asia.

The historical context of partition

Bringing political India into conformity with geographical India proceeded directly from British perceptions of imperial requirements, both strategic and economic. By contrast with the loosely woven web of suzerainty claimed by pre-colonial empires, the British established an essentially unitary state structure in colonial India. This required a skilful manipulation of two of the key dialectics that have spanned the history of the subcontinent's internal struggle to align its geographical and political frontiers: between centralism and regionalism on the one hand, and between all-India nationalism and communalism on the other. A formidable administrative structure with no formal separation between the bureaucracy and the political executive penetrated the lowest reaches of Indian society. In addition, the British entered into a series of treaty arrangements with a range of princely rulers whose territories they had found convenient not to annex and who were allowed varying degrees of autonomy in their internal affairs. This division of the subcontinent into directly and indirectly ruled territories – British India and princely India respectively – may not have been very tidy but it suited imperial purposes of administrative economy and coordination. While the princely rulers remained loyal compendiums of the British empire until 1947, a gradual process of administrative control brought their domains under closer scrutiny of the centralized colonial state apparatus.

In British India the colonial edifice, despite regional variations, relied on the trappings of bureaucratic authoritarianism and collaborative networks of local rural intermediaries to balance and cancel out pressures emanating from below. A series of constitutional reforms in the early twentieth century, aimed at broadening the colonial state's social bases of support, conceded the principle of elective representation, but only by diverting

Indian political attentions towards safe local and provincial pastures and keeping the unitary centre firmly in British hands. Even the most nominal form of representation at the local and provincial levels was a potential threat to the colonial state. So the Morley–Minto reforms of 1909 took the momentous step of creating communal categories, for instance separate electorates for Muslims, in the arena of limited electoral politics at all levels of representation. The structural contradiction between an emphasis on local and provincial arenas of politics on the one hand and communally compartmentalized electorates on the other was to have large implications for Indian politics. Localizing the spoils of office and state patronage was designed to encourage vertical rather than horizontal aggregation of political demands. With the institutions of representative government striking root in less than propitious soil, the disjunction between India's geographical and political unity was to become even more difficult to square. For now, the institutionalized fragmentation of Indian politics allowed the colonial state to manipulate and administer the affairs of a society differentiated by region, class, caste and community.

Indian nationalists, especially once Mohandas Gandhi nailed his colours to the Indian National Congress, went some way towards circumventing the strategy of the colonial state to alternatively regionalize and communalize Indian politics. Launching all-India agitational campaigns with the help of an imaginatively, if selectively, conceived nationalist pantheon of unifying idioms contested the colonial strategy of emphasizing difference in diversity. The more paradoxical results of British constitutional manoeuvres lay in the heightening of contradictions within Muslim politics. Indian Muslims were not merely a construction of twentieth-century British colonial social engineering. Yet neither did they represent a unified and solid community of interest to justify their compartmentalization into a separate all-India communal category for purposes of political representation. Far from facilitating the construction of an all-India Muslim identity – the logical concomitant of Muslims being a distinct political category with separate representation – the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms of 1919 and the government of India act of 1935 reinforced regional particularisms in the Muslim-majority provinces and intra-Muslim factionalism within the protected walls of specifically Muslim constituencies. While the Congress under Gandhi was partly successful in raising its organizational umbrella over the old factional structures of politics in the Hindu-majority provinces, the local and provincial politics of Muslims continued to operate outside the framework of the All-India Muslim League established in 1906 to promote and safeguard the interests of the 'Muslim' community. Indeed, the politics of those who happened to be Muslim were bounded more by locality and province, and not infrequently led to cooperation with members of other

religious communities, than by the specifically communal concerns of the tiny elite directing the Muslim League.

Despite a narrow base of support and a perilously weak organizational structure, particularly in the Muslim-majority provinces, the All-India Muslim League used the fact of Muslims being a separate political category to good advantage in the closing decades of the British raj. Challenging the Congress's claim to represent the whole of India and, therefore, its right to seize power at the unitary centre created by the British, the All-India Muslim League led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah found it convenient to reinstate the distinction between geographical and political unity which had been dropped from the lexicons of colonialists and nationalists alike. Acknowledging the fact of India's geographical unity, Jinnah left it an open question how that unity was to be reflected in a political structure representing the aspirations of not only India's Muslims but also the 562 princely states covering two-fifths of the subcontinent. Asserting that there were two nations in India, Hindu and Muslim, Jinnah demanded the creation of two essentially sovereign states, Pakistan – representing the Muslim-majority provinces – and Hindustan – representing the Hindu-majority provinces. There was force in Jinnah's contention that India was a geographic and, at best, an administrative rather than a political unity. Indian political unity, Jinnah maintained, could not be decreed and enforced by the unitary and centralized administrative structures of the colonial state. It had to be forged through a process of negotiations between the main political contenders to power after the British quit India. Implicit in this line of argument was a notion of Indian sovereignty as divisible and negotiable. Such an idea of sovereignty was at fundamental variance with Congress's notion of an indivisible and non-negotiable sovereignty for independent India. Sensing its ability to lay claim to the whole cake, Congress was understandably in no mood to debate the quality of its ingredients.

Jinnah's argument for keeping Indian geography and politics on separate but parallel tracks was part of a carefully planned strategy to win a large share of power for Muslims at the all-India level on the basis of their combined numerical majorities in the north-west and north-east of the subcontinent. This would give the Muslim League the leverage it needed to negotiate constitutional safeguards for Muslim minorities in the rest of India in exchange for those it would confer on the large non-Muslim populations residing within the territories of the Muslim state. Unfortunately for Jinnah and the Muslim League, the contradictory constraints imposed by the colonial political system on Muslim politics, namely the emphasis on provincial and local arenas of politics on the one hand and communally compartmentalized electorates on the other, worked to thwart the broader objectives for which the demand for Pakistan had been raised. If

the demand was to have the support of Indian Muslims, in majority as well as minority provinces, it had to appear to offer something to all Muslims. It could do so only if it was framed in communal terms. Yet the politics of Muslims at the regional level did not pour neatly into communal moulds. The affinities of regional geography were not always consistent with the emotions and aspirations elicited by the ideal of a united all-India Muslim politics. As was true for all of India, there lay a wedge between the unities of geography and the unities of Muslim politics. Consequently, while the Pakistan demand injected strong communal overtones into Indian politics, the Muslim League could not pull the different and frequently conflicting regional strands in Muslim politics into a unified and coherent whole. So even though the oscillation between communalism and regionalism influenced the final showdown between Indian nationalism and British colonialism as a whole, the clash between the communal and regional identities of Muslims had a more decisive bearing on the Muslim League's movement for a Pakistan.

Designed to safeguard the interests of all Indian Muslims, the League's communal demand for a Pakistan carved out of the Muslim-majority areas in the north-west and north-east of the subcontinent failed to contain the regionalisms of the Muslim provinces. These provinces lent support to the Muslim League in the hope of negotiating a constitutional arrangement based on strong provinces and a weak centre. This is why the Pakistan resolution of March 1940 had spoken of 'Independent Muslim states' in which the constituent units would be 'autonomous and sovereign'. Jinnah had taken care to hedge this concession to Muslim-majority province sentiments. An unlikely advocate of provincialism, Jinnah was looking for ways to restrain the regionalisms of the Muslim-majority provinces so as to bring their combined weight to bear at the all-India level. The cabinet mission plan of May 1946 came close to giving Jinnah what he needed by proposing the grouping of Muslim and Hindu provinces at the second tier while restricting the federal centre to only three subjects – defence, foreign affairs and communications. Significantly, on 16 June 1946 the All-India Muslim League rejected the mission's offer of a sovereign Pakistan carved out of the Muslim-majority provinces in the north-west and the Muslim-majority districts of partitioned Punjab and Bengal and accepted the alternative plan for a three-tier federal constitutional arrangement covering the whole of India.

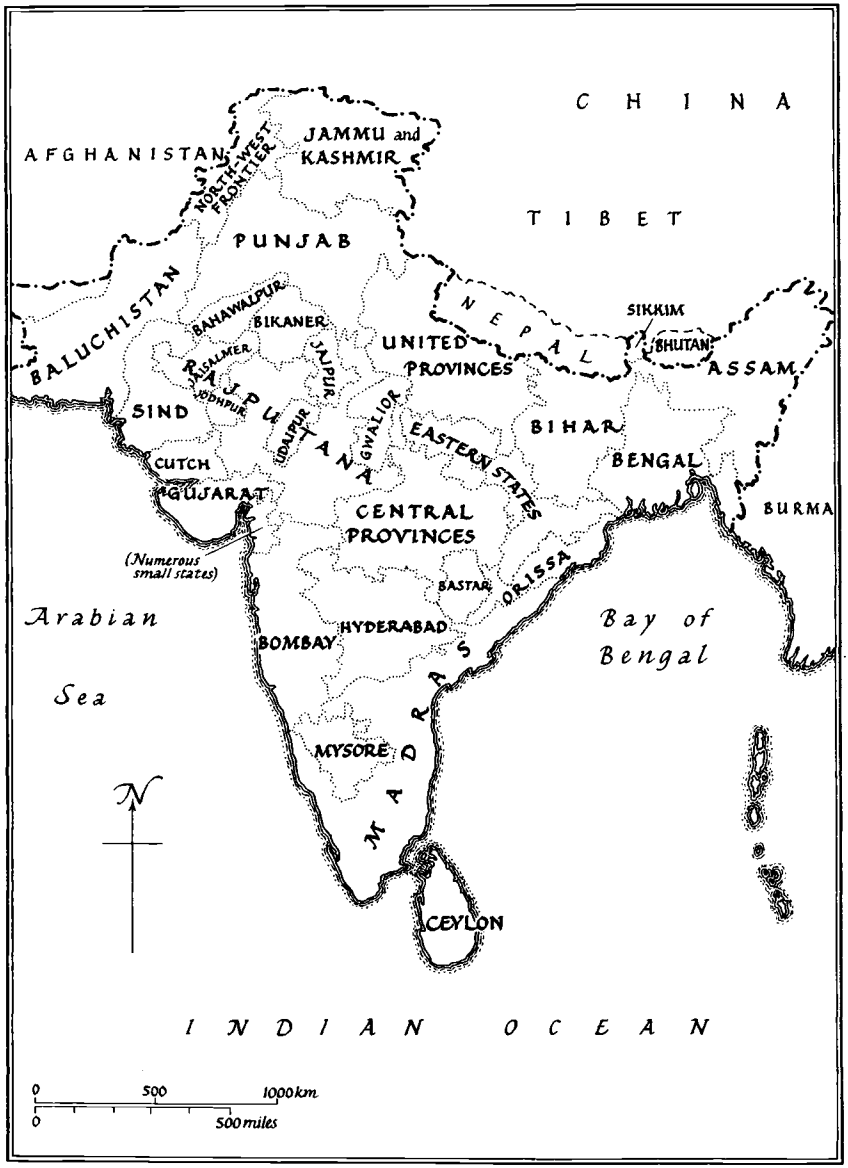
The implicit, if not explicit, assumption of a shared sovereignty between the Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority groups was unacceptable to a Congress advocating a composite nationalism based on an indivisible sovereign central authority. Inheriting the strong central apparatus of the colonial state was Congress's best insurance of quelling movements for

autonomy in the Hindu-majority provinces and bringing the princely states firmly into the Indian union. So Congress found it politically expedient to abandon its commitment to India's geographical integrity and allow the division of the subcontinent along ostensibly communal lines rather than weaken the impersonalized institutional structures of the colonial state to accommodate the powerful regionally based aspirations of the Muslim provinces. Such a vision of India's political unity, unbendingly and uncompromisingly captured in the frozen embrace of colonial institutions, was chilling to say the least. Yet here was the rub. Having successfully laid claim to the centralized apparatus of the colonial state, Congress insisted on using the term 'India' to define its polity even while carrying out the vivisection of geographical India. Jinnah and the Muslim League made strong, but ineffectual, protests that there could be no political India bereft of territories inhabitated by Muslim majorities. Investing the geographical term 'Hindustan' with new political meaning in opposition to the demand for a Pakistan, Jinnah argued that a federal or confederal union of India could only be based on an equal partnership between Hindustan and Pakistan.

With partition just around the corner, Jinnah's arguments fell on deaf ears. In control of three-quarters of the subcontinent, the Congress leadership required no special pleading to win British approbation in appropriating the international personality of British India. This minimized the psychological impact of partition, allowing the Congress leadership to keep alive the fiction of India's political unity surviving the subcontinental division even after the loss of its geographical integrity had been recognized internationally. But the multiple and complex bonds which through the centuries had locked together the different parts of India had not all been snapped by the sudden and arbitrary drawing of the lines of political division alone. It would require considerable administrative and political effort before the freshly demarcated frontiers could be made to reflect two wholly independent sovereignties in the subcontinent. Before that could happen a way had to be found to dismantle some key features of the colonial administrative structure, in particular those which had served to integrate the rest of India with the north-western and north-eastern extremities of the subcontinent.

The administrative legacy

In the closing months of the British raj in India, the twin dialectics of centralism and regionalism, and nationalism and communalism converged in complex ways, tearing apart the unity but retaining the substance of the very centralized administrative structure which had extended the colonial state's hold over Indian society. A casualty of partition and yet the most



1 The Indian Empire: administrative divisions, 1947

imposing legacy of colonialism, the division of the British Indian administrative structure is a key factor in assessing the differential inheritances of India and Pakistan. While India inherited the colonial state's unitary central apparatus without seriously rupturing its links with the lower rungs of the administration, Pakistan had to construct an entirely new central government before it could begin coordinating the affairs of the provincial, district and local levels of society.

The departure of British and Muslim officials of the Indian civil service undoubtedly complicated India's task of resettling millions of refugees fleeing both the eastern and the western wings of Pakistan, and completing the integration of the princely states which had enjoyed a quasi-autonomous status under the paramount colonial power. Of a total of some 955 ICS officers before partition, excluding Muslims but including British officers, 392 remained in India in the immediate aftermath of partition. Yet despite some personnel problems, India's transition from colonialism was smoothed considerably by the continuities provided by a pre-existing central state apparatus, to say nothing of the advantages of inheriting the domestic and international personality of British India. By contrast, the absence of a basic machinery linking the various tiers of the administration, a grave shortage of competent and experienced personnel and the unenviable status of having seceded from an internationally recognized sovereign and independent state compounded Pakistan's problems in asserting central authority over territories separated by over a thousand miles.

Notwithstanding the differential administrative legacies, both India and Pakistan drew heavily on the colonial state's methods of bureaucratic control and centralization. The government of India act of 1935, strengthening the very bureaucratic 'steel frame' of the British raj that had been the bête noire of Indian nationalists, was adapted to serve as the constitutional framework in both countries. In principle, a commitment to the ideal of democracy based on the Westminster model of parliamentary government ensured a formal separation between the bureaucracy and a representative political executive. But in actual practice the bureaucratic authoritarianism inherent in the colonial state structure remained largely intact. It proved difficult at the very onset to establish the principle of legislative supremacy over the executive. Despite the general scholarly view which traces its origin to a later period of institutional atrophy, the attractions of personalized patronage soon became prevalent in the operations of supposedly rule-bound institutions, elected as well as non-elected. In the words of an observer of the Indian administrative bureaucracy in the immediate aftermath of independence, 'the rule of law was ever bent to subserve either executive action in the administration or the will of dominant elements of

society'.[1] A greater propensity for executive action by politicians strengthened the hands of the administrative bureaucracy, the erstwhile non-elected representatives, many of whom openly derided the feasibility of democracy in subcontinental conditions.

Yet the legitimizing force of democracy in the wake of independence was too strong and pervasive to be discarded for the sake of administrative convenience. Instead of undertaking a massive reorganization of the administrative apparatus of the colonial state to guarantee the supremacy of elected institutions, the Indian and Pakistani political leadership alike formed alliances of convenience with members of the civil bureaucracy, the Indian civil service in particular. This was publicly justified on the grounds of pragmatism and the need to maintain some sort of administrative continuity to cope with the massive dislocations and law and order problems that followed in the wake of partition, especially in the northern, north-western and eastern parts of the subcontinent. The co-existence of formal democracy with bureaucratic authoritarianism has been one of the more enduring legacies of colonial rule in the subcontinent.

In keeping with the principles of democracy, the emphasis in the post-independence period was on strengthening the bond between the elected representative and the voter, in contradistinction to that between the local bureaucrat and the common people during the colonial period. But these measured nods in the direction of representative democracy, louder in Congress-dominated India than in Pakistan, scarcely disguised the dependence of both sets of leadership on the colonial bureaucracy. In the absence of a genuine commitment to an ideology of socio-economic development, granted Congress's socialist rhetoric and the Muslim League's placid appeals to Islamic social justice, relations between voters and their representatives were largely limited to elections. Although local bureaucrats were theoretically in a subordinate position to the elected representatives, they remained by virtue of their proximity and accessibility for all practical purposes the main representatives of the common people. Few politicians could expect to muster support in a constituency without at least the tacit support of the local administration. Unfamiliarity with the workings of both the political and administrative institutions of the state was another reason why most politicians had to try and establish a working, and often a dependent, relationship with the local bureaucrat.

So at the local levels of society in both dominions where the majority of the voters were bunched there was little qualitative change in the balance between the elected and non-elected institutions. Consequently, the exten-

[1] B. B. Misra, *Government and Bureaucracy in India: 1947–1976*, Delhi, 1986, p. 90.

sion in India of universal adult franchise did not energize the polity with the spirit of citizens' rights as distinct from the formal periodic exercise of voters' rights. The subservience of democratic politics to authoritarian states coupled with the attraction of caste and communal modes of mobilizing voters prevented the rise of an ethic of representatives' accountability to citizens that would be the hallmark of any substantive democracy. In parts of India where the Congress was relatively better organized, local party bosses could expect to successfully manipulate the administrative machinery to their own advantage in securing the support of a clientele of voters. Yet this merely confirmed the extent to which political success at the locality depended on the cooperation of the administrative bureaucracy. Where the Congress machinery was practically non-existent and riven with factionalism, bureaucrats had much greater leeway in administering the affairs of the locality. This kept alive the old face of bureaucratic despotism tempered by a personalized style in the operations of local administration even as the impersonalized, rule-bound service traditions were lauded and streamlined in both countries.

The persistence of bureaucratic authoritarianism in such marked fashion in the localities serves as a cautionary note against celebrating the boons of the new democratic dispensation which accompanied the transition from colonialism in India and Pakistan. As already alluded to above, even at the higher levels of the political system, the central in particular, the frequency and ease of executive action at legislative expense – often dubbed the 'viceregal' tradition – tended to supplant many of the basic precepts of democracy. While these qualifications are necessary to maintain perspective, it was undoubtedly at the central and provincial levels that the supremacy of the elected institutions – both executive and legislative – over the non-elected could be asserted with a greater or lesser measure of success. And it is here that the main differences between the Indian and Pakistani experiences have to be detected and analysed.

As part of the process of maintaining the greatest possible degree of administrative continuity, the political leaderships in both countries opted to retain the existing all-India services. These were recruited in open competitive examinations held at the all-India level and constituted into separate cadres for each of the provinces. Establishing the origin of recruits was an important feature of the colonial policy of posting members of the all-India services to the provincial and local levels. Generally speaking, members of the all-India services were appointed in provinces other than their own, a policy that was expected to inculcate an all-India outlook and help maintain a better measure of administrative objectivity. The policy was criticized – for instance by Bombay, West Bengal and the United Provinces in India – on the grounds that it was becoming increasingly necessary for

officers to be familiar with the language and the customs of the people. But its integrative overtones were attractive for central governments seeking to establish their writs at the different layers of the administration, especially in areas where political institutions were either non-existent or poorly developed. Though the impact of the policy varied from region to region, the overall effect was to deepen the process of administrative integration and fortify centralized state authority. There were more than the occasional hitches since the provinces enjoyed powers granted to them under the government of India act of 1935 and were not prepared to assist in a reversal of their autonomy. To offset provincial resentments at being dictated to by the centre in matters to do with their own administration various concessions were made, but none so great as to alter the essential thrust of the drive towards centralization. Under the terms of an agreement signed on 21 October 1946 between the centre and seven (later nine) provincial governments in India, the latter would approve the appointments of all central recruits. A similar arrangement was made between the Pakistani centre and the provinces. In both dominions quotas were fixed for recruitment to the ICS – renamed the Indian administrative service – and the Indian police service from each provincial civil and police service. For instance, under the emergency recruitment plan in operation in India between August 1947 and 1949, of the 454 new members of the IAS half were recruited from the provincial services.

Later the newly integrated Indian states, with the sole exception of Jammu and Kashmir, also accepted the same IAS and IPS schemes. This enabled the Indian centre to post members of the IAS and the IPS to the princely states, usually with extraordinary powers over the public representatives to expedite the process of administrative integration. Once again it was the institutional continuities at the centre which enabled the Indian states ministry to accomplish the feat of imposing New Delhi's sovereign authority over a bewildering collage of administrative units in erstwhile princely India. Pakistan's north-western provinces, where officials often tended to exercise larger discretionary powers than their counterparts in many British Indian provinces, provided an even more attractive canvas than princely India. With a centrally appointed official combining revenue, executive and magisterial and judicial functions in the districts, there was considerable scope for bureaucratic control and administrative centralization in West Pakistan.

So although both states went through a greater measure of administrative centralization than undivided India, the absence of a central state apparatus gave added impetus to that process in Pakistan. Given the weaknesses of the Muslim League's organizational machinery in the Muslim-majority provinces and the relative strengths of the Congress organization in the

Indian provinces, the Pakistani political leadership had to concede much greater autonomy to the administrative bureaucracy in order to consolidate state authority than its opposite number in India. Differences in their institutional inheritances, administrative as well as political, therefore, played a significant part in determining the degree of centralization in Pakistan and India during the initial years of independence. But the precise ways in which this shaped the dialectic between state construction and the political process depended in large part on the economic and strategic legacies of colonialism and, above all, of partition in the two countries.

The economics of partition and separate defence

Quite apart from the need to impose central authority, the expansion and centralization of the administrative machinery in Pakistan was needed to augment meagre state resources and finance the requirements of the defence establishment. Pakistan started its independent career with 17.5 per cent of the financial assets and 30 per cent of the defence forces of undivided India. With a mere Rs.200 million as its opening cash balances, Pakistan after 1 December 1947 when the division of the military personnel was completed had to cough up an estimated Rs.35 to Rs.50 million a month for the upkeep of its defence forces alone. Assuming responsibility for the defence of the strategically vulnerable north-western and north-eastern marcher regions of the subcontinent was well beyond the capacities of the newly created state. Already in the initial year of independence Pakistan's defence expenditure was higher than that of the undivided government of India.

In subsequent years the annual budgets of the Pakistani central government were essentially defence budgets with practically nothing available for developmental purposes. Such a crushing defence burden called for a drastic change in the financial relationship between the newly established Pakistani centre and the provinces. Very soon after partition the Pakistani provinces were hustled into relinquishing their right to a whole range of taxes by the central government in the interest of establishing the financial stability of the new state. And while India too had to reckon with a considerably weighty defence bill, it could afford to do so without placing the pre-independence financial relationship between the centre and the provinces in jeopardy. In 1950–1 the Pakistani central government for the first time sanctioned a paltry sum of Rs.1 crore for provincial development purposes. By contrast, the central government of India had been allocating between Rs.25 to Rs.30 crores annually as grants-in-aid to the provinces for reconstruction and development programmes. The per capita revenue of the Indian provinces was 40 per cent more than that of the Pakistani provinces. East Bengal had a per capita revenue below that of the poorest Indian

provinces such as Assam, Orissa and Bihar. While the Pakistani centre had to syphon off a large proportion of provincial resources to remain solvent, the Indian centre was able to fund 35 per cent of provincial development programmes. Under the circumstances the Pakistani provinces could not even emulate the modest achievements of their Indian counterparts in the financing of basic social services like education, public health and transport and reduce the differentials in the quality of life between the two countries.

So institutionally, strategically, economically and, consequently, politically, Pakistan was left facing a grimmer reality than India. This is not to suggest that things were light and easy for India; it is the balance of difficulties which underlines Pakistan's hapless predicament. With 23 per cent of the land mass of undivided India and 18 per cent of the population, Pakistan had less than 10 per cent of the industrial base in the two states and just a little over 7 per cent of the employment facilities. Mainly a raw material and foodstuff producing area, Pakistan could not expect to meet the expenditure for its strategic defence without expanding the state's administrative machinery and taking the politically precarious path of digging deeply and widely into provincial resources. Alternatively, Pakistan had to solicit foreign aid and, in this way, increase its dependence on the centres of the international capitalist system. The outbreak of military hostilities with India over the north Indian princely state of Kashmir within months of independence narrowed Pakistan's already restricted options.

Although predominantly agricultural, India was relatively better placed than Pakistan since the bulk of the industries in undivided India were situated in its territories. While possessing a considerably more diversified economy with the potential to tackle the problems of both unemployment and underemployment, the loss of some of the best irrigated land in the subcontinent to Pakistan increased India's food shortage by 0.5 to 0.7 million tons per annum. Despite centrally directed 'grow more food' campaigns and a concerted procurement drive, New Delhi had perforce to go in for large-scale food imports which in 1948–9 accounted for as much as 60 per cent of India's balance of payments deficit on current account. The deficit had to be financed by periodic releases from India's sterling balance account with the Bank of England and the purchase of $100 million from the International Monetary Fund in 1949. Before partition India had been a net earner of dollars with a healthy balance of payments position. By mid-1949, as a result of continuous annual trade deficits, transfers to Pakistan of its share of the sterling balances and remittances to Britain for the capitalized value of military stores and pensions, India had managed to reduce its inherited sterling balances by half, from Rs.1750 crores to Rs.825 crores. Increases in taxation, generally at the expense of the urban middle classes, failed to ease the financial crisis by improving the level of productivity.

Evidence of business confidence in the stability of the government in India did not translate into greater investment activity or help reduce levels of unemployment. Most of the revenue from the new taxes was used to pay for top heavy government expenditure which rose from some Rs.200 crores for united India to about Rs.600 crores for partitioned India. Government extravagance and rising food prices contributed to a post-war inflationary spiral made worse by the severe after-effects of partition.

Yet India's financial woes were more manageable than those enveloping Pakistan where efforts to stave off an imminent bankruptcy had been afoot since November 1947. While sharing most of the worst features of India's post-independence financial difficulties, Pakistan's exclusive reliance on the export of agricultural commodities magnified the problems fourfold. Only in relation to India did Pakistan initially enjoy some trading advantages. Its surplus foodstuffs as well as jute, cotton, hides, tanning materials, dyestuffs were exported to factories located in India. Indian industry and trade were dependent on these items, especially Pakistani raw jute and raw cotton which constituted 70 per cent and 40 per cent respectively of the total production in the subcontinent. But in return Pakistan was dependent on a number of Indian manufactured commodities and energy resources: cotton piece goods, iron and steel products, soap, coal, cement, petroleum, sugar and alkalis, as well as chemicals. Admittedly, these could be purchased from anywhere in the world. Yet under a standstill agreement currency, exchange, customs imports and export control and other matters of mutual concern were administered on an all-India basis until 31 March 1948. These arrangements, necessitated by the interdependence of the Indian and the Pakistani economies, soon crumbled under the strain of congenital rivalry between the two states.

The interdependence of the two economies in the initial years of partition is in part reflected by the foreign trade figures. In 1948–9, Indo-Pakistan trade accounted for just under 20 per cent of India's total foreign trade or 18 per cent of its imports and 16 per cent of its exports. By comparison, inter-dominion trade accounted for as much as 41.2 per cent of Pakistan's total foreign trade or 37 per cent of the imports and 61 per cent of the exports. Clearly, Pakistan was far more dependent in aggregate terms on trade with India. Yet the trade figures underplay the extent to which Indian jute mills in Calcutta and cotton mills in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Cawnpore depended on imports of Pakistani raw materials. The inelasticity of demand for raw jute and raw cotton gave Pakistan far more bargaining power with the government of India than the statistical evidence suggests. This was exemplified by the nonchalance with which Pakistan refused to devalue its rupee following the devaluation decisions taken by Britain and India in September 1949. Yet Pakistan's search for alternative sources and

markets for its imports and exports was a long and arduous one and, not infrequently, entailed policy decisions that were economically and politically more damaging than the existing arrangements with India. And while the Indian economy showed remarkable resilience by increasing the production of raw jute and raw cotton, the disruption of free internal trade between the different regions in the subcontinent did extract considerable costs in human, financial and infrastructural terms from both dominions.

The ideological dimension

If the institutional legacy provided critical elements of continuity between the colonial and the post-colonial periods, reversing the economic interdependence of the subcontinent together with the altered strategic imperatives of the two states underline the main points of discontinuity. The ideological legacies of colonialism are in many ways a reflection of and a reaction to these continuities and discontinuities. Ostensibly, the secularism of the Congress and the communalism of the Muslim League are the main ideological legacies of the colonial era in India and Pakistan. But it is only by scaling the gap between rhetoric and reality that the ideological impact of colonialism in the subcontinent can be meaningfully assessed. Both creeds were formulated as a response to colonialism in a bid to win the allegiance of large segments of Indian society. As the most likely inheritor of the British colonial mantle, Congress's secularism derived from pragmatic quite as much as ethical and moral considerations. Congress's claim to be the only representative organization in a society divided along community and caste lines demanded the conscious projection of a secular ideology.

The translation of a secular ideology into secular politics, however, proved to be fraught with contradictions. In one of the typical paradoxes of Indian society the very factors necessitating the politics of secular nationalism laid the basis for particularistic religious communalism. Despite the official creed of secularism, a succession of Congress leaders both before and after Gandhi had grasped the expediency of resorting to popular Hindu religious symbols. An assertion of cultural confidence against alien rule as well as a strategy for political mobilization, the use of the Hindu idiom did much to narrow the gap separating India's localized public arenas from the larger purposes of the nationalist leadership. Yet what was intended to paper over the innumerable cracks within the majority community had the unwitting effect of appearing to set Hindus apart from non-Hindus, Muslims in particular.

The manipulation of religious symbolism in a secular nationalist garb had deeper intellectual moorings. Since the late nineteenth century leading voices in the anti-colonial struggle repeatedly equated their conception of

the Indian people as a collectivity or a 'nation' with *Bharatvarsha*, the land of the mythological Vedic ruler Bharat. A definition of the Indian nation fashioned on ideas of territoriality found in ancient Hindu texts and popular mythology was not seen to compromise Congress's secularism. Presaging Gandhi's political philosophy in the twentieth century, Bipin Chandra Pal – by no means the most strident proponent of a religiously or racially based nationalism – had nevertheless argued forcefully along with many others that Hinduism was not simply a religion but an all-encompassing social system subsuming the diverse peoples and cultures inhabiting the geographical space that was India. On this view, it was 'unpardonable ignorance' to suggest that India was no more than a mere geographical entity consisting of 'a chaotic congregation ... of tribes and races, families and castes, but not 'in any sense a nation'.[2] Despite its multifarious diversities, social and political, India was united by an overarching cultural ideal based on shared spiritual meanings and the disciplines of *dharma*. The main contribution of the Muslims was to lend a greater measure of political and administrative unity to a country already possessing a strong sense of its common spiritual and emotional roots. This was the India which the British came to and conquered, not 'an unorganised, unconscious, and undeveloped chaos' devoid of any sense of its collective identity.[3]

Insofar as nations are the constructions of educated imaginings, there is nothing extraordinary about this convenient substitution of history with mythology. Much the same tendency is discernable in the writings of Indian nationalist luminaries as far apart ideologically as a B. G. Tilak, an Aurobindo Ghosh and even a Subhas Chandra Bose. Arguing the prior existence of an Indian nation was intrinsic to the nationalist struggle against colonialism. It was a claim made by ideologically disparate nationalists to contest the attempt by the colonial masters to emphasize India's manifold social divisions even while establishing administrative centralization. But the claim came to dominate nationalist discourse only after the 1920s when Gandhi successfully began translating ideology into the politics of mass action. Yet ironically enough it was in the domain of politics that the notion of a singular Indian nation, albeit one containing many divergent strands, was most effectively contested. Intended to buttress the nationalist cause, the claim of Indian nationhood closely associated with such explicitly Hindu concepts as *varnashramadharma* and *Ram Rajya* gave impetus to the very diverse forces it intended to harness against the colonial state.

Pejoratively dubbed communal, these forces were not quite the artifacts of colonialism which the nationalists mistakenly believed. Unable to

[2] Bipin Chandra Pal, *The Soul of India: A Constructive Study of Indian Thoughts and Ideals* (fourth edition), Calcutta, 1958, p. 93 [first published in 1911].

[3] Ibid.

identify with many of the symbols deployed by the Congress, especially after the Gandhian takeover, many Muslims given their minority status were susceptible to anyone offering an alternative cultural construct for their politics. As the clash of cultural symbols, Hindu and Muslim, played itself out on the various levels of the Indian political stage, the lines dividing the vision of an inclusionary Indian nationalism from that of an exclusionary communalism became more clearly defined. The alienation of a growing number of Muslims and the British perception of them as a separate communal category was capitalized upon by the All-India Muslim League, not as a first step towards the attainment of an Islamic state but as a political ploy to win the support of a constituency divided by class, region and language in order to counter the Congress's unchallenged ascent to power in an independent India. In other words, the League's recourse to an exclusionary, religious communalism was in response to Congress's inclusionary, secular nationalism which borrowed heavily from Hindu ethical ideals and mythology. This is not to deny the possibility that some Muslim League leaders were genuinely attached to Islamic cultural symbols. Yet one does not have to plough the depths of cynicism to view the League's communal stance as a matter of political necessity on the part of a party purportedly representing an ideologically and organizationally divided minority.

Instead of representing two sharply divergent or mutually exclusive world views, secularism and communalism in the subcontinental context in fact reveal themselves as alternative strategies of political mobilization. As such they appear less as polar opposites than competing and interacting political forces. Just as the Congress's secularism was frequently overwrought with evocations of Hindu symbolism, the League's communalism was shot through with concerns that were other than purely religious. The paradox of Mohammad Ali Jinnah with his secular leanings advocating the League's communal demand for a Pakistan, and Gandhi with his strong Hindu beliefs propounding the doctrine of communal unity, rapidly appropriated as one of the central pillars of Congress's secular post-colonial ideology, is a comment on the ambiguities surrounding the uses made of religion in South Asian politics.

Contradictions between the rhetoric and reality of Congress's secularism and the League's religious communalism were not confined to the top leadership alone. A powerful group of Hindu ideologues took the cover of Congress's secularism to advance their cause while an array of Islamic ideologues stayed outside the Muslim League's corral to protest its lack of Islamic commitment. What is more, Congress's acceptance of partition along communal lines for the sake of a strong centralized state power was a complete reversal of its policy of acquiring power over a secular and united

India. That a movement claiming higher moral ground over its rivals and long guided by Gandhi, for whom the very notion of centralized state authority was the organized annihilation of individual spirituality and freedom, should in the end have sacrificed all at the instance of Congress's machine politicians – Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in particular – for control over the colonial masters' satanic institutions of oppression is one of the more profound ironies of recent subcontinental history. And as for the Muslim League which at least had been consistently confused ideologically, the goal of Pakistan was attained by dividing the very Muslim community whose interests it supposedly wanted to represent and safeguard.

If partition deflected, even distorted, the ideological positions of the Congress and the Muslim League, the institutional, strategic and economic legacies of colonialism contorted many of the objectives for which independence had been won. The commitment to democracy was compromised by the attractions of governance through the bureaucratic instruments of the state. A communal holocaust following partition and the onset of military hostilities between India and Pakistan made a mockery of Gandhian notions of non-violence. The assumption of the centralized power of the raj by the Congress professing an ideology of reformist class conciliation but in fact representing the interests of specific privileged groups postponed the goals of socio-economic reform aimed at eliminating poverty, discrimination and exploitation. In Pakistan, the unifying bonds of Islam could not prevent the imperatives of constructing a central apparatus and raising a viable shield of defence against India from exacerbating the sense of alienation and socio-economic deprivation in the various regions.

So the dominant idioms of nationalism, secularism and communalism of the late colonial era left rather contradictory and confusing legacies. It was the Western colonial ideology of an indivisible sovereignty as underwritten by a centralized state structure that held the more unambiguous attraction for the managers of the subcontinent's post-colonial states. This was an ideology of sovereignty that, ironically enough, survived the agonizing political division of the subcontinent and was sought to be replicated at the central apexes of two independent sovereign states. The ideological inheritance has had a powerful bearing on the centre–region dialectic and the authoritarian strains within state structures in post-colonial South Asia. Analysed in interaction with the contrasting institutional legacies of the colonial state it provides a critical ingredient to a comparative study of the relationship between state structures and political processes in post-independence India and Pakistan.