



INDIA

Foundations of Indian Civilization (2500 BCE – 300 CE)

Ancient Roots and Social Stratification

- 2500 BCE: **The Indus Valley Civilization:** India's urban history begins with the Harappan culture. These were master traders who built planned cities like Mohenjo-Daro, featuring standardized architecture and advanced sewage systems. Their undeciphered script remains one of history's great mysteries.
- 1500 BCE: **The Vedic Age:** Indo-Aryan migrations introduced the Sanskrit language and the Rig-Veda. This warrior-centric culture laid the philosophical groundwork for Indian literature.
- 1500 – 500 BCE: **Evolution of Hinduism:** Hinduism emerged as a collection of diverse traditions centered on karma and rebirth. It evolved through Vedic rituals into a cohesive spiritual framework, eventually becoming the world's oldest continuously practiced religion.

The Institutionalization of Caste

1. **Varna System** (1200 – 1000 BCE): Originally a functional social organization categorized into four tiers: Priests/Scholars, Warriors, Merchants, and Laborers.
2. **Jati System** (500 BCE – 300 CE): Over time, social mobility vanished. Status became strictly hereditary (by birth), dictating marriage, occupation, and social circles, effectively locking individuals into a permanent social rank.


The First Unifications

- 322 BCE: **The Mauryan Empire:** Founded by Chandragupta Maurya, this was the first entity to unify the subcontinent. It featured a massive standing army and efficient taxation.
- 320 CE: **The Gupta Dynasty:** Known as the "Golden Age," this period favored elite Sanskrit culture and saw a massive explosion in science and the arts under a stable, unified rule.

Colonialism, Resistance, and Sovereignty

The Mughal and British Eras

- 1526: **Mughal Empire:** Established by Babur, the Mughals blended Persian and Indian influences, creating a wealthy state famous for grand architecture like the Taj Mahal.
- 1600s: **East India Company (EIC):** Initially a trading monopoly, the EIC exploited Mughal fragmentation to become a "quasi-state" with its own army and taxing power.
- 1857: **The Sepoy Mutiny:** A violent uprising by Indian soldiers against the EIC failed due to lack of unified leadership but forced the British Crown to take direct control.
- 1858: **The British Raj:** Queen Victoria was declared Empress. This period was marked by the "Drain of Wealth," where India's economy was restructured to serve British industry, leading to widespread poverty and famines.



The Road to Independence

- 1930: **Salt March**: Mahatma Gandhi's 240-mile protest against the salt monopoly proved that nonviolent civil disobedience could mobilize millions.
- 1942: **Quit India Movement**: Launched during WWII, this movement signaled that Britain could no longer govern India without indigenous consent.
- August 15, 1947: **Independence and Partition**: India gained freedom but was violently split into India and Pakistan. This triggered a migration of 15 million people and hundreds of thousands of deaths.
- **The Kashmir Conflict**: The contested status of Kashmir, a Muslim-majority region joined to India by its Hindu ruler, remains a primary source of nuclear-armed tension today.

Geography and Global Strategy

The Subcontinental Fortress

India is the world's seventh-largest landmass, functioning as a self-contained "subcontinent."

- **Natural Barriers**: The Himalayas to the north block Arctic winds and trap moisture for Monsoons (the lifeblood of agriculture), while the ocean borders on three sides historically protected the region and facilitated trade.
- **Geopolitics of the "Heart of Asia"**: India shares borders with eight nations (including China and Pakistan), making it pivotal to continental security.

Maritime and Frontier Strategy

- **Indo-Pacific Vision**: India utilizes its central location in the Indian Ocean to project "soft power." The Sagarmala Pariyojana initiative modernizes ports to boost agricultural exports.
- **Two-Front Security Dilemma**: India must maintain high military readiness to address simultaneous threats from Pakistan (West) and China (North/East), specifically along the volatile Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The Modern Political System (2026 Status)


Structure of the Republic

India is a Sovereign, Secular, Democratic Republic under the 1950 Constitution.

- **Quasi-Federalism**: Power is split between the Union (Central) and 28 States, though the Centre holds ultimate authority during national crises.
- **Three Pillars**: The Executive (PM/Cabinet), Legislature (Bicameral Parliament: Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), and Judiciary (Supreme Court).
- **Three-Tier Governance**: Authority flows from the Union to the States, down to local Panchayats (villages) and Municipalities.

Political Participation (2024/2026 Data)

- **The Electorate**: 96.88 crore (968 million) registered voters.

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- Turnout: Approximately 65.79% overall.
 - The "Silent Revolution": Women's participation has reached parity with men, making them a decisive national vote bank.
 - NOTA: The "Right to Reject" remains a tool for local protest, peaking at 16.28% in specific frustrated constituencies.

The Six National Parties

As of 2026, the ECI recognizes six parties with National status:

1. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP): The dominant plurality (240 seats); focuses on Hindutva (cultural nationalism). It is the "Central Pillar" of the current system.
2. Indian National Congress (INC): The revived "Leader of the Opposition" (99 seats) under Rahul Gandhi, acting as the glue for anti-BJP coalitions.
3. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP): Known for governance models in Delhi and Punjab.
4. Communist Party of India (Marxist): Represents the far-left ideological wing.
5. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP): Historically represents the interests of the Dalit (lower caste) communities.
6. National People's Party (NPP): A significant force representing Northeast India.

The "Fourth Party System"

India has moved past the "fragmented" coalition era of the 1990s. The current system is defined by the BJP as the "Sun"—an undisputed central pillar around which all other parties orbit. While the government now works within coalition constraints, the BJP remains powerful enough to stay in power even if minor allies depart.

Key Interest Groups

- Ideological: The RSS serves as the mentor to the BJP, providing grassroots cadre and a Hindu nationalist framework.
- Economic: FICCI and ASSOCHAM lobby for market reforms and the \$5 trillion economy goal.
- Agrarian/Labor: Groups like Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) use direct action (protests) to check government power, as seen in the 2021 farmer law reversals.

Civil Society and Social Movements

The Landscape of Civil Society

In India, civil society (CS) is a vast, decentralized network of NGOs, religious groups, student bodies, and labor unions. Post-independence, it has evolved from a purely development-based approach to a **rights-based empowerment model**, serving as a "watchdog" over government actions.

- **Cultural Roots:** CS is grounded in the concepts of **Dharma** (duty) and **Daan** (giving), values shared across all religious traditions that encourage communal support.

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- **Reach:** Civil society maintains a strong, diverse presence in both urban centers and rural villages.

Pivotal Social Movements

Social movements in India are grassroots-driven and deeply intertwined with identity, social justice, and development.

- **Quit India Movement (1942):** Launched by Mahatma Gandhi with the slogan "Do or Die," this act of mass civil disobedience demanded an immediate end to British rule without compromise.
 - **Anti-Dowry Movement:** A crusade for women's rights aimed at ending the violence and exploitation caused by the dowry system. This led to the **Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961**, which criminalizes the practice to protect women's dignity.
 - **Chipko Movement:** An iconic forest conservation movement where protesters hugged trees to prevent commercial logging. This activism helped pass the **Environment Protection Act (1986)** and solidified India's role in global environmental discussions.
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Political Culture

Political Dynasties

Despite being a Republic, Indian politics is characterized by families holding power across generations. The most prominent is the **Nehru-Gandhi family** (not related to Mahatma Gandhi).

- **Key Figures:** Jawaharlal Nehru (1st PM), Indira Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi.
- **Current Context:** Rahul Gandhi led the Indian National Congress (INC) opposition against the BJP, focusing on secularism and welfare in contrast to the BJP's Hindu nationalist and pro-business model.


The Modern Caste System and "Vote Banks"

The caste hierarchy remains a significant influence on social and political identity.

- **The Hierarchy:** Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras (laborers), with **Dalits** historically marginalized outside this structure.
 - **Vote Bank Politics:** Political parties often target specific caste or religious groups with tailored promises or "reservations" (quotas) to secure a loyal block of voters.
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Political Communication

Election Strategy: The Digital and the Physical

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- **Digital Outreach:** The 2019 election was considered a "WhatsApp election." The BJP utilized over 1.2 million social media volunteers and three WhatsApp groups per polling booth.
 - **The Power of Rallies:** Despite digital dominance, mass in-person rallies remain essential. Voters still value face-to-face campaigning as much as, or more than, social media outreach.

Governance and Media Accountability

- **Mann Ki Baat (MKB):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi uses this monthly radio program to reach rural voters directly, publicizing initiatives and explaining complex policies like the GST.
 - **Social Media:** PM Modi maintains a massive digital footprint (100+ million followers on X as of 2024), using it for public announcements and policy promotion.
 - **Media as a Watchdog:** Media plays a critical role in accountability. For example, in Karnataka, media coverage of leaked videos forced the government to arrest lawmakers charged with sexual assault.
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Geopolitical Stance and Foreign Policy

Russian Invasion of Ukraine

India maintains a policy of **public neutrality**, abstaining from UN votes that condemn Russia.

- **Historical Ties:** Russia has been a "sturdy friend" since 1955, using its **UN Security Council veto** on India's behalf six times (notably regarding Kashmir and the 1971 war).
- **Current Strategy:** India focuses on the humanitarian crisis rather than assigning blame, as maintaining the Russian relationship is vital for its strategic interests and UN support.


Israel-Hamas Conflict: The Balancing Act

India supports both sides through different lenses:

- **Support for Israel:** India views the conflict through a **counter-terrorism lens**. PM Modi was one of the first to condemn the October 7 attacks. India has deep defense and technology ties with Israel (exceeding \$10 billion).
- **Support for Palestine:** India continues to back a **Two-State Solution** and has voted in the UN against illegal Israeli settlements. As a leader of the **Global South**, India must balance its Israeli ties with the pro-Palestine sentiments of Arab nations and developing partners.

Executive-Legislative Relations

India operates under a **Parliamentary System** defined by the **Fusion of Powers**.

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- **The Fusion:** The Executive (PM and Council of Ministers) is drawn directly from the Legislature (Parliament). The PM must be a member of either the Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha.
 - **Executive Accountability:** The government must maintain the confidence of the **Lok Sabha** (Lower House). Accountability is enforced through:
 1. **Votes of No Confidence** (can remove the PM).
 2. **Question Hour** (direct questioning of ministers).
 3. **Parliamentary Committees** (detailed scrutiny of laws).
 - **Legislative Influence:** While the Executive is technically accountable to Parliament, in practice, the PM often influences the Legislature through party discipline and controlling the majority agenda.