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Vision and Strategy in Indian Politics.

Jawaharlal Nehru's Policy Choices and the Designing of Political Institutions.

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Chapter One

The art and craft of policy-making.

Modernisation, political development and political disorder in political science.

Nehruana literature.

This book sets out to analyse the politics behind policy-making during the early years of India's independence under the country's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Using three cases of policy choices as its unit of analysis, the study proposes two central variables, vision and strategy that determine the resilience of policy outcomes. By focusing on Jawaharlal Nehru, the aim is to examine both structural constraints as well as the ideological and intellectual impulses that motivated his policy decisions. Nehru led the country for seventeen years, initially as head of the interim legislature (1947 – 1952) and then won three successive general elections (1952, 1957, 1961). He was also leader of the Indian National Congress party

in addition to holding other ministerial posts during his prime ministership. Imprisoned for more than nine years during the independence struggle[1] and anointed as successor to Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru attained a larger than life stature in Indian politics. His impact has been long lasting and far-reaching. His admirers and critics alike, attribute the resilience of India's democracy to his stewardship during the crucial decades after independence, from the years 1947 to 1964. However, the existing literature on Nehru tends to be mostly biographical and narrative while the decade of the 1950s needs to be examined more thoroughly. This decade was crucial in the transition from colony to a post-colonial state with important implications for the long-run consolidation of India's modern, democratic institutions. Addressing this gap, the book seeks an interpretation based upon a theoretical framework where the individual actor's choices are set within a specific institutional context.

Nehru is the 'pivotal actor' given the power he gradually accumulated[2] and thus his preferences, worldview and 'vision' need to be explored in depth and detail. He cannot be seen in isolation, for both during the formative phase prior to independence and as prime minister, contextual constraints need to be taken into account. Nehru's position of power was by no means guaranteed and translating his preferences into policy required both tactical manoeuvring and bargaining. The aim therefore is to turn attention towards Nehru the political actor, to identify the challenges that he faced; the strategies that were devised to maintain,

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[1] On December 6, 1921, Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested for the first time, along with his father, Motilal Nehru. Jawaharlal was briefly released and then re-arrested. Motilal was released in 1922 while Jawaharlal was released on January 31, 1923. Other periods of jail sentence followed: October 19, 1930 – January 1931; December 26, 1931 to August 30, 1933; February 12, 1934 – September 1935; November 1940 – December 1941; August 1942 – June 1945.

[2] Jawaharlal Nehru was the prime minister of India from August 15, 1947 till his death in May 1964. During this time he also held the positions of Minister for External Affairs of India (for the entire period) and Finance Minister of India for one year (1958 – 1959), in addition to acting as chairperson on numerous committees and organisations and most importantly, serving as president of the Indian National Congress party on three occasions after independence (1951, 53 and 54).

enhance and project power, and in the process, the impact this had on the policies that were formulated and implemented under his leadership.

Three policy choices have been selected as case studies and with each, Jawaharlal Nehru can be personally associated. The three also represent the core pillars of Nehru's overall modernization project: the secular state, a non-aligned foreign policy, and a self-sufficient economy. The Hindu Code Bills of the 1950s were aimed at reforming Hindu law, and were the result of extensive parliamentary debates on the treatment of majority and minority communities and the dual, sometimes conflicting, duty of the state to act as reformer and modernizing agent as well as guarantor of equality and security. The Panchasheela Agreement signed by India and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1954 was showcased at the time as a success story for non-alignment. The founding of the Planning Commission in 1950 made it the most influential body for the planned economy. In all three cases extensive public debates were generated, first in the form of the Constituent Assembly Debates[3] and later the *Lok Sabha* Debates.[4] These issues have been selected because Nehru promoted them as key policies. Furthermore, each was given prominence during the general elections when they were propagated as central goals in the Congress party manifesto and cast as key issues that set the Congress apart from other political parties. In addition, the early 1950s were a period of intense jockeying as Nehru battled to consolidate power. Each of these policies therefore became both a test as well as demonstration, of power.

To place the study of Nehru within a wider context, the following section examines how political science engaged with the non-western world during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. This

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[3] Formed in 1946 the Constituent Assembly was elected to write the Constitution of India and served as the country's first parliament after independence.
[4] Parliamentary debates.

is important because the study of Indian politics has been and continues to be dominated by concepts, ideas and discussions emanating from discussions on modernization, political development and the role of the 'post-colonial state'[5]. An analysis of a particular leader and his polices, it is proposed, provides a different entry-point into the broad phenomena of 'old societies and new states' since it does not begin with assumptions about the 'appropriate objectives' for 'changing societies' as Huntington did in his 1968 book, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, or the presumption of an ideal-type universal, modern state. Instead the book takes leadership as an indigenous, home-grown category that is comparable across time and space in terms of the resources available to the actor and the constraints under which he/she operates.

Having identified some of the key authors and texts within the older school of writing on modernisation, the chapter presents a historiography of the existing literature on Nehru (known in India as Nehruana). A selection of seven biographies is portrayed, dating from different periods in time, and an analysis made of how little has changed in terms of the interpretation and material used to depict and understand Nehru.

Two questions initiated the research behind the book: (1) what were the factors that determined Nehru's decisions and, (2) can one evaluate the consequences of choices made? These emerged out of a curiosity about how to study the legacies of key political actors. The narrative biography whilst useful for details and insights more often than not fails to provide the basis for a comparison across time and space. Nor does the format of a biography usually allow for a systematic analysis of intentions of the actor(s) on the one hand and eventual outcome(s), on the other. Hence there is a need for a theory of agency which takes both the

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[5] See Mitra, S.K. (ed.) *The Post-Colonial State in Asia* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire, 1990).

actor's preferences into account as well as the strategic context. For this, the analysis borrows from the school of "new institutionalism" and "historical institutionalism"[6] the insight that sequence and timing in the decision-making process matters and that rationality is context-dependent.

Going beyond the causes of action, to explore the consequences, the argument is made that, at 'critical junctures', key policy decisions can alter a country's path of institutional development. For instance a prominent historical institutionalist advocates an analysis "that traces divergent trajectories back to systematic differences either in antecedent conditions or in the timing, sequencing, and interaction of specific political-economic processes, suggesting that not all options are equally viable at any given point in time"[7]. It is posited in this work that the early 1950s represented such a 'critical juncture'. While there was continuity with the colonial period, the transfer of power, and the subsequent shape of India's political institutions were far from inevitable. Most early India observers expected Indian democracy and territorial unity to be short lived. Instead, the period and its leaders generated a set of political institutions that represented a unique blend of continuity and disjuncture with the colonial past. Jawaharlal Nehru was at the centre of this transition to and consolidation of power.

As a result the book focuses on the micro-level of decision-making and policy implementation in order to reach a finely grained appraisal of the 'Nehru era'. To do this a 'structured, focused comparison' of the policy choices is made. As Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett explain in their book, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, the method is 'structured' because general questions are being asked that reflect the

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[6] See chapter two for details about these two analytical approaches.
[7] Thelen, *Annual Review of Political Science,* 1999, p. 385.

research objective and by asking the same questions of each case, a systematic comparison is possible. The method is 'focused' because it deals with certain, specified aspects of the historical cases being examined. As a result four central variables were identified to structure the comparative analysis:

(1) The <u>structure of opportunities</u> at the time, identified in terms of the organisational set-up, the various contenders for power and the range of positions articulated on specific policy issues.

(2) <u>Vision</u> which is applied here in terms of the meaning that particular issues have for the actor both in terms of their inherent value, as ends in themselves and, as instruments for attaining something else. This draws upon the distinction that was made by Max Weber in terms of *wertrationalität* and *zweckrationalität* and will be discussed in the following chapter.

(3) <u>Strategy</u> which is examined in terms of tactics such as the timing of decisions, the framing of policy debates and the justifications used to promote a particular policy.

(4) The <u>policy outcome</u> which is compared across the three examples in terms of the institutional provisions that arise as a result of a particular policy choice.

In chapter two these variables are discussed and the underlying assumptions are presented, drawn from the theories of rational choice, new institutionalism and historical institutionalism. Chapter two also contains a section on the methodology applied and addresses the challenge of remaining within the remit of political science whilst studying a historical figure. The choice of case studies is considered as well as the sources of data. A model of the policy-making process is constructed through which each of the three policy examples is examined.

Nehru's 'vision' is examined in chapter three in terms of the preferences and worldview as articulated in his early writings. Chapter four goes on to examine the 'structure of opportunities' by identifying Nehru's political rivals and the political space defined in terms of the range of positions articulated on specific policy issues. A study is also made of the consistency of his preferences by comparing his Congress party presidential speeches with his private writings. The subsequent three chapters take up each of the case studies individually and present an investigation into the strategies employed by Nehru to push through policies in the three fields of social reform, economic development and foreign policy. A final chapter summarises the findings generated through a comparison across the three cases and explores the implications that initial policy choices have for policy implementation in the longer-run.

Modernisation, political development and political disorder in political science.

To analyse the existing literature on Nehru and, to a large extent, the writing on India's political development, it is useful to delve into the perspectives that dominated the field of political science in the 1950s and 60s. As will be demonstrated, following the survey below, the assumptions of that time have strongly influenced the scholarship on India. Three general positions are identified in the social sciences literature that addresses the phenomena of modernization and political development in the non-western, post-colonial world. The first, dating from the late 1950s, was predominantly conducted by sociologists and economic historians who applied Western modernization as a model of global applicability. The 1960s witnessed a turn towards a more context-specific understanding of modernity and its interaction with tradition, and thirdly, the late 1960s generated model-driven approaches that sought to

explain political order and disorder rather than political development. This section examines each of the above, demonstrating by reference to studies on India, the weaknesses of these approaches. Ending with the 1970s, the chapter highlights the emergence of 'new institutionalism' and the school of rational choice in political science.

Characteristic of the late 1950s is the evolutionary point of view as represented by the writings of Rustow and Gerschenkron, both economic historians who proposed a stage-by-stage prognosis of economic development.[8] Such an approach implied that it was possible to categorise a country's 'level' of economic and even political development according to a set of attributes.[9] Unlike the pre-war view of industrialisation as degenerative and dangerous, the outlook of the 1950s highlighted the success of Western society, economy and politics. Modernisation, following the western path, was guaranteed to produce a 'modernity' comprising a political system that was more participatory and representative, an economy that was more efficient and a society that was more just, tolerant and rational.

Similarly, the sociologist, Daniel Lerner, in his 1958 book, *The Passing of Traditional Society* identified four sectors or dimensions that in the process of modernization, are systematically related to one another, these being: urbanization, literacy, media participation, and political participation.[10] By examining the relation between these four, Lerner believed it to be possible to rank societies in accordance with their degree of tradition, transition or modernity. This highly behavioural perspective produced studies that compiled attribute-

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[8] Rustow, W.W. *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1960); Gerschenkron, A. *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1962).

[9] Applied later by political scientists such as Almond, G. & Coleman, J. *The Politics of Developing Areas* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960); Organski, A.F.K. *The Stages of Political Development* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965)

[10] Lerner, D. *The Passing Of Traditional Society*, (New York, The Free Press, 1964), p.46.

checklists according to which the countries of the world could be ranked by the degree to which they approximated the characteristics of Western industrial societies. Apter, in his *Politics of Modernisation* similarly employed a dichotomous view: the world of tradition on the one hand, where life revolves around the community, is ascription-oriented, particularistic and functionally diffuse and a modern world on the other, that is functionally specific, universal and achievement-oriented.[11] The developmental paradigm to emerge out of this world-view and epistemology, proclaimed that traditional societies had to bring about deep-seated change to psychological attitudes and the structures of social organisation to achieve political and economic development.

The difficulties with such an approach are manifold. Among others, Richard Bendix identifies various methodological problems for example with the use of ideal types that creates a 'disjunctive characterisation of "tradition" and "modernity"'[12] where abstraction can result in the exaggeration or simplification of evidence. Referring to Max Weber, Bendix repeats the warning that "*Developmental* sequences too can be constructed into ideal types and these constructs can have quite considerable heuristic value. But this quite particularly gives rise to the danger that the ideal type and reality will be confused with one another".[13] The notion of 'prerequisites' is another term which Bendix sees as misleading. Implying that countries need to replicate conditions characteristic of modernity *before* they can ever hope to be successful in their drive for modernisation, the analyst ignores the possibility that some of the listed

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[11] Apter, D.E. *The Politics of Modernisation*. (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1965).
[12] Bendix, R. "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.9 (3), April 1967, p. 314.
[13] Weber, M. *The Methodology of Social Sciences,* (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1949), p.101

attributes may develop in the course of industrial development as a *consequence* rather than *cause* of modernisation.[14]

Proposing a reorientation, Bendix suggested that "the industrialisation and democratisation of Western Europe was a singular historic breakthrough, culminating in a century-long and specifically European development. But modernisation brings about specific discontinuities by virtue of its expansive tendencies so that the relation between the intrinsic structure and external setting of societies assumes special significance. Thus, the internal, historically developed structure of a country and the emulation induced by economic and political developments abroad affect each country's process of modernisation."[15] This can be cast in terms of a 'non-linear modernity' which offers an alternative to the view of development and politics as linear, circular or punctuated, the important point being that even a non-linear trajectory has its own path dependent logic[16].

In the case of India, it was increasingly observed that the country seemed to be experiencing processes of modernization that differed both in sequence and timing as compared to the Western model. For instance in many European countries the franchise was extended rather slowly, while in many newly independent countries universal suffrage had been adopted at once. A further methodological problem encountered by the early modernisation scholars was the question of whether methods and concepts drawn from the Western experience of history were really applicable to non-Western contexts.[17] The need to account for, and

[14] Bendix, R. "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.9 (3), April 1967, p. 316.
[15] Ibid. p. 329.
[16] See Mitra, S.K. (ed.) *Politics of Modern South Asia. Critical Issues in Modern Politics* (Routledge, London, 2008) , pp. 2 – 5.
[17] See Sathyamurthy, T.V. *Terms of Political Discourse in India.* (University of York, York, 1989), p.5

recognize differences in the routes, the variation in the outcomes of modernization, prompted scholars to reconsider the relationship between modernity and tradition.

Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph for example, examined the transformation of caste into 'bearer of both India's ancient regime and its democratic political revolution'.[18] The process of transformation was described by them as caste having 'reconstituted itself into the *sabha* with characteristics of both the natural and the voluntary association,… defined in terms of both *dharma* and democracy'.[19] Their seminal book in 1967, *The Modernity of Tradition* delved more deeply into the structure and function of caste, analysing the relationship of caste and politics in terms of three types of political mobilisation: vertical[20], horizontal[21] and differential.[22] Modern politics, they posited, paradoxically appears as both an instrument for the revival and, the suppression of traditional society. Their idea of something being both traditional and modern at the same time was a critical contribution to the literature on modernization and political development. Other research at the time made observations in a

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[18] Rudolph, L. & Rudolph, S. "The Political Role of India's Caste Association", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 33/1, March, 1960, p.22.

[19] Ibid., p.22.

[20] 'Vertical Mobilisation' is defined as "the marshalling of political support by traditional notables in local societies that are organised and integrated by rank, mutual dependence, and the legitimacy of traditional authority. Notables reach vertically into such social systems by attaching dependents and socially inferior groups to themselves through their interests and deference." Rudolph, L. and Rudolph, S. *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, (University of Chicago Press, London, 1967), p. 24.

[21] "Horizontal mobilisation involves the marshalling of popular political support by class or community leaders and their specialised organisations. Ignoring the leaders......they make direct ideological appeals to classes or communities." Ibid, p. 25.

[22] "Differential mobilisation involves the marshalling of direct and indirect political support by political parties (and other integrative structures) from viable, but internally differentiated, communities through parallel appeals to ideology, sentiment and interest. The agent of mobilisation in this case is the political party rather than the local notable or community association". Ibid, p. 26.

similar vein, such as Gusfield[23], Morris-Jones[24] and Bendix.[25] Gusfield, writing in 1967 posited that the concept of political development is far more difficult and culture-bound than is that of economic development, pointing out that 'what is seen today and labelled as the "traditional society" is often itself a product of change'.[26]

This problem is brought out well in Subrata Mitra's article, *Flawed Paradigms: Some Western Models of Indian Politics*[27] in which he analyses the discourse on Indian politics. Concluding his survey, Mitra identified two sets of difficulties: 'the fact that the root concepts around which (the paradigms) are organised are not germane to the experience that comes under their domain' and 'that there does not exist a comprehensive discourse on the Indian state within which India's cultural perception of the self could also be specified in terms of the political discourse of change'.[28] These writers played a crucial role in turning attention to context and in establishing that there were many routes to, and, many forms of modernisation. Tradition and modernity were thus seen as supplementing rather than supplanting each other, no longer defined as stark opposites or as 'mutually exclusive'.[29] Modern development, it was proposed, might even revive and integrate traditional features into the 'modern' reality.[30]

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[23] Gusfield, J.R. "Political Community and Group Interests in Modern India", *Pacific Affairs,* Vol. 36/ Summer 1965, pp.123-41; Gusfield, J.R. "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change", *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.72/4 (Jan, 1967), pp351-362.

[24] Morris-Jones (*The Government and Politics of India*, Hutchinson, London 1967).

[25] Bendix, R. "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.9/3, April 1967, pp.292-346.

[26] Gusfield, J.R. "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change", *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.72/4 (Jan, 1967), pp. 352-353.

[27] Mitra, S.K. Culture and Rationality, (Sage, London, 1999), pp. 39 – 63.

[28] Ibid. p.57.

[29] Bendix, R. "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, IX (April 1967), p.326.

[30] Heesterman, J.C. *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship and Society* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1985), p. 9.

In response to these criticisms, attention was redirected towards the puzzle of why some traditional societies seemed to be better able to cope with modern change than others. A forerunner in this was S.N.Eisenstadt who in 1964 analysed the 'Breakdowns of Modernisation' in a likewise titled article. Drawing upon the concept of *social mobilisation*, Eisenstadt put forward the thesis that the internal structures of certain social groups, such as the tendency to minimise internal differentiation, were important particularly 'when these groups were pushed into new, modernised, and differentiated, urban, industrial and semi-industrial settings. They resulted in the perpetuation of previous "traditional" types of relationships and not the creation of viable new, differentiated institutional structures.'[31] Eisenstadt claimed to have found a purely sociological analysis where, 'just as the predilection for change is necessarily built into any institutional system, so the direction and scope of change are not random but depend....on the nature of the system generating the change'.[32]

Eisenstadt's work was crucial in drawing attention to the fact that societies which were successful at harnessing and promoting change, particularly modernising societies, were those which had the capacity for internal transformation. This was a process 'manifest in structural frameworks or cultural symbols that enable some groups to mobilise new forces and resources without necessarily destroying the existing structures.'[33] Referring to India, Eisenstadt observed how modernisation entailed a continuous re-crystallisation of traditional frameworks, for instance the caste system, which had given way to 'more flexible networks of caste associations, organised around modern economic, professional and political activities'.[34]

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[31] Eisenstadt, S.N. "Breakdowns of Modernisation", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 12(4), 1964 July, p. 359.

[32] Eisenstadt, S.N. 'Institutionalisation and Change', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 29 / 2 (April, 1964), p. 247.

[33] Eisenstadt, S.N. 'Transformation of Social, Political and Cultural Orders in Modernisation', *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 30 / 5, (October 1965), p. 659.

[34] Ibid. p. 669.

Challenging the purely sociological perspective, Huntington's influential *Political Order in Changing Societies,* published in 1968, argued that political change needed to be regarded as distinct from modernisation. Rather than being a correlate of modernisation, it was often *impeded* by the latter. As a central hypothesis, Huntington proposed that the relationship between political participation and political institutionalisation determined the stability of a political system, regardless of the 'level' of economic or political development. An alternative to the stage-by-stage paradigm, Huntington represented a new wave of scholars who concentrated on the functional features of political development.[35] Functional categories of comparison, applicable directly across national and cultural boundaries were constructed in contrast to the traditional country-by-country or area analysis based upon geographic, historical and institutional description. Proposing a 'functional theory of the political system' Gabriel Almond and James Coleman developed a formal model whereby differing empirical variations in the real world could be compared 'in terms of the frequency and style of performance of political functions by political structures'.[36]

The core propositions made were: (i) all political systems have political structure; (ii) all political structure is multi-functional; (iii) all political systems are culturally mixed, none being all-modern and rational nor all-primitive and traditional; (iv) the same functions are performed in all political systems. To ask the comparative questions, seven functional categories were proposed: the four 'input' functions of political socialisation and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation and political communication; the three 'output'

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[35] Almond,G.A. and Coleman, J.S. (eds.) *The Politics of Developing Areas* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960).
Almond & Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston, 1966).
[36] Almond, G.A. and Coleman, J.S. (eds.) *The Politics of Developing Areas* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960), p. 62.

functions of rule-making, rule-application and rule adjudication. With these tools of analysis, Almond and Coleman proposed in their introduction, 'to offer a comparative analysis of the political system of those areas in the world in which dramatic social and political change is taking place – Asia, Africa and Latin America'.

Another example of a functional theorist, Lucien Pye, compiled a list of ten meanings commonly attributed to the idea of political development, including increasing equality among individuals in relation to the political system, increasing capacity of the political system in relation to its environment and, increasing differentiation of institutions and structures within the political system.[37]

The early exponents of the functional approach nonetheless, continued to rely on a sequential understanding of political development moving towards a self-sustaining polity. Focusing on the distribution of power as a critical feature of the political development process, Harold D. Lasswell posited, 'A self-sustaining level of power accumulation is reached when the nation is able to furnish its own trained personnel, to achieve structural innovations with minimum resort to coercion, and to mobilise resources for national goals.'[38] Representative of this line of thinking include, for example, Morris-Jones's book, *Parliament of India*[39] that examined the extent to which the institution functioned successfully as a component of representative government. However, Morris-Jones was also amongst the first to caution that the student of political science 'should not assume, for instance, that institutions with familiar names are necessarily performing wholly familiar functions'.[40] Analysing the social

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[37] Pye, Lucien W. *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston, 1966), pp.31-48.
[38] Lasswell, H.D. "The Policy Sciences of Development", *World Politics*, Vol.17/2 (Jan. 1965) p.290.
[39] Morris-Jones,W.H. *Parliament in India* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1957).
[40] Ibid. p. 2.

backgrounds and behaviour of members of state and central legislatures, Morris-Jones examined the role played by parties in Parliament and the particular procedures and committees which had evolved from within the Indian system.

Similarly, Myron Weiner was also concerned with the ways in which people were inducted into new political processes. His studies of Indian party politics drew attention to the crucial role political parties can play in providing stability once the citizenry accepted them as legitimate channels through which goals and aspirations can be satisfied.[41] Weiner was crucial in pointing out not only the importance of the Congress party but also the myriad of opposition parties confronting it and the dangers of factionalism. As Myron Weiner himself highlighted, at the heart of such analyses lie policy-oriented questions about the kind of political institutions and practices that can facilitate the emergence of a modern society. Writing about India's political future in 1959, Weiner asked, "How can values and attitudes be changed so as to mobilise people into voluntary corporate action on behalf of social and economic change? Who – administrators, political parties, legislators, businessmen, trade unions, religious associations, or other voluntary bodies – can mobilise people? And insofar as people are mobilised to participate...are they not also likely to increase their demands? How can one inculcate into organised groups the belief in some sort of public interest which would moderate the kinds of demands made and the techniques used to influence government, so that government can function with a minimum of recourse to coercive methods to maintain law and order?" [42]

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[41] See for example, Weiner,M. *Party Politics in India: the Development of a Multi-Party System* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1957) and Weiner,M. *Party Building in a New Nation: the Indian National Congress* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967).
[42] Weiner, M. "India's Political Future", *World Politics*, Vol.12/1 (Oct. 1959), pp103-119.

In contrast, a comparative, historical school with a preference for variables such as class, institutions and leadership emerged alongside. A representative scholar of this genre was Barrington Moore who, in his 1966 classic, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, distinguished between three patterns of modernisation: the bourgeois model (United States, England), the aristocratic (Japan, Germany) and the peasant (Russia, China). In this book Moore argued that the radically different costs and achievements of each model were explicable in terms of divergent patterns of social class development. One of the most important achievements of Moore's book was to bring together the study of both Eastern and Western history.

The case of India was for Moore both puzzling and paradoxical. As a political democracy in an Asian setting and one without an industrial revolution, India represented a paradox, 'a challenge to and a check upon the theories advanced in this book as well as others'.[43] The puzzle compared with the other cases, was how despite the odds (a rigid caste system, oriental despotism, parasitic landlordism, stunted agricultural development) and without the prerequisites (commercial agriculture, a crown that was held in check, a landed aristocracy that was reined in) India had evolved into a democratic political system. The price however, of an incomplete process of change, according to Moore, was the ongoing tendency of the Indian system towards backwardness, economic inefficiency and a disregard for high human costs. According to Moore, 'by the middle of the 1960s, India had no more than haltingly entered upon the process of becoming a modern, industrial society'[44] for rather than being a facilitator of change, democracy had become the elite's 'rationalisation for refusing to overhaul on any massive scale a social structure that maintains their privileges.' [45]

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[43] Moore, B. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1993) , p. 315.
[44] Moore, B. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1993), p. 413.
[45] Moore, B. Ibid (p.431).

Providing a different reading of the Indian experience yet sharing a similar historically comparative methodology, Rajni Kothari's first book, *Politics in India*[46], examined the politicisation process. Differing from the European case, where political participation, he claimed, was confined to the upper classes of society and political activity was not a significant engine of change, India was also unlike the 'revolutionary experiments' of China and Russia where, for example, parochial identities were suppressed and competition disallowed.[47] Instead, he described the Indian model of development as the 'politicisation of a fragmented social structure through a penetration of political forms, values and ideologies....operating against the background of an essentially *apolitical* condition of society.'[48] By this Kothari was referring to India's long past of failed attempts at forming a centralised political authority.

The crucial variable Kothari identified was 'the crystallisation of a dominant political centre in the midst of plural identities'[49]. This he argued had been the result of an all-encompassing nationalist movement and the 'institutionalisation' of the dominant political centre, namely the Congress party. Combined with a political culture that was non-aggregative, India's experience with nation-building produced not a clash between tradition and modernity but rather a situation where modernity (could) survive only by becoming part of tradition, by "traditionalising" itself'.[50] This anticipated the literature that, much later on, was to speak of political power and political categories becoming *indigenised*.[51] Both scholars referred to here

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[46] Kothari, R. *Politics in India* (Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1970) .
[47] Ibid. p. 9.
[48] Ibid. p. 11.
[49] Ibid. p. 420.
[50] Ibid. p. 93.
[51] See Mitra et al (eds.) *Political Parties in South Asia* (Praeger, Westport, 2004) for an application of this concept.

(Kothari[52] and Mitra[53] respectively) conceptualised politics as an unfolding process, amenable to an analysis of institutions and elite strategies.

This was an advance on the existing modernisation literature because Kothari provided a variable that could explain the divergence *as well as* convergence in the varying attempts of countries to attain political stability, social change and economic well-being. This variable was labelled by Kothari, '*political institutionalisation*' with which, he proposed, one could explore the possibility of an Indian model which incorporated pluralities and segmentations without using methods of obliteration or marginalisation. Furthermore, unlike the evolutionary approach of early modernisation theory, Kothari identified 'a simultaneous rather than sequential model of development'.[54] As he put it: 'In simultaneously pursuing the goals of political participation, social mobilization, and economic development, and at the same time trying to project a world image, the Indian elite spread its energies too broadly on too many tasks but this also enabled it to articulate an incremental and cumulative style of nation-building which, because it focused on coalition-making, enabled it to contain the pressures that inevitably emerged with increasing politicisation.'[55]

One of the first scholars to consider the case of India as the basis for producing a 'model of incremental change'[56], Kothari's *Politics in India* reflected a general trend that had taken root in political science. By the late 1960s, the study of political development had gradually changed from being a largely problem-driven subject to a theory-building exercise that was

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[52] Kothari, R. *Politics in India* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1985), p. 6.
[53] Mitra, S.K. *Power, Protest and Participation: Local Elites and Development in India*. (Routledge, London, 1992).
[54] Kothari, R. *Politics in India* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1985), p. 422.
[55] Ibid, pp. 422-3.
[56]Ibid, p. 430.

essentially policy-oriented. In a 1971 landmark article, Huntington summarised this transformation succinctly: "the work of political scientists moved from a generalised focus on the political system to the comparative analysis of modern and traditional political system, to a more concrete concern with the discreet historical processes of modernisation and then back to a higher level of abstraction oriented toward general theories of political change."[57] Moving away from the notion of stages and take-off into the self-sustaining polity[58], the idea of sequential challenges or crises gained popularity[59] which in turn was replaced by studies employing the "if…then…" approach.[60] This formulation implies a model sequence but suggests that variations from the expected pattern will produce problems that are in themselves predictable.

The problem however, continued to be the core assumption that political order was desirable in itself. Thus for Huntington, 'the primary problem is not liberty but the creation of a legitimate public order. Men may, of course, have order without liberty but they cannot have liberty without order. Authority has to exist before it can be limited….'.[61] As a result all forms of disorder were categorised as negative, as forces undermining the processes of political development that include literacy, urbanisation, economic growth and the demands for political participation. One direct consequence for the study of Indian politics has been the tendency to portray any sign of political disorder as evidence of the break-down, disintegration or

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[57] Huntington, S. (1971), p. 314.

[58] See for example, Lerner, D. *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernising the Middle East*, (The Free Press, Glencoe, 1958).

[59] For example, Binder, L., Coleman,J.S., LaPalombra,J., Pye,L.W., Verba,S. and Weiner,M. *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1971).

[60] LaPalombara, J. & Weiner, M. (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966).

[61] Huntington, S. *Political Order in Changing Societies,* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1968), pp. 7-8.

impending implosion of the country.[62] This was characteristic of academic writing in the 1980s which observed the declaration of Emergency rule by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the rise of separatist and insurgency movements within the country and the assassination of a prime minister.

Writing in 1990 Atul Kohli described the growing un-governability of India in the following terms, 'The evidence for eroding political order is everywhere. Personal rule has replaced party rule at all levels…..Below the rulers, the entrenched civil and police services have been politicised. Various social groups have pressed new and ever more diverse political demands in demonstrations that often have led to violence'.[63] The critical challenge Kohli identified was the political incorporation of newly mobilised lower strata, additionally problematic at a time India's major political institution, the Congress party appeared to be disintegrating. Like Rudolph and Rudolph in their classic, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*[64], Kohli blamed a structural feature of Indian politics, the highly interventionist state, for the growing political disorder: 'If the role of the Indian state in India's development were minimal, if many of the country's pressing problems could be dealt with by social actors without the help of the state, then the state's relative ineffectiveness would not pose such a crisis.' [65]

Such an approach however, fails to take into account that crises may actually strengthen a political system and prove the resilience of institutions in the face of disorder. Furthermore,

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[62] See for instance Kothari, R. *The Crisis of the Moderate State* (1983), *A Fragmented Nation* (1983), *State Against Democracy* (1988), Kohli, A. *Democracy and Discontent: India's growing crisis of governability.* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990).

[63] Kohli, A. *Democracy and Discontent: India's growing crisis of governability.* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990), p. 3.

[64] Rudolph, L. and Rudolph, S. *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago,1987).

[65] Kohli, A. *Democracy and Discontent: India's growing crisis of governability.* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990), p. 379.

by not distinguishing between the *sources* of challenges to regimes, the analysis ends up treating all anti-regime opposition as being alike and takes for granted the mere fact of orderliness as desirable. Not acknowledging the costs involved in upholding a particular order over another runs the risk of under-estimating the extent to which elites themselves might be willing to dismantle existing institutions in the interest of continued rule.   Similarly, on the subject of institutionalisation, Huntington posited that strong institutions meant attractive values such as coherence, autonomy, complexity and adaptability. In his words, 'without strong political institutions, society lacks the means to define and to realise its common interests. The capacity to create political institutions is the capacity to create public interests'.[66] However, while under-institutionalisation or de-institutionalisation is seen as alarming, there is little concern expressed about the danger of *over*-institutionalisation leading to repression and rigidity.

Applying Huntington's thesis to the Indian case, Myron Weiner developed an 'index of institutionalisation'[67] which measured the percentage of candidates who forfeited their security deposits in the State assembly elections (a deposit required for the candidate to file his nomination and lost if the candidate failed to win one-sixth of the total vote). Weiner's own extensive work on Indian politics was heavily influenced by the political development school. Contributing in 1971 to the volume on *Crises and Sequences in Collective Theory Development* in the prominent *Studies in Political Development* series Myron Weiner focused on the growth of participation as a key variable determining political change. A participation crisis, defined by Weiner was 'a conflict that occurs when the governing elite views the demands of behaviour

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[66] Huntington, S. *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (1968), p. 24.
[67] Weiner, M. "Political Development in the Indian States" in Weiner, M. (ed.) *State Politics in India* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968), p. 41

of individuals and groups seeking to participate in the political system as illegitimate.'[68] This represented an important area of research in terms of the various ways in which governing elites respond to such crises, the new institutions that may emerge from the resolution of a crisis and the dilemmas facing new participants who seek to enhance their influence within the political system.

A year later Paul Brass tested the hypothesis on a selection of Indian states to come to the conclusion that there was no law-like relationship between political participation / social mobilisation and political institutionalisation.[69] Additionally, James Manor, writing in 1990 pointed out that 'to make a liberal political system work, it is no more necessary for them (the Indians) to be liberals than it is for them to be literates'.[70] Stability and resilience therefore were not to be seen as outcomes of mass participation and social mobilisation but rather the result of politics. Scholarship like that of Manor was crucial for bringing politics back into the picture, for drawing attention to the 'political accommodations, bargains and compromises'. [71]

As the above analysis has demonstrated, while advances and contributions were made to the study of Indian politics and India's political development through the 1960s, 70s and 80s, the basic conceptual framework did not alter. Books by authors considered here such as Rajni Kothari, Samuel Huntington, Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Rudolph, W.H. Morriss-Jones, each a classic in its own right, provide what are essentially structural-functionalist explanations for the resilience of India's political institutions and their ability to combine and transcend the

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[68] Binder et al, *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1972), p. 187.
[69] Brass, P.R. "Political Participation, Institutionalization and Stability in India", *Government and Opposition*, 1969 (10), pp. 23-53.
[70] Manor, J. 'How and Why Liberal and Representative Politics Emerged in India', *Political Studies* (1990), Vol. 38, p. 22.
[71] Ibid., p. 22.

modernity-tradition dichotomy. Hence, Morris-Jones writing in 1964 described India's political system as a 'mediating framework for a dialogue between the two inherited traditions of governance and movement'[72] and Rudolph and Rudolph, shortly thereafter, examined the capacity of India's modern institutions to tap into pre-colonial and pre-modern traditions.[73]

Expanding their argument in 1987, the Rudolphs went on to explore other features of the Indian state such as its centrist nature that 'minimises the political salience of major cleavages'[74]. They highlighted a 'state-dominated pluralism'[75] where a multiplicity of social groups compete with one another under the overall hegemony of the state (to create) an institutionalised system of conflict resolution with the state acting as the 'third party' or 'honest broker'[76] allowing conflict to be localised rather than spreading across the whole system. Identifying 'hinge groups' that bridged the modernity-tradition gap by drawing their legitimacy simultaneously from both, Rudolph and Rudolph explored the changing nature of caste associations and the emergence of new hybrid forms such as 'bullock capitalists' and the rise of a state which, 'Like Hindu notions of the divine,.....is polymorphous, a creature of manifold forms and orientations'.[77] Meanwhile authors such as Huntington in 1968 and Kothari in 1970 had developed theories focusing on the need for strong, stable institutions capable of withstanding the inevitable challenges of political and social mobilisation entailed in the process of modernisation.

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[72] Morris-Jones *The Government and Politics of India*, (Hutchinson, London 1964), p. 126.

[73] Rudolph, L. & Rudolph, S., *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, (University of Chicago Press, London, 1967).

[74] Rudolph, L. and Rudolph, S. *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987), p.1.

[75] Ibid., p.247.

[76] Ibid., p.65.

[77] Ibid., p.400.

While certainly contributing empirical evidence and sharpening their theoretical models, the work of the above authors represents a dominant continuum within the study of Indian politics and political development. Drawing upon a historical sequence of events, the structural approach envisioned grand processes such as nation-building and economic growth to be the forces contributing to a transformation of society and economy. Emerging from this, the 'functional paradigm'[78] identified particular features of India's social or political system that served the functions of modern life as in the work, portrayed above, of Morris-Jones and Rudolph and Rudolph. Whilst revealing new and interesting features of the Indian case, these works remained firmly embedded within the structural perspective that identified the state as the central catalytic agent.

The arguments to emerge later, questioned the assumption of modernisation as an irreversible, linear process which could be set in motion once the institutional kernels were set in place or the argument that the mere destruction of traditional forms assured the development of a new, viable modern system. Having been dominated by primarily social accounts of change, the literature on political change, development and order finally gave way to a stream of writers from the 1970s on, who sought to bring politics centre stage as an explanatory variable.[79] With this shift came an interest in the theory of agency. Ernst Gellner, attacking the Eurocentric assumptions of early modernisation theorists, argued that there was a tendency to confuse several distinct sets of features such as, characteristics specific to the *first* transition from traditional to modern, those specific to the *European* transition, characteristics of *any*

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[78] See Mitra, S.K. 'Flawed Paradigms: Some "Western" Models of Indian Politics' in Mitra, S.K. *Culture and Rationality* (Sage, New Delhi, 1999).

[79] See for example Kothari, R. *Politics in India* (Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1970); Brass, P.R. *The New Cambridge History of India: the Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990); Frankel, F. & Rao, M.S.A. (eds.), Dominance and State Power in Modern India: decline of a social order. Vol.II (Oxford University Press Delhi, 1990).

transition and features of a *completed* transition to modernity.[80] Gellner's distinctions pinpointed a previously ignored dimension, the role of choice and ideology in the modernisation process and the importance of leadership in making strategic decisions. In the writings of Dore, Nettl and Robertson for example, modernisation itself is seen as the product of a *decision* to modernise.[81] Modernisation, according to Nettl and Robertson, ought to be taken as a subjective, relativist term denoting the process by which national elites successfully consolidated their position within the state and moved toward equivalence with well-placed nations in the international system. Two central factors played a role in determining the elite's perceptions of this goal: the values and exigencies of the international system and the values, dispositions and capabilities of the elites themselves.

By the late 1970s a shift had occurred with the emergence of rational choice and the 'new' institutionalist paradigm that addressed the role of choice and the constraints of context. The following section examines biographies of Nehru to demonstrate how choice and context are necessary variables when trying to explain the causes and consequences of action.

Nehruana literature.

Seven biographies of Nehru will be reviewed in this section: Micheal Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (1959), Michael Edwardes, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (1971), S. Gopal's three-volume official biography, *Jawaharlal Nehru: a Biography* (1975 – 84), B.R.Nanda, *Jawaharlal Nehru: Rebel and Statesman* (1995), Stanley Wolpert's *Nehru: Tryst*

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[80] Gellner, E. *Thought and Change* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969), p.139.
[81] Dore, R.P., "The Late-Development Effect" in Evers, H.D. (ed.) *Modernisation in South East Asia*, (Singapore, 1973), pp.65 – 81. and Nettl, J.P. & Robertson, R., *International System and the Modernisation of Societies*, (New York, 1968) .

with Destiny (1996), Judith Brown, *Nehru: a Political Life* (2003) and finally, Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (2004). By making such a selection the intention is to examine whether interpretations or methods of analysis have changed over time across a selection of biographies by well-known international as well as Indian scholars. Despite the shared medium of a chronological, narrative account of his person, the books do represent two broad 'generations' of Nehru scholars, a point to which the chapter will return in its conclusion. Literature that deals with specific aspects such as Nehru's economic thought or books that refer in more general terms to Nehru's policies and legacy will be incorporated into subsequent chapters.

Beginning with the earliest, Michael Brecher's political biography of Nehru, written during Nehru's lifetime, is a rigorous piece of work that draws upon a range of sources including official reports, Nehru's own writings, that of his contemporaries, newspapers and interviews with statesmen in Britain and India.[82] Avoiding a narrow focus on Nehru's person, Brecher takes the trouble to explain the institutional framework within which Nehru functioned as a political leader. Thus, his chapter on Planning and Welfare contains a perceptive description and analysis of the Planning Commission: its membership, its functions and influence.[83] Reflecting on Nehru's role in policy-making, Brecher concludes that the Prime Minister was a 'most effective salesman of planning in the country as a whole' but that the many shortcomings of his programmes 'reflect in large measure the weaknesses of Nehru's policies and his frequent reluctance to act resolutely when forcefulness is necessary'.[84] Similarly, on foreign policy Brecher provides an insight into the policy-making process, examining the role of parliament, the cabinet, various 'interest groups' and key individuals, in addition to the exceptionally central role that Nehru occupied.

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[82] Brecher, M. *Nehru, A Political Biography* (Oxford University Press, London, 1959).
[83] Ibid., p. 520.
[84] Ibid., p. 554.

Writing in 1959 Brecher had yet to witness the failure of Nehru's approach towards China that culminated in the 1962 war but he detected the ambiguities in Nehru's position and strategy of non-alignment.[85] In many ways, Brecher's study is one of the more 'political' accounts of Nehru and his times. This is achieved by allowing for an analysis of the institutional mechanisms and inter-personal dynamics that characterised the newly installed democracy. Thus, in addition to the content of Nehru's beliefs and vision, the reader is given a vivid sense both of the substantive and procedural nature of Indian politics then. Out of the selection of books reviewed above, this comes closest to a policy analysis of the Nehru period. Nevertheless there is clearly scope for further work for Brecher mentions both the Hindu Code Bill and Panchasheela only in passing and his bibliography indicates that parliamentary debates were not consulted. As a result, Brecher seems to have intuitively found an approach that takes both actor and context into account, but without specifying a methodology and analytical framework.

Similarly, Michael Edwardes' *Nehru, A Political Biography* which is full of insight, analysis and perceptive commentary, is based upon a loose narrative structure that does not seek to explicitly prove anything. By the time the 1971 biography was complete, Edwardes had written about a range of historical subjects related to the subcontinent[86], a background which instils his writing about the freedom struggle with a breadth and depth that sets him apart from the other scholars reviewed here. Also, having been a live observer of pre and post-independence politics, Edwardes offers an unusual combination of the insider and outsider. His

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[85] Ibid. pp. 588 -94.
[86] See for example, Edwardes, M *High Noon of Empire: India under Curzon* (1965), *The West in Asia, 1850-1914* (1967), *Bound to Exile: The Victorians in India* (1969), *East-West Passage: the travel of ideas, arts and inventions between Asia and the Western World* (1971).

writing is not tinged by an unquestioning veneration of Nehru and his aim of presenting a 'political' biography is motivated by his inquiry into the *political* causes for action, choices and behaviour. For example, when discussing Nehru's second Congress presidency in 1936, a time when the recently formed Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was a powerful force within the Congress while the right wing dominated the leadership, Edwardes observed how Nehru managed the situation: "He wanted national not factional leadership. He had noted that as the CSP had increased its influence inside the Congress so the right wing closed its ranks. He could best maintain his position by identifying with neither but by retaining the support of both Gandhi and the socialists."[87]

A further interesting interpretation describes how Nehru, frustrated by the internal politics of the Congress was encouraged by his 'opponents' (Patel, Prasad, Rajagopalachari are referred to as the Eumenides[88] in Nehru's life) to seek refuge 'into the wider and more amenable reality of foreign policy.......It was an escape which hardly damaged the struggle for freedom but after independence Nehru's preoccupation with foreign affairs was to lead to an abdication of decision on internal matters...".[89]

However, like the Wolpert biography (also under review here), Edwardes chooses to devote more than two thirds of his analysis to the pre-independence period, thereby neglecting the years of policy-making under Nehru's prime ministership. Edwardes is highly critical and cynical about the early years after independence, writing about the first elections as a 'travesty of democracy'[90], depicting the Nehru-Congress combine as an 'alliance of weakness' where

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[87] Edwardes, M. *Nehru, A Political Biography* (Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1971), p. 114.
[88] Refers to the Furies who tormented Orestes in the play by Aeschylus.
[89] Edwardes, M. *Nehru, A Political Biography* (Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1971), p. 118.
[90] Ibid., p. 248.

"Congress had created Nehru and Nehru could have led only a party like Congress".[91] Without delving deeply into the debates surrounding policy-making within parliament or within the Congress party, Edwardes' assessment is rather harsh, seeing Nehru as someone beset by indecisiveness who was "compelled to allow events to take their course, or to be directed on course by others more purposeful, until there was only one choice left to him to make."[92] Since Edwardes does not examine any particular policy in detail he does not portray the competing interests at stake nor the process through which Nehru built up his position via co-optation or polarisation. In the end, it is Nehru's weaknesses that stand out and not because they are flattering (which is often the interpretation presented by his admirers), for Edwardes paints a picture of a fallible leader, often misguided by others but quite capable of being misleading himself. Whilst Edwardes certainly presents a distinctive interpretation of the man and his times, the reader is not given a train of logic to follow in terms of the resources used, the assumptions being made about leadership and transition, and the constraints of context. The end result is a biography which reads like a gripping novel, partly inevitable given the extraordinary conditions it deals with, but also because, Edwardes simply focuses on dramatic events.

Sarvepalli Gopal's three-volume project is, technically speaking, a tour de force. Later, Gopal went on to edit a series of primary documents drawn from the Nehru family's private papers, Nehru's speeches and public writings, spanning Nehru's entire life. His particular interpretation is of interest here for in a final chapter summarising Nehru's achievements, Gopal reveals his flagrant admiration for a man who 'consolidated a nation, trained it for democracy, constructed a model for economic development and set the country on the path to

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[91] Ibid., p. 245.
[92] Ibid., p. 255.

growth'.[93] Gopal ends by describing Nehru as "India's once and – we may hope – future king.'[94] Elevating Nehru to the heights of almost a super hero, Gopal's analysis loses credibility and value. The compromises, manoeuvring and politicking to which Gopal alludes in the three volumes make for far more interesting reading, providing insights into the complex person that Nehru was and the multiple challenges of his times. However, these are mostly left un-elucidated. Instead, the leader whom he describes 'was a visionary as well as a planner', who combined 'intellectual and moral authority', a man in possession of such 'attractive failings' as 'the agonising continually in public over all aspects of every question, the open-mindedness carried to excess, the over-developed democratic instinct to carry all shades of opinion with him, the civilised self-doubt' begins to sound more like a caricature than a credible political actor.[95]

So far, the three biographies above have exemplified a style of writing that was coloured heavily by the ideals through which Nehru was portrayed: Nehru as a moderniser, Nehru as the great leader and philosopher king. This can perhaps be accounted for by the fact that the authors lived through the Nehru years and were caught up in the euphoria and also later, the disappointment of the times.

B.R.Nanda on the other hand, represents the transition to a 'new' generation of Nehru scholars who sought to reduce the intensity of the spotlight on Nehru and to draw attention to his contemporaries and the impact of key individuals surrounding him. Adopting an essay-format, B.R.Nanda's *Jawaharlal Nehru, Rebel and Statesman* examines various aspects of Nehru's life, ranging from important personal relationships, to the conditions that shaped him

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[93] Gopal, S. *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1984), Volume 3, p.302.
[94] Ibid. p. 302.
[95] Ibid. p.299.

and the intellectual themes that engaged him. Thus, Nanda emphasizes the mutually beneficial relationship to emerge between Nehru and Gandhi, pointing out how Nehru's political career was made by Gandhi's projection of him as Congress president at decisive junctures in 1930, 1936 and 1946. The Nehru-Bose relationship meanwhile is used to highlight how a more radical and impulsive Nehru might have looked and behaved. On the themes of religion, partition, socialism, economic planning and non-alignment, Nanda expertly weaves together the personal experiences that shaped Nehru's thinking, the situational constraints he was up against and very briefly, the state policy he formulated. By not following a chronological narrative, Nanda produces a series of 'keyhole' images which seem to plunge the reader briefly but intensively into the times. For example, in the chapter on 'Nehru and Socialism', Nanda refers to Nehru's own writings, the contemporaries who influenced him, the strategy of accommodation and compromise acquired through experience, and the 'mixed economy' approach that emerged as a result. Since all this is done in just nine pages it is naturally a brief account but is indicative of the potential for an analysis based on variables such as context, preferences and bargaining power.

Stanley Wolpert carries this approach further, providing insights into the personal relationships between Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, Nehru and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Nehru and Krishna Menon, Nehru and Lord Mountbatten. Wolpert, by drawing upon the autobiographies, memoirs and biographies of Nehru's contemporaries and comrades to shed light on Nehru's life and times – a technique that the book also implements – also makes a methodological contribution. Nevertheless it is surprising to note that Wolpert makes no mention of the Hindu Code Bills or Panchasheela, probably a reflection of the fact that the bulk of the book concerns itself with the pre-1947 period (27 out of the 32 chapters).

Judith Brown's 'Nehru' begins with a clear agenda. Claiming to adopt a different approach from other accounts of Nehru's life, Brown hopes 'to portray him in a broader context, as a man who belonged to a crucial generation in the history of Asia …It shows the diversity and complexity of the major issues which confronted them in a time of profound and unusually rapid transition'.[96] Furthermore Brown's study seeks to 'use his life as a window into Indian politics and shows how his work and concerns, his ambitions and failures can help the analysis of some of the deeper forces operating within the Indian polity'.[97] Like Zachariah, Brown regards Nehru as having had a critical bearing on India's political culture and thus divides the narrative into five chronological sections, 'each one deal(ing) with a special phase in Nehru's life, which also coincides with a particular phase in the development of India's polity and politics'.[98] In this way Nehru becomes India and India, Nehru, a representation that can only be problematic as will emerge.

Brown opens her narrative with a brief background into the pre-Nehru context with a section titled, 'An Imperial Heritage, 1889-1920'. This is useful and unusual compared with the other biographies under review here. However, the attention to 'pre-history' does not continue throughout the book. As a result the reader is provided with the briefest of immersions into the workings of the British Raj and the kinds of problems and challenges as well as opportunities that were bequeathed to Nehru. Opting for a thematic framework, Brown hopes to redress the imbalance in biographical studies on Nehru where the focus is largely on the freedom struggle and not the issues Nehru himself considered vital during his prime

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[96] Brown, J. Nehru. A Political Life (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003), p. 2.
[97] Ibid. p. 4.
[98] Ibid. p. 4.

ministership.[99] Thus, Brown examines the process of nation-building, dividing this into (a) 'the work of imagining the nation', (b) 'of structuring the nation and giving it political shape', (c) forging 'an expanded understanding and reality of shared nationhood' and finally (d) the task of installing the new nation in the international order.[100] Whilst this approach aims at weaving together the main events of Nehru's prime ministership together with the travails of actually running a government ultimately, Brown ends up concentrating on Nehru, the 'political visionary', the 'cosmopolitan intellectual who could see the broad picture and expound the significance of issues facing India in sweeping historical terms.'[101]

Like in so many other biographies of Nehru, the political manoeuvring that was necessary to maintain his position of power within the Congress party and the instrumentalisation of policy issues to establish his primacy in political debates, is over-shadowed by the portrayal of the greatness of his stature as an intellectual and leader. A further problem emerges with the image Brown creates in a final section, titled 'Frustration of Vision, 1957 – 1964', of an aging Nehru, from whose hands the reins of control were slipping and 'the demands of politics confronted the principled intellectual within Nehru's complex personality, causing hesitation, tension and often distress.'[102] The picture Brown paints of these years is that of a leader, increasingly stymied by opposition from within the party and the entrenched interests and inherent conservatism that came to the fore as Nehru weakened in health and spirit. However, because Nehru's own machinations within party and parliament are under-portrayed, there is a tendency to underplay the fact that to some extent these were constraints of his own making. The early years of his prime ministership need to be studied not only in

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[99] Ibid. p. 368 -9, n.2.
[100] Ibid. p. 187.
[101] Ibid. p. 242.
[102] Ibid. p. 297.

light of the high principles and values he thought should exemplify independent India but also the compromises he inevitably had to make as a skilled politician and, the shortcomings these might have entailed.

Coming to the most recent biography, Zachariah opts for a more explicitly interpretive account. Unlike Wolpert who weaves a narrative based on fragments and excerpted quotations, Zachariah poses concrete questions to which he is trying to find an answer. In addition to rescuing Nehru from the mythologies that his supporters, detractors and even Nehru himself created, Zachariah emphasizes in the introduction, that the book must ask a vital question, namely, 'what were the social forces that made it possible for Nehru to rise to and to sustain his leadership in the Indian national movement?'[103] Providing the structure for his book, Nehru's rise to power, his leadership skills, during the period prior to independence and after, are explored from various angles. By examining the nature of leadership under colonial rule, Zachariah seeks to contextualise Nehru in terms of the resources available and the strategies that were common to the time. In a sub-section entitled, 'The Problems of Authenticity and Modernity', Zachariah highlights the challenges faced by Nehru and his contemporaries in justifying the call to universal rights of freedom and self-determination on the one hand while navigating indigenous notions of and paths toward modernity. This was compounded by the fact that these leaders were simultaneously negotiating the foundations for a future state as well as moulding the idea of a nation.

Mid-way through his book, Zachariah interrupts the narrative to dwell on the transition to independence, a phase that is important in order to "examine the roots of what came to be called the 'Nehruvian vision' or the 'Nehruvian model', describing thereby what might be

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[103] Zachariah, B. *Nehru* (Routledge, London, 2004), p. xxiii.

called the political culture of post-independence India."[104] Seeking a conceptual framework, Zachariah breaks down the task into the following components: the parameters of the discourse as represented in the Constituent Assembly debates, the institutional framework of the Indian National Congress and the imperatives of the time such as communal, identity politics, economic redistribution and the consolidation of India's sovereignty in the international realm. However, as will be noted further on, the book falls short in a number of ways, particularly in terms of its account and analysis of Nehru's political manoeuvring and the arguments and alternatives put forward by Nehru's contemporaries on each of the issues that he concerned himself with, including foreign policy. While the latter is perhaps inevitable given the biographical focus on Nehru as the central character, the former weakness stems from the fact that few studies dissect, chronologically and substantively, the conception, formulation and implementation of a particular policy during the Nehru era.

In his conclusion, Zachariah pronounces the "Nehruvian project" to a large extent to have been a failure but points out that there is a tendency to 'judge Nehru by standards far beyond those applied to most politicians….(perhaps because) he himself set the standards so high, and also perhaps because, as Nehru was and regarded himself as an intellectual, subsequent writers engage with him in the full splendour of intellectual combat, delighting in his inconsistencies and revelling in revealing his compromises."[105] This is where, in the end, Wolpert's study proves more insightful for he points out how Nehru was perfectly capable of engaging in the dirty business of politics but at the same time worked hard at maintaining a clean image. Thus, "Nehru never liked associating himself directly with any unscrupulous act, anything as immoral as throwing his 'friend' Sheikh Abdullah behind bars or forcing his most

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[104] Ibid. p. 139.

[105] Ibid. p. 262.

likely and best-qualified successor Morarji out of his cabinet into the political wilderness virtually on the eve of his demise."[106]

Another tendency towards over-simplification occurs in Zachariah's assessment of the 'successes' and 'failures' of the Nehruvian period where the reasons and evidence for failure are listed as 'over-optimistic' targets for the Five Year Plans, an inability to tackle poverty because of the limited attention paid to human development, giving in to conservative opposition especially with regards to social reform and finally, Nehru's betrayal of his own ideals particularly in compromising non-alignment through his alignment with China.[107] However, in his assessment of Nehru's 'unfinished business', Zachariah does not allow for the possibility that Nehru's compromises and half-hearted initiatives were also embarked upon for short-term gain, primarily that of consolidating and maintaining power. Seen from this angle they were highly successful for, on almost every count, Nehru managed to silence critics and disarm opponents. Zachariah refers to this element of strategic calculation in Nehru's behaviour when he describes him as 'the eternal coalitionist (who) appears to have been particularly adept at locking himself into coalitions with his opponents rather than his allies'[108]. However, as will become evident in the following chapters, Nehru's tactics did not simply consist of coalition building for, when necessary, he engaged in agenda-setting, bandwagoning and stalling procedures that left in its wake more polarisation than consensus. All in all, Zachariah's study of Nehru, while innovative in its overall approach, does not generate the kind of subtle insights which Wolpert and Gopal's more traditionally written biographies provide. Furthermore,

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[106] Wolpert, S. Nehru. A Tryst with Destiny (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996), p. 489. These incidents refer to Nehru's decision to throw Kashmir's Chief Minister into jail from August 1953 when Sheikh Abdullah began to assert too much independence from the central government. He was kept in jail till Nehru's last days in 1964 The second incident refers to the ousting of key ministers under the *Kamaraj Plan* of 1963, widely believed to be a ploy through which to get rid of potential political contenders whom Nehru did not approve of.
[107] Zachariah, B. Nehru (Routledge, London, 2004), p. 263.
[108] Ibid. p. 259.

despite the promising questions at the start of the book, Zachariah ends up under-estimating the tactical and strategic side to Nehru's actions and over-emphasizing the substantive content of the 'Nehruvian vision'.

Examining Nehru biographies reveals how little the field has moved since the late 1950s. There has been a tendency in the literature to repeat and embellish biographical details but not to generate *new* insights about Nehru, his politics and his times. This is possibly due to the fact that there has not been an attempt to apply fresh analytical approaches drawn from the study of politics and research on changing societies or societies in transition. Nehru is generally regarded as a unique, great man of history. Coupled with a tendency to neglect Indian politics of the 1950s as a topic in its own right, this has resulted in a propensity to focus on the man rather than to critically examine his actions or context.

Nevertheless it is possible to distinguish between two 'generations' of Nehru scholars. Writers like Brecher, Edwardes and Gopal share the experience of having been contemporaries of Nehru, either observing his politics first hand or, as in Gopal's case, as a public official.[109] As a result they approach the subject matter with a natural sensitivity for the context, aware of the many pressures as well as the historic opportunities that Nehru had as prime minister. Hence their writing is unconsciously multi-layered. Authors like Judith Brown, Stanley Wolpert and Benjamin Zachariah on the other hand represent a shift towards a more systematic study of the man and his times but nevertheless appear to be coloured by a sense of nostalgia for bygone days. The new element in more recent writing has been to use Nehru as a means through which to understand the present or as Brown puts it, 'how India has come to be what it is and to demonstrate some of the resources with which it faces still critical domestic issues as well as

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[109] From 1954 to 1966 S.Gopal worked for the Ministry of External Affairs.

those with major international dimensions'.[110] Nevertheless the general trend has been towards an ever-greater magnification of Nehru's vision at the expense of deciphering Nehru's tactical and strategic behaviour as a political actor. As a result, Nehru has remained the country's philosopher king, the ideal leader who combined virtue and wisdom.

Not only has this hindered research on Nehru but it has also created a dearth in writing on the politics and policies of the 1950s as will become evident in subsequent chapters. A deeper exploration of the way in which policy was shaped in the 1950s, the alternatives that were foregone and the interests that became congealed in the policy-making process, is of crucial importance. The decade of the 1950s marked a critical period of transition, moving from the trappings of colonial rule to the infrastructure of an independent, democratic system of government. Although the process had started much earlier, the negotiation of core values (such as secularism, socialism and non-alignment) went through a crucial phase during the early 1950s when policies were being formulated and implemented by an independent Indian government for the first time. In the process institutional constraints were respected, undermined and remade. The 1950s represents the wellspring of India's modern politics in terms of the resources and interests that continue to set the terms of debate and the limits to policy-making.

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To sum up, the foregoing survey has demonstrated that early proponents of the 'modernisation paradigm' in the social sciences failed to explain the divergence in political

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[110] Brown, J. Nehru. A Political Life (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003), p. 345.

development amongst countries. Using India as a test case, scholars examined the ways in which tradition re-invented itself and modernity took on local features to propose theories about the indigenisation process, the 'idioms' of politics and the importance of history. Nevertheless what remained under-explained was why breakdowns and setbacks occur in the form of political violence and the use of coercion, or, why religion had retained its socio-political saliency and economic growth remained unsustainable?

The survey of biographical material on Jawaharlal Nehru demonstrates how blinkered the scholarship on Nehru's brand of post-independence parliamentary democracy has generally been. This, the chapter has argued, is a weakness stemming from the underlying methodological and epistemological approach adopted by the authors, one that tends to overlook the politics and compromises of the time. The years 1950 to 1967 represent the heyday of Congress dominance, referred to as a one-party-dominant system to distinguish it from both a one-party state and a multi-party system. While the 'Congress system'[111] has been well researched, the early years of the 1950s do offer a crucial insight into the origins of this system and the manoeuvres to contain and control political opposition.

As demonstrated above, a literature survey reveals the extent to which Jawaharlal Nehru is portrayed as a founding father of the modern Indian nation-state. Whilst misjudgements and mistakes in his policy choices are recognised, these are usually cast in terms of his having been misled, either by advisors or adversaries. The result has been a largely hagiographic interpretation of Nehru and his legacy, whilst those who have been more critical have not delved deeply enough into the material, to explain the reasons behind his choices. To imply

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[111] A term introduced by scholar, Rajni Kothari to demonstrate the functioning of a one-party-dominant system in India.

that Nehru simply made unfortunate or even incompetent decisions leading, for instance, to an unwanted and unforeseen war with China in 1962, does not help us understand why alternative actions were rejected. To counter this view, the chapter proposes the following argument, that choice, as much as context and contingency, determines policy content and output. This is what the rest of the book seeks to investigate.

It is both the role of the intellectual elite and its political choices that the following chapters will focus upon. Although the book focuses on Jawaharlal Nehru, the 'vision' and 'strategy' that drive his policy decisions draws upon both his past experiences and his perception of the immediate constraints and challenges facing him. Using the term 'structure of opportunities' an entire chapter is devoted to highlighting the extent to which opinions and positions differed across the political spectrum, already in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The three chapters examining specific policies further explore the range of opinions on the particular issue at stake (planning, relations with China, a uniform civil code), highlighting Nehru's response to an opposition. The three policy issues and the institutions, which emerged out of the debates to shape Indian politics for decades to come, were selected because they reveal a variety both in the range of ideological positions articulated and the tactics implemented to ensure a favourable result. Since the focus is on choice, the rationality of actors and the constraints under which decisions are made, the following chapter turns to more recent theories of 'new' and 'historical' institutionalism for further insights.