

History of the Republic of India

Part of [a series](#) on the

History of Modern India



सत्यमेव जयते

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The **history of the Republic of India** began on 26 January 1950. The country became an independent [nation](#) within the [British Commonwealth](#) on 15 August 1947. Concurrently the Muslim-majority northwest and east of [British India](#) was separated into the [Dominion of Pakistan](#), by the [partition of India](#). The partition led to a [population transfer](#) of more than 10 million people between India and Pakistan and the death of about one million people. Nationalist leader [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) became the first [Prime Minister of India](#) and [Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel](#) became the [Deputy Prime Minister of India](#) and its [Minister of Home Affairs](#). But the most powerful moral leader [Mahatma Gandhi](#) accepted no office. The new [constitution of 1950](#) made India a [secular](#) and a democratic state. It has a Hindu majority, a large Muslim minority, and numerous other religious minorities including Sikhs and Christians.

The nation faced [religious violence](#), [casteism](#), [naxalism](#), [terrorism](#) and regional separatist insurgencies, especially in [Jammu and Kashmir](#) and northeastern India. India has unresolved territorial disputes with China, which, in 1962, escalated into the [Sino-Indian War](#), and with Pakistan, which resulted in wars in [1947](#), [1965](#), [1971](#) and [1999](#). India was neutral in the [Cold War](#), but purchased its military weapons from the Soviet Union, while its arch-foe Pakistan was closely tied to the United States.

India is a [nuclear-weapon state](#); having conducted its first [nuclear test](#) in 1974,^[1] followed by [another five tests](#) in 1998.^[1] From the 1950s to the 1980s, India followed [socialist](#)-inspired policies. The economy was shackled by [extensive regulation](#), [protectionism](#) and public ownership, leading to pervasive [corruption](#) and slow economic growth.^[2] Beginning in 1991, [significant economic reforms](#)^[3] have transformed India into [the third largest](#) and [one of the fastest-growing economies](#) in the world. Today, India is a [major world power](#) with a [prominent voice in global affairs](#) and is seeking a permanent seat in the [United Nations Security Council](#). Many economists, military analysts and think tanks expect India to become a [superpower in the near future](#).

Green Revolution (1970s)
Indo-Pakistani War of 1971
Emergency (1975–77)
1990s in India
Economic liberalisation
2000s in India
See also
History of India
History of South Asia
 India portal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • v • t • e

1947–1950: Dominion of India

Independent India's first years were marked with turbulent events — a massive exchange of population with Pakistan, the [Indo-Pakistani War of 1947](#) and the integration of over 500 princely states to form a united nation.

Partition Of India

[Partition of India](#)



A group photo of people accused in Gandhi's murder case. *Standing:* [Shankar Kistaiya](#), [Gopal Godse](#), [Madanlal Pahwa](#), [Digambar Badge \(Approver\)](#). *Sitting:* [Narayan Apte](#), [Vinayak D. Savarkar](#), [Nathuram Godse](#), [Vishnu Karkare](#).

An estimated 3.5 million [Hindus](#) and [Sikhs](#) living in [West Punjab](#), [North-West Frontier Province](#), [Baluchistan](#), [East Bengal](#) and [Sind](#) migrated to India in fear of domination and suppression in Muslim Pakistan. Communal violence killed an estimated one million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, and gravely destabilised both Dominions along their [Punjab](#) and [Bengal](#) boundaries, and the cities of [Calcutta](#), [Delhi](#) and [Lahore](#). The violence was stopped by early September owing to the co-operative efforts of both Indian and Pakistani leaders, and especially due the efforts of [Mohandas Gandhi](#), the leader of the Indian freedom struggle, who undertook a *fast-unto-death* in Calcutta and later in Delhi to calm people and emphasize peace despite the threat to his life. Both Governments constructed large relief camps for incoming and leaving refugees, and the [Indian Army](#) was mobilised to provide humanitarian assistance on a massive scale.

The [assassination of Mohandas Gandhi](#) on 30 January 1948 was carried out by Nathuram Vinayak Godse, a Hindu extremist affiliated with the nationalist movement, which held him responsible for partition and charged that Mohandas Gandhi was appeasing Muslims. More than one million people flooded the streets of Delhi to follow the procession to cremation grounds and pay their last respects.

In 1949, India recorded close to 1 million Hindu refugees flooded into [West Bengal](#) and other states from [East Pakistan](#), owing to communal violence, intimidation and repression from

Muslim authorities. The plight of the refugees outraged Hindus and Indian nationalists, and the refugee population drained the resources of Indian states, who were unable to absorb them. While not ruling out war, Prime Minister Nehru and Sardar Patel invited [Liaquat Ali Khan](#) for talks in Delhi. Although many Indians termed this appeasement, Nehru signed a pact with Liaquat Ali Khan that pledged both nations to the protection of minorities and creation of minority commissions. Although opposed to the principle, Patel decided to back this Pact for the sake of peace, and played a critical role in garnering support from West Bengal and across India, and enforcing the provisions of the Pact. Khan and Nehru also signed a trade agreement, and committed to resolving bilateral disputes through peaceful means. Steadily, hundreds of thousands of Hindus returned to East Pakistan, but the thaw in relations did not last long, primarily owing to the Kashmir dispute.

Union's Integration

[Political integration of India](#)



[General El Edroos](#) (at right) offers his surrender of the [Hyderabad State](#) Forces to Major General (later General and Army Chief) [Joyanto Nath Chaudhuri](#) at [Secunderabad](#).

[British India](#) consisted of 17 provinces and 562 princely states. The provinces were given to India or Pakistan, in some cases in particular — [Punjab](#) and [Bengal](#) — after being partitioned. The princes of the [princely states](#), however, won the right to either remain independent or join either nation. Thus India's leaders faced the prospect of inheriting a nation fragmented between medieval-era kingdoms and provinces organised by colonial powers. Out of the 17 provinces, 1 opted out of voting. Under the leadership of [Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel](#), the new Government of India employed political negotiations backed with the option (and, on several occasions, the use) of military action to ensure the primacy of the Central government and of the Constitution then being drafted.

There were three States that proved more difficult to integrate than others:

1. [Junagadh](#) (Hindu majority state with a Muslim nawab) – a December 1947 [plebiscite](#) resulted in a 99% vote^[8] to merge with India, annulling the controversial accession to Pakistan, which was made despite the people of the state being overwhelmingly [Hindu](#).
2. [Hyderabad](#) (Hindu majority state with a Muslim nizam)– Patel ordered the Indian army to depose the government of the [Nizam](#) after the failure of negotiations, which was done between 13–17 September 1948. It was incorporated as a state of India the next year.
3. The area of [Kashmir](#) (Muslim majority state with a Hindu king) in the far north of the subcontinent quickly became a source of controversy that erupted into the [First Indo-Pakistani War](#) which lasted from 1947 to 1949. Eventually a United Nations-overseen ceasefire was agreed that left India in control of two thirds of the contested region. [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) initially agreed to Mountbatten’s proposal that a [plebiscite](#) be held in the entire state as soon as hostilities ceased, and a UN-sponsored cease-fire was agreed to by both parties on 1 Jan. 1949. No statewide plebiscite was held, however, for in 1954, after Pakistan began to receive arms from the United States, Nehru withdrew his support. The Indian Constitution came into force in Kashmir on 26 January 1950 with special clauses for the state.

Constitution

[Constitution of India](#)

The [Constituent Assembly](#) adopted the Constitution of India, drafted by a committee headed by [B. R. Ambedkar](#), on 26 November 1949. India became a sovereign, democratic, republic after its constitution came into effect on 26 January 1950. [Rajendra Prasad](#) became the first [President of India](#). The words 'socialist' and 'secular' were added later with the 42nd Constitution Amendment 1976.

1947 War with Pakistan

[Indo-Pakistani War of 1947](#)

1950s and 1960s

India held its first national elections under the Constitution in 1952, where a turnout of over 60% was recorded. The [National Congress Party](#) won an overwhelming majority, and Jawaharlal Nehru began a second term as Prime Minister. President Prasad was also elected to a second term by the electoral college of the first [Parliament of India](#).

Nehru administration (1952–1964)



[Jawaharlal Nehru](#) (right) with [Muhammad Ali Bogra](#), [Prime Minister of Pakistan](#) (left), during his 1953 visit to [Karachi](#).

Prime Minister Nehru, with his charismatic brilliance, led the Congress to major election victories in 1957 and 1962. The Parliament passed extensive reforms that increased the legal rights of women in Hindu society, and further legislated against caste discrimination and [untouchability](#). Nehru advocated a strong initiative to enroll India's children to complete primary education, and thousands of schools, colleges and institutions of advanced learning, such as the [Indian Institutes of Technology](#) were founded across the nation. Nehru advocated a socialist model for the [economy of India](#) — no taxation for Indian farmers, minimum wage and benefits for blue-collar workers, and the [nationalisation](#) of heavy industries such as steel, aviation, shipping, electricity and mining. An extensive public works and industrialisation campaign resulted in the construction of major dams, irrigation canals, roads, thermal and hydroelectric power stations.

States reorganization

[*States Reorganization Act*](#)

[Potti Sreeramulu](#)'s *fast-unto-death*, and consequent death for the demand of an [Andhra State](#) in 1953 sparked a major re-shaping of the Indian Union. Nehru appointed the *States Re-organisation Commission*, upon whose recommendations, the States Reorganization Act was passed in 1956. Old states were dissolved and new states created on the lines of shared linguistic and ethnic demographics. The separation of [Kerala](#) and the [Telugu](#)-speaking regions of [Madras State](#) enabled the creation of an exclusively [Tamil](#)-speaking state of [Tamil Nadu](#). On 1 May 1960, the states of [Maharashtra](#) and [Gujarat](#) were created out of the [Bombay state](#). The creation of Punjabi Suba on 1 November 1966, an exclusively [Punjabi](#) speaking state of [Punjab \(India\)](#), occurred after a long struggle.^{*[citation needed]*}

Foreign policy and military conflicts [edit]

See also: [Role of India in Non-Aligned Movement](#), [List of conflicts in Asia#Republic of India](#), and [Indo-Pakistani War of 1965](#)



Indian soldiers in 1947 war.

Nehru's foreign policy was the inspiration of the [Non-Aligned Movement](#), of which India was a co-founder. Nehru maintained friendly relations with both the United States and the [Soviet Union](#), and encouraged the People's Republic of China to join the global community of nations. In 1956, when the Suez Canal Company was seized by the Egyptian government, an international conference voted 18-4 to take action against Egypt. India was one of the four backers of Egypt, along with Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and the USSR. India had opposed the [partition of Palestine](#) and the 1956 invasion of the [Sinai](#) by [Israel](#), [Britain](#) and France, but did not^{[[citation needed](#)]} oppose the Chinese direct control over [Tibet](#) and the suppression of a pro-democracy movement in Hungary by the Soviet Union. Although Nehru disavowed nuclear ambitions for India, Canada and France aided India in the development of nuclear power stations for electricity. India also negotiated an agreement in 1960 with Pakistan on the just use of the waters of seven rivers shared by the countries. Nehru had visited Pakistan in 1953, but owing to political turmoil in Pakistan, no headway was made on the Kashmir dispute.

1. India has fought a total of four [wars/military conflicts](#) with its rival nation [Pakistan](#), two in this period. In the [Indo-Pakistani War of 1947](#) fought over disputed territory of [Kashmir](#), Pakistan occupied one third of Kashmir (which India claims as its territory), and India occupied three fifths (which [Pakistan](#) claims as its territory). In the [Indo-Pakistani War of 1965](#) India attacked Pakistan on all fronts after attempts by Pakistani troops to infiltrate into Indian controlled Kashmir.
2. In 1961, after continual petitions for a peaceful handover, India [invaded and annexed](#) the Portuguese colony of [Goa](#) on the west coast of India.
3. In 1962 China and India engaged in the brief [Sino-Indian War](#) over the border in the Himalayas. The war was a complete rout for the Indians and led to a refocusing on arms build-up and an improvement in relations with the United States. China withdrew from disputed territory in, what is to China [South Tibet](#), and to India part of the [North-East Frontier Agency](#) that it crossed during the war. Unrelated to that war, India disputes China's sovereignty over the smaller [Aksai Chin](#) territory that it controls on the western part of the Sino-Indian border.

Post-Nehru India



Nehru's daughter [Indira Gandhi](#) served as prime minister for three consecutive terms (1966–77) and a fourth term (1980–84).

Jawaharlal Nehru died on 27 May 1964. [Lal Bahadur Shastri](#) succeeded him as Prime Minister. In 1965 in the [Second Kashmir War](#) India and Pakistan again went to war over Kashmir, but without any definitive outcome or alteration of the Kashmir boundary. The [Tashkent Agreement](#) was signed under the mediation of the Soviet government, but Shastri died on the night after the signing ceremony. A leadership election resulted in the elevation of [Indira Gandhi](#), Nehru's daughter who had been serving as Minister for Information and Broadcasting, as the third Prime Minister. She defeated right-wing leader [Morarji Desai](#). The Congress Party won a reduced majority in the 1967 elections owing to widespread disenchantment over rising prices of commodities, unemployment, economic stagnation and a food crisis. Indira Gandhi had started on a rocky note after agreeing to a [devaluation](#) of the [Indian rupee](#), which created much hardship for Indian businesses and consumers, and the import of wheat from the United States fell through due to political disputes.

Morarji Desai entered Gandhi's government as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, and with senior Congress politicians attempted to constrain Gandhi's authority. But following the counsel of her political advisor [P. N. Haksar](#), Gandhi resuscitated her popular appeal by a major shift towards socialist policies. She successfully ended the [privy purse](#) guarantee for former Indian royalty, and waged a major offensive against party hierarchy over the nationalisation of India's banks. Although resisted by Desai and India's business community, the policy was popular with the masses. When Congress politicians attempted to oust Gandhi by suspending her Congress membership, Gandhi was empowered with a large exodus of Members of Parliament to her own Congress (R). The bastion of the Indian freedom struggle, the [Indian National Congress](#) had split in 1969. Gandhi continued to govern with a slim majority.

1970s



☐ Gandhi meeting with [Shah of Iran Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi](#) and [Shahbanu Farah Pahlavi](#) during the latter's State visit to India in 1970.

In 1971, Indira Gandhi and her Congress (R) were returned to power with a massively increased majority. The nationalisation of banks was carried out, and many other socialist economic and industrial policies enacted. India [intervened](#) in [Bangladesh Liberation War](#) a civil war taking place in Pakistan's [Bengali](#) half, after millions of refugees had fled the persecution of the Pakistani army. The clash resulted in the independence of East Pakistan, which became known as [Bangladesh](#), and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's elevation to immense popularity. Relations with the United States grew strained, and India signed a 20-year treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union - breaking explicitly for the first time from non-alignment. In 1974, India tested [its first nuclear weapon](#) in the desert of [Rajasthan](#). Meanwhile, in the Indian protectorate of [Sikkim](#), a referendum was held that resulted in a vote to formally join India and depose the [Chogyal](#). On 26 April 1975, Sikkim formally became India's 22nd state.

Green revolution and Operation Flood

[Green Revolution in India](#) and [Operation Flood](#)

India's population passed the 500 million mark in the early 1970s, but its long-standing food crisis was resolved with greatly improved agricultural productivity due to the [Green revolution](#). The Government sponsored modern agricultural implements, new varieties of generic seeds and increased financial assistance to farmers that increased the yield of food crops such as wheat, rice and corn, as well as commercial crops like cotton, tea, tobacco and coffee. Increased agricultural productivity expanded across the states of the [Indo-Gangetic plains](#) and the [Punjab](#). Under [Operation Flood](#), the Government encouraged the production of milk, which increased greatly, and improved rearing of livestock across India. This enabled India to become self-sufficient in feeding its own population, ending two decades of food imports.

Indo-Pakistan War of 1971

Main article: [Indo-Pakistan War of 1971](#)

The [Indo-Pakistan War of 1971](#) was the third in four wars fought between the two nations. In this war, fought over the issue of [self rule in East Pakistan](#), India decisively defeated Pakistan resulting in the creation of [Bangladesh](#).

Indian Emergency

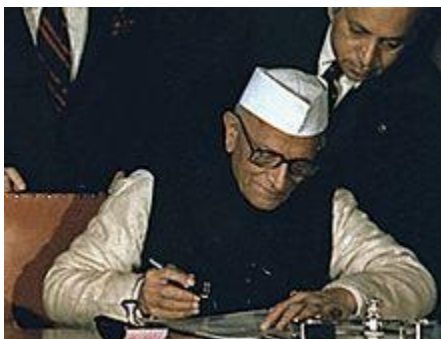
[Indian Emergency](#)

Economic and social problems, as well as allegations of corruption caused increasing political unrest across India, culminating in the [Bihar Movement](#). In 1974, the [Allahabad](#) High Court found Indira Gandhi guilty of misusing government machinery for election purposes. Opposition parties conducted nationwide strikes and protests demanding her immediate resignation. Various political parties united under [Jaya Prakash Narayan](#) to resist what he termed Mrs. Gandhi's dictatorship. Leading strikes across India that paralysed its economy and administration, Narayan even called for the Army to oust Mrs. Gandhi. In 1975, Mrs. Gandhi advised President [Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed](#) to declare a [state of emergency](#) under the Constitution, which allowed the Central government to assume sweeping powers to defend law and order in the nation. Explaining the breakdown of law and order and threat to national security as her primary reasons, Mrs. Gandhi suspended many [civil liberties](#) and postponed elections at national and state levels. Non-Congress governments in Indian states were dismissed, and nearly 1,000 opposition political leaders and activists were imprisoned and programme of compulsory birth control introduced.^[9] Strikes and public protests were outlawed in all forms.

India's economy benefited from an end to paralysing strikes and political disorder. India announced a [20-point programme](#) which enhanced agricultural and industrial production, increasing national growth, productivity and job growth. But many organs of government and many Congress politicians were accused of corruption and authoritarian conduct. Police officers were accused of arresting and torturing innocent people. Indira's son and political advisor, [Sanjay Gandhi](#) was accused of committing gross excesses - Sanjay was blamed for the Health Ministry carrying out forced vasectomies of men and sterilisation of women as a part of the initiative to control population growth, and for the demolition of slums in [Delhi](#) near the Turkmen Gate, which left thousands of people dead and many more displaced.

Janata interlude

[Janata Party](#)



[Morarji Desai](#), the first non-Congress Prime Minister of India, signing the "New Delhi" declaration during a visit by US President [Jimmy Carter](#).

Indira Gandhi's Congress Party called for general elections in 1977, only to suffer a humiliating electoral defeat at the hands of the [Janata Party](#), an [amalgamation](#) of opposition parties. [Morarji Desai](#) became the first non-Congress Prime Minister of India. The Desai administration established tribunals to investigate Emergency-era abuses, and Indira and Sanjay Gandhi were arrested after a report from the [Shah Commission](#).

But in 1979, the coalition crumbled and [Charan Singh](#) formed an interim government. The Janata party had become intensely unpopular due to its internecine warfare, and the fact that it offered no leadership on solving India's serious economic and social problems.

1980s

Indira Gandhi and her Congress party splinter group, [Congress \(Indira\)](#) party were swept back into power with a large majority in January 1980.

But the rise of an insurgency in Punjab would jeopardize India's security. In [Assam](#), there were many incidents of communal violence between native villagers and refugees from [Bangladesh](#), as well as settlers from other parts of India. When Indian forces, undertaking [Operation Blue Star](#), raided the hideout of self-rule pressing.^[9] [Khalistan](#) militants in the [Golden Temple](#)- Sikhs' most holy shrine - in [Amritsar](#), the inadvertent deaths of civilians and damage to the temple building inflamed tensions in the Sikh community across India. The Government used intensive police operations to crush militant operations, but it resulted in many incidents of abuse of civil liberties. Northeast India was paralyzed owing to the [ULFA](#)'s clash with Government forces.

On 31 October 1984, the Prime Minister's own Sikh bodyguards assassinated her, and [1984 Anti-Sikh Riots](#) erupted in Delhi and parts of Punjab, causing the deaths of thousands of Sikhs along with terrible pillage, arson and rape. Senior Members of the Congress Party have been implicated in stirring the violence against Sikhs. Government investigation has failed to date to discover the causes and punish the perpetrators, but public opinion blamed Congress leaders for directing attacks on Sikhs in Delhi.

Rajiv Gandhi administration

The Congress party chose [Rajiv Gandhi](#), Indira's older son as the next Prime Minister. Rajiv had been elected to Parliament only in 1982, and at 40, was the youngest national political leader and Prime Minister ever. But his youth and inexperience were an asset in the eyes of citizens tired of the inefficacy and corruption of career politicians, and looking for newer policies and a fresh start to resolve the country's long-standing problems. The Parliament was dissolved, and Rajiv led the Congress party to its largest majority in history (over 415 seats out of 545 possible), reaping a sympathy vote over his mother's assassination.

Rajiv Gandhi initiated a series of reforms - the [license raj](#) was loosened, and government restrictions on foreign currency, travel, foreign investment and imports decreased considerably.

This allowed private businesses to use resources and produce commercial goods without government bureaucracy interfering, and the influx of foreign investment increased India's national reserves. As Prime Minister, Rajiv broke from his mother's precedent to improve relations with the United States, which increased economic aid and scientific co-operation. Rajiv's encouragement of science and technology resulted in a major expansion of the telecommunications industry, [India's space programme](#) and gave birth to the [software industry](#) and information technology sector.

In December 1984, gas leaks out at Union Carbide pesticides plant in the central Indian city of Bhopal. Thousands are killed immediately, many more subsequently die or are left disabled.^[9]

India in 1987 brokered an agreement between the Government of [Sri Lanka](#) and agreed to deploy troops for peacekeeping operation in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict lead by the [LTTE](#). Rajiv sent Indian troops to enforce the agreement and disarm the [Tamil](#) rebels, but the Indian Peace Keeping Force, as it was known, became entangled in outbreaks of violence - ultimately ending up fighting the Tamil rebels itself, and becoming a target of attack from Sri Lankan nationalists. [VP Singh](#) withdrew the IPKF in 1990, but thousands of Indian soldiers had died. Rajiv's departure from Socialist policies did not sit well with the masses, who did not benefit from the innovations. Unemployment was a serious problem, and India's burgeoning population added ever-increasing needs for diminishing resources.

Rajiv Gandhi's image as an honest politician (he was nicknamed *Mr. Clean* by the press) was shattered when the [Bofors scandal](#) broke, revealing that senior government officials had taken bribes over defence contracts by a Swedish guns producer.

Janata Dal

General elections in 1989 gave Rajiv's Congress a plurality, a far cry from the majority which propelled him to power.

Power came instead to his former finance and defence minister, [VP Singh](#) of [Janata Dal](#). Singh had been moved from the Finance ministry to the Defence ministry after he unearthed some scandals which made the Congress leadership uncomfortable. Singh then unearthed the Bofors scandal, and was sacked from the party and office. Becoming a popular crusader for reform and clean government, Singh led the [Janata Dal](#) coalition to a majority. He was supported by BJP and the leftist parties from outside. Becoming Prime Minister, Singh made an important visit to the Golden Temple shrine, to heal the wounds of the past. He started to implement the controversial [Mandal commission](#) report, to increase the quota in reservation for low caste Hindus. The BJP protested these implementations, and took its support back, following which he resigned. [Chandra Shekhar](#) split to form the Janata Dal (Socialist), supported by Rajiv's Congress. This new government also collapsed in a matter of months, when congress withdrew its support.

1990s

[1990s in India](#), [Rajiv Gandhi assassination](#), [Insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir](#), and [Bombay Riots](#)



The stone mosaic that stands at the exact location where Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in [Thiruperumbudur](#).

The Prime Minister of Indian ruling Kashmir [Farooq Abdullah](#) (son of former Chief Minister [Sheikh Abdullah](#)) announced an alliance with the ruling Congress party for the elections of 1987. But, the elections were allegedly rigged in favour of him. This led to the rise of the armed Muslim [insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir](#) composed, in part, of those who unfairly lost elections. Pakistan supplied these groups with logistical support, arms, recruits and training.

On 21 May 1991, while former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi campaigned in [Tamil Nadu](#) on behalf of Congress (Indira), a [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam](#) (LTTE) [female suicide bomber](#) assassinated him and many others, setting off the bomb in her belt by leaning forward while garlanding him. In the elections, Congress (Indira) won 244 parliamentary seats and put together a coalition, returning to power under the leadership of [P.V. Narasimha Rao](#). This Congress-led government, which served a full 5-year term, initiated a gradual process of economic liberalisation and reform, which has opened the [Indian economy](#) to global trade and investment. India's domestic politics also took new shape, as traditional alignments by [caste](#), creed, and ethnicity gave way to a plethora of small, regionally-based political parties.

But India was rocked by communal violence (see [Bombay Riots](#)) between Hindus and Muslims that killed over 10,000 people, following the [Babri Mosque](#) demolition by Hindu extremists in the course of the [Ram Janmabhoomi](#) dispute in [Ayodhya](#) in 1992. The final months of the Rao-led government in the spring of 1996 suffered the effects of several major political corruption scandals, which contributed to the worst electoral performance by the Congress Party in its history as Hindu nationalist [Bharatiya Janata Party](#) emerged as largest single party.

Era of coalitions

The [Bharatiya Janata Party](#) (BJP) emerged from the May 1996 national elections as the single-largest party in the [Lok Sabha](#) but without enough strength to prove a majority on the floor of that Parliament. Under Prime Minister [Atal Bihari Vajpayee](#), the BJP coalition lasted in power

13 days. With all political parties wishing to avoid another round of elections, a 14-party coalition led by the [Janata Dal](#) emerged to form a government known as the United Front. A United Front government under former [Chief Minister of Karnataka H.D. Deve Gowda](#) lasted less than a year. The leader of the Congress Party withdrew his support in March 1997. [Inder Kumar Gujral](#) replaced Deve Gowda as the consensus choice for Prime Minister of a 16-party United Front coalition.

In November 1997, the Congress Party again withdrew support for the United Front. New elections in February 1998 brought the BJP the largest number of seats in Parliament (182), but this fell far short of a majority. On 20 March 1998, the President inaugurated a BJP-led coalition government with Vajpayee again serving as Prime Minister. On 11 and 13 May 1998, this government conducted a series of underground nuclear weapons tests which caused Pakistan to conduct its own tests that same year.^[10] India's nuclear tests prompted President of the United States [Bill Clinton](#) and Japan to impose [economic sanctions](#) on India pursuant to the 1994 Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act and led to widespread international condemnation.

In the early months of 1999, Prime Minister Vajpayee made a historic bus trip to Pakistan and met with Pakistan's Prime Minister [Nawaz Sharif](#), and signed the bilateral [Lahore peace declaration](#).^[9]

In April 1999, the coalition government led by the [Bharatiya Janata Party](#) (BJP) fell apart, leading to fresh elections in September. In May and June 1999, India discovered an elaborate campaign of terrorist infiltration that resulted in the [Kargil War](#) in Kashmir, derailing a promising peace process that had begun only three months earlier when Prime Minister Vajpayee visited Pakistan, inaugurating the Delhi-Lahore bus service. Indian forces killed Pakistan-backed infiltrators and reclaimed important border posts in high-altitude warfare.^[11]

Soaring on popularity earned following the successful conclusion of the [Kargil conflict](#), the [National Democratic Alliance](#) - a new coalition led by the BJP - gained a majority to form a government with Vajpayee as Prime Minister in October 1999. End of the millennium was devastating to India, as a cyclone hit Orissa, killing at least 10,000.^[9]

2000s and 2010s

Under Bharatiya Janata Party

In 2000 May, India's population exceeded 1 billion. President of the United States [Bill Clinton](#) made a groundbreaking visit to India to improve ties between the two nations. In January, massive [earthquakes hit Gujarat state](#), killing at least 30,000.



The skyline of Ahmedabad filled with smoke as buildings and shops are set on fire by rioting mobs during the [2002 Gujarat violence](#).

Prime Minister Vajpayee met with Pakistan's President [Pervez Musharraf](#) in the first summit between Pakistan and India in more than two years in middle of 2001. But, the meeting failed without a breakthrough or even a joint statement because of differences over Kashmir region.^[9]

The National Democratic Alliance government's credibility was adversely affected by a number of political scandals (such as allegations that the Defence Minister [George Fernandes](#) took bribes) as well as reports of intelligence failures that led to the Kargil incursions going undetected, and the apparent failure of his talks with Pakistani President.^{[9][12]} Following the [11 September attacks](#), the United States lifted sanctions which it imposed against India and Pakistan in 1998. The move was seen as a reward for their support for the [War on Terror](#). The tensions of an imminent war between India and Pakistan again rose by the heavy Indian firing on Pakistani military posts along the [line of control](#) and the subsequent deadly [Indian Parliament attack](#) and the [2001–2002 India–Pakistan standoff](#).^[9]

In 2002, 59 Hindu pilgrims returning from Ayodhya were killed in a train fire, in [Godhra](#), Gujarat. This sparked off the [2002 Gujarat violence](#), leading to the deaths of 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus and 223 more people were reported missing.

Throughout 2003, India's speedy economic progress, political stability and a rejuvenated peace initiative with Pakistan increased the government's popularity. India and Pakistan agreed to resume direct air links and to allow overflights and a groundbreaking meeting was held between the Indian government and moderate Kashmir separatists.^[9] The [Golden Quadrilateral](#) project aimed to link India's corners with a network of modern highways.

Congress rule returns

In January 2004 Prime Minister Vajpayee recommended early dissolution of the [Lok Sabha](#) and general elections. The [Congress Party](#)-led alliance won an surprise victory in [elections](#) held in May 2004. [Manmohan Singh](#) became the Prime Minister, after the Congress President [Sonia Gandhi](#) (born Antonia Edvige Albina Maino), the widow of former Prime Minister [Rajiv Gandhi](#) declined to take the office, in order to defuse the controversy about whether her foreign birth should be considered a disqualification for the Prime Minister's post. The Congress formed a coalition called the United Progressive Alliance with Socialist and regional parties, and enjoyed

the outside support of India's [Communist parties](#). [Manmohan Singh](#) became the first [Sikh](#) and non-[Hindu](#) to date to hold India's most powerful office. Mr. Singh continued economic liberalisation, although the need for support from Indian Socialists and Communists forestalled further privatisation for sometime.^{[13][14]}



U.S. [President George W. Bush](#) and [India's](#) Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh](#) exchange handshakes in New Delhi on 2 March 2006.

By the end of the year 2004, India began to withdraw some of its troops from Kashmir. And by middle next year the [Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Bus Service](#) was inaugurated, the first in 60 years to operate between Indian-administered and Pakistani-administered Kashmir. However, in 2006 May, suspected Islamic extremist militants killed 35 Hindus in the worst attacks in Indian-administered Kashmir for several months.^[9]

The [Boxing Day Tsunami](#) in 2004 devastated Indian coastlines and islands, killing an estimated 18,000 and displacing around 650,000. The Tsunami was caused by a powerful undersea earthquake off the Indonesian coast. Natural disasters such as the [Mumbai Floods](#) (killing more than 1,000) and [Kashmir earthquake](#) (killing 79,000) hit the subcontinent in the next year. In 2006 February, the [United Progressive Alliance](#) government launched India's largest-ever rural jobs scheme, aimed at lifting around 60 million families out of poverty.^[9]

United States and India signed a [major nuclear co-operation agreement](#) during a visit by United States President [George W Bush](#) in 2006 March. According to the nuclear deal, the United States will give India access to civilian nuclear technology while India agrees to greater scrutiny for its nuclear programme. Later United States approved a controversial law allowing India to buy their nuclear reactors and fuel for the first time in 30 years. In 2008 July, the United Progressive Alliance survived a [vote of confidence](#) brought after left-wing parties withdraw their support over the nuclear deal. After the vote, several left-wing and regional parties form new alliance to oppose government, saying it has been tainted by corruption. Within three months, following approval by the American Congress, George W Bush signed into law a nuclear deal with India, which ended a three-decade ban on American nuclear trade with Delhi.^[9]

In 2007 India got its first female President as [Pratibha Patil](#) sworn in. Long associated with [Nehru–Gandhi family](#), Pratibha Patil was a low-profile governor of the state of Rajasthan before emerging as the favoured presidential candidate of [Sonia Gandhi](#).^[15] In February, the infamous [Samjhauta Express bombings](#) took place, killing Pakistani civilians, in [Panipat](#), Haryana. There

have been a number of breaks in the investigation of the bombings. As of 2011, nobody has been charged for the crime though it has been linked to [Abhinav Bharat](#), a shadowy Hindu fundamentalist group headed by a former Indian army officer.^[16] In 2008 October, India successfully launched its first mission to the moon, the unmanned [lunar probe](#) called [Chandrayaan-1](#). In the previous year, India had launched its first commercial [space rocket](#), carrying an Italian [satellite](#).^[9]

In November 2008, [Mumbai attacks](#) took place and India blamed militants from Pakistan for the attacks and announced "pause" in the ongoing peace process.^[9] In the [Indian General Election in 2009](#), the [United Progressive Alliance](#) won a convincing and resounding 262 seats, with Congress alone winning 206 seats. However, the Congress-led government is facing many allegations against it. Inflation rose to an all-time high and the ever-increasing prices of food commodities caused wide spread agitation. The [concerns and controversies over the 2010 Commonwealth Games](#) rocked the country in 2010, raising questions about the credibility of the government followed by [2G spectrum scam](#) and [Adarsh Housing Society Scam](#). In mid-2011, [Anna Hazare](#), a prominent social activist, staged a 12-day hunger strike in Delhi in protest at state corruption, after government proposals to tighten up the an [anti-graft legislation](#) fall short of his demands.^[9]

Despite all this, India showed great promise with a higher growth rate in Gross domestic product.^[17] In January 2011, India assumed a nonpermanent seat in the United Nations Security Council for the 2011-12 term. In 2004, India had launched an application for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council along with Brazil, Germany and Japan. In March, India overtook China to become the world's largest importer of arms.^[9]

However, 21st century India is facing the [Naxalite-Maoist rebels](#), in the words of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, India's "greatest internal security challenge"^[18] and other terrorist tensions (such as Islamist terrorist campaigns in and out of [Jammu & Kashmir](#), terrorism in [India's Northeast](#), and [Hindutva terrorism](#))^{[18][19]} Terrorism has increased in India with bomb blasts in leading cities like [Mumbai](#), New Delhi, [Jaipur](#), [Bangalore](#), [Hyderabad](#) has been very common.^[11] India in the new millennium, improved relations with many countries and foreign unions including the United States, the [European Union](#), Israel and the People's Republic of China.^[9] The [economy of India](#) has accelerated by growing at a very rapid pace. India is now being looked at as a [potential superpower](#).^{[13][14]}

Economic transformation



[Manmohan Singh](#) widely credited for initiating [economic reforms in India](#).

Under the [policies](#) initiated by Late Prime Minister [Narasimha Rao](#) and his Finance minister [Manmohan Singh](#), India's economy expanded rapidly. The Rao administration initiated the [privatization](#) of large, inefficient, and loss-inducing government corporations. The UF government had attempted a progressive budget that encouraged reforms, but the [1997 Asian financial crisis](#) and political instability created economic stagnation. The Vajpayee administration continued with privatization, reduction of taxes, a sound [fiscal policy](#) aimed at reducing deficits and debts, and increased initiatives for public works. Cities like [Bangalore](#), [Hyderabad](#), [Pune](#) and [Ahmedabad](#) have risen in prominence and economic importance, becoming centres of rising industries and destination for foreign investment and firms. Strategies like forming *Special Economic Zones* - tax amenities, good communications infrastructure, low regulation - to encourage industries has paid off in many parts of the country.

A rising generation of well-educated and skilled professionals in scientific sectors of industry began propelling the Indian economy, as the information technology industry took hold across India with the proliferation of computers. The new technologies increased the efficiency of activity in almost every type of industry, which also benefitted from the availability of skilled labor. Foreign investment and outsourcing of jobs to India's labor markets further enhanced India's economic growth. A large middle-class has arisen across India, which has increased the demand, and thus production of a wide array of consumer goods. Unemployment is steadily declining, and poverty has fallen to approximately 22%. Gross Domestic Product growth increased to beyond 7%. While serious challenges remain, India is enjoying a period of economic expansion that has propelled it to the forefront of the world economy, and has correspondingly increased its influence in political and diplomatic terms.