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                In the study of party systems, attention has so far been given
to two opposite phenomena, the two party or multi-party system on the
one hand and the "one party system" on the other. Until quite recently,
discussion in this field has been dominated by a dichotomous (or trichoto-
mous) division on these lines, the principal criterion employed being the
availability of choice between alternatives. The two-party system provides
such a choice, and so does the multi-party system though in a more com-
plicated manner;[1] the one party system does not provide this choice. That,
at any rate, is the rationalization behind the widely prevalent typology of
party systems. To be sure, there is of late an attempt to look more closely
at the precise functioning of the various party systems, especially in some
of the new nations of Africa. There are also attempts at a "behavioural
analysis" of the American and British party systems.[2] These studies are
giving rise to new ways of looking at party phenomena and have made
scholars aware of the shortcomings of the present typology.
   While such a discussion is going on, it might be useful to look at the Indian
experience with political parties, which is one of the most successful party
systems in operation and yet is a system that cuts across the usual stereo-
types and also calls into question the very criterion of political performance
usually employed in the analysis of party systems. That it is the function
of politics to offer choice between alternative sets of policies and personnel
may indeed be a gross oversimplification of political phenomena. Politics is
not always reducible to who gets what, when and how. We do not, however,
intend to go into these more fundamental questions in this paper. In what

   1 Neumann has introduced other distinctions to differentiate the multi-party system
as it operates on the Continent in Europe. He distinguishes between the party of action
and the party of platform, depending upon the degree of proximity to power. To this
he adds a further distinction between the party of program and the party of personages,
broadly approximating to the distinction between institutional and personal govern-
ment. See Sigmund Neumann (ed.), *Modern Political Parties,* Chicago: Chicago Uni-
versity Press, 1956.
   2 Samuel J. Eldersveld, *Party System: A Behavorial Analysis,* Rand McNally, 1964.
R. Rose, "Parties, Factions and Tendencies in Britain," *Political Studies,* Vol. 12, No. 1,
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follows, we try to describe the party system as it has been functioning in India.

While the availability of multiple parties and the freedom to form parties gives an impression of similarity between India and the West, and while there actually are some similarities as well as an element of common heritage, two differences must be noted at the outset. In the first place, the "Western" model posits a criterion of alternation or replacement—the ideal of a "choice between alternatives" and the assumption that the choice is exercised in that manner—which is not the critical factor in the working of the party system in India. Secondly, the western system implies a relationship between the government and the party organization in which the latter plays an instrumental and subsidiary role which is not true of India.[3]

The Indian system can be described as a system of *one party dominance* (which, it may be noted, is very different from what is generally known as a one party system). It is a competitive party system but one in which the competing parts play rather dissimilar roles. It consists of a *party of consensus* and *parties of pressure*. The latter function on the margin and, indeed, the concept of a *margin of pressure* is of great importance in this system. Inside the margin are various factions within the party of consensus. Outside the margin are several opposition groups and parties, dissident groups from the ruling party, and other interest groups and important individuals. These groups outside the margin do not constitute alternatives to the ruling party. Their role is to constantly pressurize, criticize, censure and influence it by influencing opinion and interests inside the margin and, above all, exert a latent threat that if the ruling group strays away too far from the balance of effective public opinion, and if the factional system within it is not mobilized to restore the balance, it will be displaced from power by the opposition groups. Both the ideas of an in-built corrective through factionalism within the ruling party, and the idea of a latent threat from outside the margin of pressure are necessary parts of the one party dominance system. It is an assumption of the system that the party of consensus, which is presumably the only legitimate instrument of power, is sensitive enough to public pressures and demands, but a safeguard is nonetheless provided through the operation of the *latency factor,* so that there is always available an identifiable group or groups which can be called into action for the preservation of competition and external control, if the normal mechanism provided by competing elites within the party fails to respond. The sensitivity of the entire system depends on the sensitivity of the *margin of pressure,* its flexibility and general responsiveness being a function of the elbow room it provides to factions, dissident groups and opposition parties in the making of critical choices and decisions.

It is the consensus system which operates through the institution of a

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[3] Robert Mckenzie has popularized this formula. See his *British Political Parties,* Second Edition (London: Heineman, 1963).

party of consensus that is of central importance in this scheme of politics. In India, the Congress, which is the party of consensus, functions through an elaborate network of factions which provides the chief competitive mechanism of the Indian system. We have considered elsewhere in some detail the main features of the factional system and the functions it performs.[4] We have shown there how political change takes place at each level in this system, and how in the process not only new men come to power but new kinds of men, bringing with them new attitudes and orientations to power, and new states of ideology and issue articulation. We can briefly recapitulate the arguments here. In 1947, the Congress, which functioned as a broad-based nationalist movement before independence, transformed itself into the dominant political party of the nation. Although a number of opposition parties came into existence, it was recognized that the Congress was the chief party, representing a historical consensus and enjoying a continuing basis of support and trust. Under the circumstances, political competition was internalized and carried on within the Congress. There developed an elaborate system of factions at every level of political and governmental activity, and a system of coordination between the various levels through vertical "faction chains."[5] Originating on the basis of individual competition between leaders, these factions were then built around a functional network consisting of various social groups and leader-client relationships. In the process, a system of patronage was worked out in the countryside, traditional institutions of kin and caste were gradually drawn and involved, and a structure of pressures and compromises was developed. These were mediated through two new tiers of political organization, a managerial class of politicians occupying critical organizational positions in the State and the District Congresses, and a class of "link men" in the field [6] through whom they operated. It was in the course of the working of this system that political competition was intensified, changes took place, new cadres of leadership drawn from a more diffuse social basis came to power, and an intricate structure of conflict, mediation, bargaining and consensus was developed within the framework of the Congress.

The system got aggregated at the State level where individuals who had risen to power in the Congress organization sometimes constituted the chief opposition to the government, provided an alternative leadership,

4 Rajni Kothari, "Party System," *The Economic Weekly,* June 3, 1961; Rajni Kothari, "India's Political Take-Off," *The Economic Weekly,* Special Number, July, 1962; also see Myron Weiner, "Political Leadership in West Bengal," *The Economic Weekly,* Special Number, July 1962; and W. H. Morris-Jones, "India's Political Idioms," in C. H. Phillips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963).

5 Rajni Kothari and Ghanshyam Shah, "Caste Orientation of Political Factions: Modasa Constituency—A Case Study," *The Economic Weekly,* Special Number (July, 1963).

6 F. G. Bailey, *Politics and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963). Bailey uses the term "brokers" to describe these men.

exercised controls and pressures on it, and in many instances overthrew it from power and replaced it.[7] In this process, elections in the organization played an important role, but also the general elections, and the selection of party candidates for the general elections. Finally, the system of mediation and arbitration as well as an inter-level coordination in the Congress [8] ensured active involvement of the central leadership in the factional structure. More recently, starting some time before Mr. Nehru's death, we find the operation of the same system at the top, through the activization of the central executive of the party, and the latter's firm and successful mediation in the determination of governmental succession after Nehru.[9] The upshot of all this is the critical importance of the party organization at all levels, the competitive relationship between the organization and the government, and between the factions within each of them.

Structurally, such a party system displays two features. There is plurality within the dominant party which makes it more representative, provides flexibility, and sustains internal competition. At the same time, it is prepared to absorb groups and movements from outside the party and thus

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[7] The pattern of replacement of the government leaders by leaders controlling the party organization in the State began in Madras when Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was replaced as Chief Minister by Mr. Kamaraj, the State Congress President, in 1953. In U. P. Mr. C. B. Gupta first acquired control of the P.C.C. and then managed to win over support of a majority of the members in the Legislature Party and brought about the fall of Chief Minister Sampurnaanand in 1961, much against the wishes of Prime Minister Nehru. The Orissa Chief Minister Harekrushna Mahatab was similarly replaced by Mr. Bijoyanand Patnaik in 1962, when the latter as Chief of the P.C.C. virtually organized an agitation against the Congress-Gantantra coalition Ministry that the former was heading and forced the central leadership to intervene in his favor. Likewise in Gujarat and Mysore the leaders who had gained control of the P.C.C.s took over as Chief Ministers in 1963.

[8] The Central leadership has been able to play a considerable role in the rivalries between Congress factions in the States through such instrumentalities as the Central Parliamentary Board, the sub-Committees in the Working Committee that are appointed from time to time to look after the affairs of P.C.C.s where the conflicts are acute, and through the system of the "observer" appointed to supervise, on its behalf, the organizational elections in the States. Possessing vast powers, ranging from the determination of the eligibility of primary members to vote to the conduct of the poll for election of P.C.C. office-bearers, the "observers" have been able to help one or the other faction to gain control of the organization at the State level. The High Command itself has in a few cases been able to tilt the balance one way or the other, or bring about a rapprochement between rival factions through direct intervention, usually at the request of local groups.

[9] Mr. Kamaraj as Congress President played an important role in the selection of the successor to Mr. Nehru. With Lal Bahadur Shastri, Morarji Desai and Jagjivan Ram in the field the task of determining the degree of support each enjoyed among the M.P.s, State Chief Ministers and P.C.C. Chiefs was entrusted to Mr. Kamaraj. After meeting them all informally he conveyed to the Parliamentary Party, over whose meeting he was requested to preside, his finding that Mr. Shastri enjoyed the support of the majority among the M.P.s and among the other elements in the party. The Parliamentary Party accepted this finding and elected Mr. Shastri as its leader by a unanimous vote.

prevent other parties from gaining in strength. It is a system that concentrates strength within the dominant party and then builds internal checks to limit the use of this strength. In this way the party representing a historical consensus also continues to represent the present consensus. This ensures the legitimacy of the system and of the institutional framework under which it operates.

The role of the Opposition in such a party system has already been discussed. By posing a constant threat, it ensures the mobility and life of the internal power structure of the Congress. On the other hand, its own strength is continuously conditioned by the strength of the Congress, gaining where the latter loses, and sometimes gaining substantially when the latter has lost grip over the situation or its internal thermostat has failed.[10] Such a position has its structural implications. Electorate-wise, the Opposition can only hope to function effectively at the local and regional levels. Legislature-wise, however, it also functions at the national level and performs a very useful role in the maintenance of the system. It should be noted here that thanks to the heritage of parliamentary traditions, which are further reinforced by the conventions established by the leaders of the national movement in the Indian Parliament, the Opposition is given an importance which is out of proportion to its size. This, in turn, helps sustain the morale and activity of the Opposition in spite of there being a slender chance of its coming to power. Also, certain important leaders of the Opposition are given considerable personal importance by the ruling group in the Congress, thus preventing frustration and bitterness from taking undesirable forms. At the same time, this creates a wide gap between the leadership and the rank and file in the Opposition, shielding and protecting the former from the radicalism of the latter.

Apart from this relationship within the national political elite, however, the Opposition in India is, for all practical purposes, a regional phenomenon. Even the "national" parties are loose coalitions of State parties, which explain the great heterogeneity within opposition parties, and the constant problem of enforcing discipline from above. The second structural implication is that the Opposition is fragmented and greatly divided. Because they are basically not parties of consensus but parties of pressure, they present an inchoate front. This is another important reason why sectional parties, such as the D.M.K., the different tribal parties and various language parties and coalitions, and certain parties that are essentially sectional such as the Communists in Kerala and earlier in Andhra, and the Jan Sangh and Swatantra in certain areas, are much more successful in opposition. Again, however, both the positive stimulation of parliamentary experience and the negative contribution of Congress weakening in parts of the country has set up a corrective trend to such a structure of pressure: the Opposition parties too are found to contain a wide variety of social groups.

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[10] The analogy with the thermostat underlines the absorbent, self-corrective and flexibility functions of factionalism.

There is also a greater secular involvement of sectional groups which will help in the articulation of the Opposition.[11] But the emergence of a second party of consensus is not anywhere in the offing. We shall return to this point when we consider below the emerging trends.

What we have discussed so far provides no more than a tentative definition and description of the one party dominance system as it operates in India. We do not propose in this paper to suggest explanatory hypotheses for the emergence and development of such a system as we are more concerned here with the logic of its operation and its consequent impact on the framework in which political and institutional development is taking place. However, we may touch briefly upon the historical and environmental context in which the system has developed, as this may help in bringing out its more peculiar elements.

It is important to bear in mind that the Congress took root and came to political power not as a political party but as a movement for independence and reform. What is important is the long duration and organization of the movement and the forms it took. Established in 1885, and passing through a long phase of intellectual agitation during which its goals were articulated, it was transformed during the nineteen twenties and thirties into a mass movement that acquired depth and traditions. This meant two things. Encompassing as it did all the major sections and interests of society, it acquired a stamp of legitimacy and came to represent what we have called a "historical consensus." But this also meant that its structure was firmly laid out and the conditions of its competence determined. It was as a distinctive political elite organized in the form of a well-knit movement spread in large areas and along a hierarchy of levels—district, Pradesh, and all-India—that the Congress acquired its identity. It is true that it was not built in the form of a modern bureaucracy as has been the case with various socialistic and communist parties, but it remained nonetheless a powerful movement with a discipline and a strong commitment to goals. It is this that determined the organizational ideology of the Congress, which still continues, and of which the "Kamaraj Plan" is the latest and most characteristic echo.

Secondly, the Congress was from the beginning committed to a democratic ideology, a stand from which it never wavered in spite of a good deal of "anti-Western" feeling and a certain speculative nostalgia for a utopia in the past. Even the latter underlined the democratic inclinations of the leadership: it was not traditional kingship, but panchayati raj (significantly translated later on as "democratic decentralization") that was the point of reference. Similarly, freedom of speech and tolerance of opposition (indeed the necessity of opposition) were cardinal principles of the move-

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[11] For an account of the movement in which caste associations are getting involved in the total political process, see the forthcoming article by Rajni Kothari and Rushikesh Maru, "Caste and Secularism in India: A Case Study of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha," to be published in the *Journal of Asian Studies*.

ment's ideology of political modernization. Non-violent nationalism and intellectual pacifism further underlined the same democratic orientation. All this ensured the democratic and competitive character of the intellectual climate in which the party system developed in India, again setting it apart from the "one-party" models of many other countries. The model of a one-party state was anathema to the Congress from the beginning.

Historical reasons are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the efficacy of a system. There is no doubt that in its character and depth, the Congress was an unparalleled movement for independence, and this has significantly contributed to the present place of the Congress organization in India. But it was the consolidation that followed independence that really determined the present features of the system. Moreover, there were peculiar environmental features that not only confirmed the Congress in position of unrivalled power but considerably added to its strength and crystallized it in concrete terms. It is often said that with the coming of independence, the Congress ceased to be a movement and turned into a political party. This is a misreading of the reality of the Indian political situation for even after independence, the Congress continued to be a movement. Having acquired independence from foreign rule, it had now to build a nation. It is this charter of modernization through nation-building that has determined many of the present characteristics of the Indian party system. In this respect, it resembles the various official and *mouvement* parties found in the communist and non-communist developing nations, without, however, taking on their authoritarian features. It is in terms of a movement based on a consensus developed through the operation of free institutions, while at the same time restraining the excesses of partisan struggle, that the Congress has achieved its post-independence character. Let us look briefly at the main features of the system as it operates today.

The Congress, when it came to power, assigned a positive and over-whelming role to government and politics in the development of society. Secondly, it made the power of the central authority the chief condition of national survival. This power was not only consolidated but greatly aug-mented. Thirdly, it made legitimacy the principal issue of politics and gave to the government and the ruling party an importance of great symbolic value. "Only the Congress could be trusted." This is why only the Con-gress was the party of consensus. The political system got legitimized through identification with a particular leadership, and its agents and heirs. This made the symbolism of the Congress so concrete and manifest. Fourthly, the Congress in power made for a concentration of resources, a monopoly of patronage and a control of economic power which crystallized the structure of its power and made competition with it a difficult proposi-tion. Fifthly, by adopting a competitive model of development, it made mobilization and public cooperation a function of political participation rather than of bureaucratic control and police surveillance. Only the Con-gress, with its huge organizational legacy, its leadership and its control

of institutional patronage, could provide such a framework of participation.

Similarly, the broadening of the social and ideological base of the Indian polity depended upon the broadening of opportunities within the Congress as it would be suicidal for new sections and interests to join an opposition party and invite the hostility of the ruling party. Indeed, it has been repeatedly observed that even when the grievances of particular sections have been successfuly ventilated through agitations launched by the opposition parties, the result has been that these elements have been absorbed into the ranks of the Congress which only stood to gain from the bargain: a truly tragic plight for the Opposition.[12] The fact that the consensus represented by the Congress has come not only out of historical legacy but also a continuing accommodation of interests is not out of any intellectual alertness or breadth of vision on part of Congressmen. The Congress has been hard on many groups, has generally been conservative on the question of admitting new recruits, has given in only when it must, and has usually gained in the bargain. But the situation is such that it confirms the Congress more and more in its position of the party of consensus. In places where it has failed to accommodate entrenched or newly emergent groups, it has not occupied such a position and has been defeated by dissident or opposition groups.[13]

A significant trend in political development in India is the growth of built-in constraints in the political system which have led to a containment of conflicts at points where excessive conflict is likely to disrupt the intricate balance on which the Congress system is based. An awareness seems to have grown in the leadership that whereas the mechanism of factions to which the Congress has given rise serves to make for mobility and leads to a fresh balance when one is called for, neither factionalism nor partisan struggle can be allowed to become endemic, and should be held in restraint. There has developed over the years a conciliation machinery within the Congress, at various levels and for different tasks, which is almost constantly in operation, mediating in factional disputes, influencing political decisions in the States and districts, and not infrequently backing up one group against another and utilizing the electoral and patronage systems in confirming the former in a position of power. Apart from resolution of conflicts and interference in the outcome of conflicts, there is also a growing tendency

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[12] Thus as a result of the powerful agitation for linguistic states in Maharashtra and Gujarat, new cadres of workers were drawn into the political arena. Soon after the successful culmination of the agitation, however, the Congress absorbed a large number of the new entrants and succeeded in capturing full initiative in State politics. Similarly, in Punjab Congressmen who had left the party and organized a new opposition group during the agitation against Chief Minister Kairon have re-joined it following the formation of a new Ministry under Mr. Ram Kishen.

[13] See, for instance, the articles on Amroha, Farukkhabad and Rajkot constituencies in which the Congress was defeated in 1963 bye-elections, in Myron Weiner and Rajni Kothari (eds.), *Voting Behaviour in India,* to be pubished shortly by Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta.

towards avoidance of conflicts from taking an express form at certain levels, such as the All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) or the general meeting of the Pradesh Congress Committee (P.C.C.). This has been made possible by the growth of several buffers in the form of smaller executive committees, informal consultative committees, and "inner groups" in the leadership.

The trend is also noticeable outside the ruling party. Thus the significant development in the working of the Indian Parliament is the growing importance of the Congress Parliamentary Party (C.P.P.) on the one hand and various functional committees of the Parliament on the other in legislative and political decision-making. Consultation between leaders of various parties on key business issues and the development of State Committees in the C.P.P. are further extensions of the pivotal role of the Committee system in the making of parliamentary consensus. Similarly, in the Council of Ministers the latest trend is the appointment of experts and "non-controversial" figures to key ministerial positions. Even among the politician ministers, conflict and controversy appear to have been restricted through the emergence of an inner group in the form of a "collective" and the avoidance of abstract issues through the elimination of the "ideologues" from important positions. In other spheres, there has either already taken place or a demand is being made for autonomy and non-political functioning. Thus in civil-military relationships, the military is given more and more autonomy on its internal administration, as well as in the making of policy, thus making for a relationship of mutual confidence and trust and for a high state of morale and respect for civilian authority. Similar pleas for autonomy and "professionalism" are being made for the Planning Commission and the nationalized industries. These are all developments leading to a limitation of the sensitive zone of factional politics, without any attempt to limit political participation, or restrict the right to criticize the government or articulate public opinion to censure it on particular failures or shortfalls. They constitute no more than in-built correctives to a highly politicized structure of institutions through which the Congress system operates.

Such a position of the Congress has been further cemented by the policy of neutralizing some of the more important sources of cleavage and disaffection in the country. Thus the removal of feudalism, the linguistic reorganization of States, the energetic infiltration by Congressmen of labor unions coupled with protective legislation for labor, the removal of gross social inequalities by grant of special privileges to depressed sections of the community, and the firm suppression of all acts of violence, secession and disaffection—all this has succeeded in neutralizing potential sources of political disaffection. All of this has been part of the Congress drive for legitimacy on the one hand and modernization on the other. Together, these features add up to a considerable strengthening of the party of consensus and a correspondingly problematic position for the opposition parties.

On the other hand, such an impressive consolidation of power in the

hands of the Congress has not led to authoritarianism because of the free working of the electoral process, the crystallization of the factional structure within the party of consensus, the critical pressures exercised by the opposition, and the general tendency of the leadership to preserve democratic forms, to respect the rule of law, to avoid undue strife and to hold various elements together in some sort of a balance of interests. The Congress has also shown great sensitivity on the question of respect for minorities, including political minorities, accommodating them whenever possible, and in general pursuing a broad-based consensus on national politics. We have discussed these points earlier and they need not be repeated, except to once again emphasize the fact that in the development and consolidation of the party of consensus, the role of the opposition has also been preserved, and that India has categorically rejected any authoritarian model of the party system in order to avoid dissidence and preserve unity. The one party dominance as found in India is thus radically different from the one party dominance as found in, say, Ghana. It is a dominance based on consensual authority and not simply on civil or military power.

In giving to the country and its institutions such strength and character, a critical role was played by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. Although it is easy to exaggerate his role and although it is doubtful what he could have accomplished had he not had the great inheritance of the national movement and its organization to stand upon, there is no doubt that but for Nehru and his long tenure in office, it would have been difficult to consolidate the gains of independence in the manner in which this has been done. Nehru's role has been two-fold. By the sheer force of his personality, he managed to hold the country together, to arrest disruptive forces, and to take to the road of modernization. By symbolizing a nation's unity in one man [14] for such a long time, India avoided the painful convulsions through which less fortunate new nations have had to pass. But far more important was Nehru's other and more concrete role of having given roots and legitimacy to the institutions adopted by the country as well as to the modern purposes to which they are put. He patiently and doggedly worked to this end. As we have argued elsewhere, the contribution of Nehru was not to have started a revolution but to have given rise to a consensus.[15] He provided the country's institutions with sufficient time to strike roots, and himself worked to that end by being their chief operator, and made acceptable to his countrymen certain critical values—the value of equality, the value of freedom, the value of the vote. Meanwhile, he concentrated power in himself and in his party and maintained some sort of balance, pinning his faith on the institutions of democracy but not allowing political conflict to take too sharp a form, in a sense drifting on and

[14] Sisir Gupta, "Some Aspects of the Problem of National Integration in India, Pakistan and Ceylon," *Parliamentary Studies,* Vol. 8, Nos. 1 and 2, 1964.

[15] Rajni Kothari, "The Meaning of Jawaharlal Nehru," *The Economic Weekly,* Special Number (July 1964).

hoping for things to sort themselves out ultimately. Nehru was perhaps not too confident of the way things were shaping but his sense of power on the one hand and a sincere conviction about the efficacy of democratic institutions on the other were enough to allow India time to build a foundation.

In a sense, the Nehru period was an exceptional period in India's history, one that was so necessary, but not so normal. This had its effect on the working of the party system. While the Congress gained in strength owing to the various factors described above, Nehru in another way weakened the party by concentrating power in his own hands and through acting as if only he could hold the country together. Nehru allowed things to take their own shape in the States and at lower levels where the party organization often forced its way, but at the national level he stymied the growth of the organization. Such a discrepancy in institutional organization, however, could not last forever, especially in such a highly structured and powerful organization as the Congress. Towards the end of his tenure, therefore, Nehru agreed to a proposal which, while it confirmed his own unbridled power, also restored power and prestige to the Congress organization.

This proposal was the Kamaraj Plan.[16] While this scheme has attracted widespread attention and has been, in turn, made the subject of praise and ridicule, its real role has not been understood. To consider the Kamaraj Plan in terms of its formally declared objectives is to misunderstand the purpose, as observers and columnists were not slow in seeing soon after announcement of the Plan.[17] At the same time, however, to have considered

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[16] The Kamaraj Plan was adopted by the A.I.C.C. on August 10, 1963. The resolution incorporating it was moved by Mr. K. Kamaraj, who was then the Chief Minister of Madras and seconded by Mr. S. K. Patil, the then Minister for Food and Agriculture at the Center. The chief idea of the plan was to secure the voluntary relinquishment of their ministerial posts by senior Congressmen to enable them to devote all their time to the organizational work of the party so that the "unhealthy trend" noticeable in the formation of groups and factions in the party and the consequent "loosening of the Congress organization" could be arrested.

Following the unanimous adoption of the resolution, all ministers at the Center and the States submitted their resignations to the Working Committee which authorized Mr. Nehru to decide which of the resignations would be accepted. On 24th August, Mr. Nehru submitted to the Working Committee a list of names of six Central Cabinet Ministers and six Chief Ministers who should be asked to take up organizational work. The Working Committee accepted his suggestion and recommended that the resignation of the 12 senior leaders be accepted. The Central Cabinet Ministers to leave under the Kamaraj Plan were Morarji Desai, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Jagjivan Ram, S. K. Patil, B. Gopala Reddy and Dr. K. L. Shrimali. Among the six Chief Ministers whose resignations the Working Committee accepted were K. Kamaraj of Madras, Biju Patnaik of Orissa, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed of Kashmir, U.P.'s C. B. Gupta, Bihar's Binodanand Jha and B. A. Mandloi of Madhya Pradesh.

[17] K. Santhanam, "Can Kamaraj Plan Provide All the Answers," *Hindustan Times,* 14, August 1963; Krishna Bhatia, "Congress Party Proposes a Major Toning Up," *Statesman,* August 15, 1963; "Go Back to the People," editorial, *Eastern Economist,* Vol. 41, No. 10 (September 6, 1963); Romesh Thaper, "Congress Re-Birth or Hara Kiri?" *The Economic Weekly,* Vol. XV, No. 35 (August 31, 1963).

it simply in terms of a leadership purge, as was done by most of these writers, is also to have missed the point completely and to have taken an equally formal position. The importance of the Kamaraj Plan lay not in the immediate action taken, but in the sequel to it. It was not the removal "for party work" of Central Ministers and Chief Ministers but the induction of party managers into positions of power at the national level which proved of greater consequence. By putting party managers into power, the Kamaraj Plan not only recognized their importance in national affairs but also restored to the central organization the prestige and importance it had lost over the years due to Nehru's dominating presence. Seen in this light, the Kamaraj Plan was no coup staged by adventurists; it was rather a "restoration."

To think that with the return to the government of men who had been "kamarajed" the purpose of the plan is defeated is to misunderstand the nature of the succession after Nehru; it is also to misunderstand the nature of the change that has come once again in ministerial-organizational relations at the Center. That important leaders should leave the government and look after the organization was relevant in a situation where the organization had been weakened by those who were in government. It is no longer relevant when the organization is restored to its previous position and is granted its due place in the decision-making process of politics. It is this that has now come about after the death of Nehru. The struggle between Lal Bahadur Shastri and Morarji Desai over the succession issue was at the same time a struggle between two principles of party organization. In the outcome, the importance of the organization (alongside the Ministry) has been established as a cardinal principle of the system. It is a principle that is an essential part of the one party dominance system as it operates in India, and one that distinguishes it from both the party system of western democracies, and the one party systems found in many of the new nations, in both of which the party organization is considered instrumental to the executive. In the western democracies, the subsidiary role given to party organization ensures unity in the party and is functional to the two-party system. In the authoritarian and "solidarity" regimes also it ensures unity of the regime and keeps factionalism from going too far. In the Indian system, however, where a strong and potentially monolithic party must provide its own correctives to its power if it is to function democratically, the positive role of the party organization becomes a necessity.

We have now seen in detail the main features of the one party dominance system and the historical and environmental conditions under which it developed. It is a system that provides, among other things, a comprehensive mechanism of change (unlike the Western party systems, it is within the same party; unlike the "one-party systems," it is not through a *coup d'etat*), a system of conflict articulation and resolution (through the operation of the margin of pressure, both internal and external), and a system of communications between society and politics (through the factional network).

It has worked rather well so far. It has its problems too, some of them serious, for it is still an evolving system and greatly dependent at the present stage on performance in other spheres. As for the trends in operation, as mentioned earlier, it is quite possible that the opposition parties will gain from the Congress in certain areas, but this is an inherent and necessary part of the system. Where the Congress has really lost grip, the opposition may even be able to form a goverment in one or more States. Only if this happens on a large scale, and percolates to the Center, however, can the system be said to have undergone a major change. Even in that case, the question remains whether the new party or coalition provides us with another party of consensus or is just an expression of accumulated protest on the part of the public likely to wither away after a short time in office.

Lastly, there is the important theoretical question: What constitutes a stable party system? If still in transition, when does the real take-off come? Is it necessary that an "alternative government" in the form of another party of consensus should emerge? Or is stabilization of elite competition, including smooth changes in government, as found in the Congress system in India, also a satisfactory condition of political organization?

The one party dominance system in India, with its factions and its support and communications networks, may yet well be a transitional system, suited for the special period of national growth, but one that would transform into a more "normal" party system later on. This can be left as an open question. Either through a purposive coalition of dissident and opposition groups or through some sharp break within the Congress, or perhaps through the independent strengthening of one of the opposition parties, such a change may come in the future. Or, for all we know, the delicate balance on which the legitimacy and power of the Congress system rests may be rudely disturbed, and a more authoritarian system might emerge. Political systems do change in their nature over time, and there is no particular sanctity in one particular system. Meanwhile, the system of one party dominance described by us here is an interesting addition to the present typology of party systems, and one that is also, on Indian experience, a viable model of political organization.[18]

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[18] For an earlier attempt at describing this system, see the author's "Party System," *op. cit.* While sending this article to press, however, we also notice that W. H. Morris-Jones has developed a similar concept of "one dominant party." See his "Parliament and Dominant Party: Indian Experience," *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Summer 1964). The analysis presented by us, however, differs from that analysis in certain respects, especially in the characterization of the Congress as the party of consensus.

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