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The politicization of the peasantry in a North Indian state: I

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*The Politicization of the Peasantry in a North Indian State: I**

Paul R. Brass**

During the past three decades, the dominant party in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (U. P.), the Indian National Congress, has undergone a secular decline in its support in state legislative assembly elections. The principal factor in its decline has been its inability to establish a stable basis of support among the middle peasantry, particularly among the so-called 'backward castes', with landholdings ranging from 2.5 to 30 acres. Disaffected from the Congress since the 1950s, these middle proprietary castes, who together form the leading social force in the state, turned in large numbers to the BKD, the agrarian party of Chaudhuri Charan Singh, in its first appearance in U. P. elections in 1969. They also provided the central core of support for the Janata party in its landslide victory in the 1977 state assembly elections. The politicization of the middle peasantry in this vast north Indian province is no transient phenomenon, but rather constitutes a persistent factor with which all political parties and all governments in U. P. must contend.

I

Introduction

This article† focuses on the state of Uttar Pradesh (U. P.), the largest state in India, with a population of over 90 million, a land area of 113,000 square miles, and a considerable diversity in political patterns, social structure, and agricultural ecology. My purpose in writing this article is to demonstrate how a program of modest land reform, designed to establish a system of peasant proprietorship and reenforced by the introduction of the technology of the 'green revolution', has, in the context of a political system based on party-electoral competition, enhanced the power of the middle and rich peasants. The landholding classes in U. P., particularly those with landholdings above 2.5 acres, have become the arbiters of the fates of governments and parties and their interests have become decisive in critical areas of government policymaking affecting economic development. The rise to political prominence of these peasant classes also has forestalled both peasant revolution and class polarization as the leading political

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† See Notes.

parties in the state have vied for the support of those who control most of the land.

In order to understand how the politicization and political dominance of the peasantry have developed in U. P., it is necessary to refer back to the period of British rule. Before Independence, the British controlled the countryside in what was then known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh with the collaboration of a group of tax-farmers known as *zamindars* in most parts of the province, and as *talukdars* in the region of Oudh. Most of these tax-farmers owned lands of their own, whose cultivation they supervised personally or through their agents, but they collected revenue also on lands held in various types of tenures by others. There were more than two million of these tax farmers at Independence, but the vast majority of them had only medium-size landholdings and collected only a petty revenue for the state. The biggest tax-farmers, those who collected rent on hundreds of villages and paid revenues to the state of more than Rs.5,000 per year, numbered less than a thousand [Government of the United Provinces, 1948, II: 32-33]. It was upon these larger tax-farmers whom the British authorities relied to maintain political control in the countryside and whom they rewarded with titles of honour and positions of political weight in the provincial government and in the districts.

For its part, the Indian National Congress, which was the principal nationalist organization in the province and which emerged to lead the government after Independence, based its rural organization and its rural appeal on the high caste tenants of the big zamindars and talukdars and on the petty and middle zamindars, those paying less than Rs. 100 per year in land revenue. The Congress supported struggles and demands for security of tenure, for rent reductions, for cheap credit facilities, and for an end to abuses such as forced labour, fines, and 'illegal exactions' [Narendra Dev, 1946: 59]. These tenant movements were strongest in the region of the state known as Oudh, where the talukdars, holding semi-princely status and privileges, allegedly oppressed the tenantry more relentlessly than the zamindars did in other parts of the state.

Although the tenant movements in U. P. and Congress control over the government of the province from 1937 to 1939 resulted in some modest reforms and some amelioration of the condition of the tenantry, the zamindari system remained essentially intact throughout the period of British rule. After Independence, however, the Congress acquired complete control over the government of U. P. and moved to displace the zamindars and talukdars economically and politically and to substitute for the old agrarian system a new rural social order based primarily upon owner-cultivation of family-size farms. Two major pieces of land reform legislation were enacted by the Congress to achieve these goals—the Zamindari Abolition Act of 1952 and the Imposition of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act of 1960.

The Zamindari Abolition Act, as its name implies, eliminated the former system of tax-farming by removing the zamindars and talukdars from their positions as intermediaries between the cultivator and the state. It also eliminated the heterogeneous forms of land rights and types of tenancy that had existed previously and created in their place two principal categories of

landholders, called *bhumidhars* and *sirdars*. The only difference between these two categories was that the *bhumidhars* acquired transferable rights to their lands and a reduced land revenue by making an initial payment of ten times their land revenue whereas the *sirdars* could not sell their landholdings and paid a higher land revenue. A third category of land tenure also was created, called *asami*, but it was meant to be a minor form of tenure for persons engaged in 'shifting or unstable cultivation'¹ and for those letting land from *bhumidhars* and *sirdars* who were not able to cultivate their own land.

It must be stressed that the Zamindari Abolition Act did not dispossess the former zamindars and talukdars. It removed them as tax-farmers and displaced them from control over lands they did not own, but it left them in possession of lands traditionally presumed to be under their personal cultivation or supervision, which were called *sir* and *khudkhaskt* holdings. It also provided for rather generous monetary compensation to the ex-zamindars and talukdars. In some cases, the former tax-farmers were able to retain both large incomes and possession of very large tracts of land.²

The Land Ceilings Act of 1960 was designed more with a view to reduce the size of the largest landholdings in U. P. than to redistribute and equalize landholdings on a large scale. It set a rather high ceiling of 40 standard acres per individual, which meant that many families still could hold 150 to 200 acres of land. Moreover, the exclusion of grovelands left some of the former zamindars who had converted their lands to fruit trees in anticipation of the law, in control of quite substantial acreage and incomes. The act was stiffened somewhat in 1973 in conformity with the National Guide Lines established by Mrs. Gandhi's government in 1971. The basic ceiling was reduced to 27½ acres per family. Although most big farmers had by then divided their lands sufficiently among family members and relatives to avoid confiscation of their lands, some actually lost lands after the enactment of the amendments of 1973. Nevertheless, loopholes remained to be exploited by the skillful and politically well-connected farmers and ex-landlords, many of whom still retain hundreds of acres of lands by such devices as establishing bogus cooperatives or educational and charitable trusts [*Government of India, 1976: 77 and 143*].

In general, therefore, the Congress land reforms were designed principally to eliminate the old system of tax-farming, which was accomplished effectively, and to limit the size of the largest farms, which also was achieved for the most part. However, these reforms were in no sense radical. They left most landholders in possession of lands they and their families had always cultivated, they involved very little redistribution of land, and they left a considerable range in the size of land holdings in the countryside and, therefore, considerable inequality among landholders and between the landless and the landholders.

Although there have always been a minority of Congressmen in U. P. and in New Delhi who have argued in favour of more radical land reforms and for extensive redistribution and equalization of landholdings, the predominant leadership of the Congress in the state remained content to dismantle the system of intermediaries and to establish a land system in which most cultivators held exclusive rights to the land they tilled. In fact, the ruling Congress drew its local

leadership from the leading rural proprietary groups [Brass, 1965: 229]. During the 1960s and 1970s, moreover, several measures were taken by government which further strengthened the position of the peasantry and which made it nearly impossible to carry out policies that were contrary to the interests of the more prosperous among them. These measures included consolidation of landholdings, the introduction of a system of rural self-government known as *panchayati raj*, an effort to increase rural taxation that encountered stiff opposition,³ and the introduction of the technological changes in agriculture known as the 'green revolution'.⁴

Consolidation of landholdings brought together into compact and contiguous plots of land the fragmented holdings of the peasantry in U. P. The consolidation operations, which began after the passage of the U. P. Consolidation of Holdings Act of 1953, had encompassed more than half the cultivable area of the state by the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1971) [*Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, 1976: 234*]. Although consolidation made more efficient cultivation possible for all landholders, it clearly had even greater significance for the middle and larger landholders, who were now in a position to make effective use of the new agricultural inputs and, in the case of the bigger farmers, to adopt some forms of mechanization.

The introduction in the 1960s of the system of rural self-government known as *panchayati raj* enhanced the political position of the peasantry, again favouring the middle and larger farmers among them. The system provided for a three-tiered structure of rural institutions, including the directly-elected village *panchayat* (council) and village *pradhan* (president), a middle-level block development committee elected by the village *pradhans*, and a district council composed partly of indirectly-elected and partly of state-appointed members. The system of directly-elected, indirectly-elected, and appointed members at different levels worked in such a way as to enhance the power of both the locally influential landed castes and the district Congress leadership, for only the most prosperous landed groups in the villages had the time and influence to mobilize support and, until 1967, patronage in the system was channelled exclusively through the Congress-controlled state government to the Congress-controlled district boards, whose members were linked to the local landed castes [Brass, 1965: 224-227].

It was apparent in the early 1960s that any measure that ran contrary to the interests of the peasantry as a whole would be politically difficult to enact in U. P. This fact was most clearly demonstrated in 1962 when, operating under the prompting of the Planning Commission of India, the state government attempted to raise new resources from the peasantry to finance the Third Five Year Plan by imposing a 50 per cent surcharge on the land revenue. The attempt to enact this bill nearly led to the toppling of the government. A surcharge bill ultimately was passed only after the Chinese invasion of 20 October made it possible for government to justify the measure in terms of the 'national emergency' and only after the surcharge was reduced to 25 per cent. However, the surcharge was withdrawn the following year. Moreover, in subsequent years, the issue has become transformed in the U. P. political arena into a

question of whether or not the entire land revenue should be abolished and replaced by a graduated agricultural income tax. On the face of it, this type of proposal favours the smaller peasantry. However, an agricultural income tax is extremely difficult to collect, as opposed to land revenue which is based on historical records of rights and assessments on particular holdings, and is therefore not much of a threat to the more prosperous peasantry either.

Finally, in the late 1960s, the new emphasis placed by Indian government on agriculture and the introduction of the package of improved seeds and agricultural practices that goes by the name of the 'green revolution' also affected the peasantry in U. P. There is considerable controversy in the literature on the 'green revolution' as to whether or not all agricultural groups have benefited from it, but there is no real dispute on two points. First, the 'green revolution' in north India has been principally a revolution affecting wheat which, in U. P., means that its benefits have extended primarily to the Doab districts between the Ganges and the Jumna rivers and to the western part of the state. Second, however much or little the 'green revolution' may have benefited the middle or small peasants and the landless, there is no doubt whatever that the rich peasants with holdings of 15 acres or more have benefited most.⁵

This brief survey of government policy towards the landed classes in U. P. since Independence has revealed four important features. First, the old system of tax-farming was eliminated, but the ex-zamindars and former talukdars retained some economic power and potential political influence in the countryside. Second, a number of laws, structural changes in government, and policies were introduced that enhanced the economic and political positions of the peasant cultivating classes generally. Third, however, most of those measures benefited the peasants with larger landholdings more than others. Finally, it became apparent in the 1960s that no state government could function effectively if it attempted to extract resources from the peasantry or in other ways went against their interests.

These four features of land-government relationships in U. P. suggest only the broad outlines of rural social structure and political patterns in U. P. In the remainder of this article, the agrarian class structure in U. P. will be examined in greater detail and the relationship of political parties to the different rural social classes will be shown.

II

Rural social structure in Uttar Pradesh

The data on rural social structure for this study have been derived from the following sources: from the statistical volume of the *Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee*, from the 1951, 1961, and 1971 censuses of Uttar Pradesh, and from the 1971 *Agricultural Census* of Uttar Pradesh. The Zamindari Abolition Committee Report contains district-level data from land record and revenue reports for 1945 through 1947. The data from the state censuses are available at the tahsil-level, an administrative unit



Figure 1: Regions of Uttar Pradesh

subordinate to the district,⁶ those from the 1971 *Agricultural Census* at the district level only. From these several sources, data have been derived on the distribution of rural categories by type of tenure and by size of landholdings. Data also have been calculated on the distribution of agricultural labourers. In the statistical analyses to be presented later in this article, these data are manipulated at the district and tahsil-level. In this section, however, they will be presented at the state and regional level in order to reveal the broad patterns and ecological variations that exist in the state.

Seven regions are specified in the tables in this section (see figure 1). They are as follows: Kumaon, the predominantly mountainous Himalayan districts; Bundelkhand, the rocky hill and plateau region in the southeastern part of the state; Rohilkhand, comprising the districts of the Upper Gangetic plain where wheat and rice both are grown, but with wheat acreage predominant; Oudh, the home of the talukdars, another mixed zone of wheat and rice cultivation, with rice more predominant here than wheat; the Eastern Districts, a region of extremely high density rice cultivation; and the Upper and Lower Doab districts between the Ganges and the Jumna rivers where gram and wheat are the principal crops and little rice is grown.⁷ The regional discussions in the remainder of this article will focus on the five plains regions, where most of the population of the state live and which are agriculturally the most important regions of the state. For some purposes, however, the data will be regrouped into two broader divisions comprising the upper half of wheat-growing and rice-growing districts respectively, in order to detect possible specific political differences that may be associated with the different ecologies and economic bases of wheat and rice, the two principal crops in this state.

A. ZAMINDARS, TALUKDARS, AND LAND TENURE BEFORE ZAMINDARI ABOLITION

Table 1, compiled from the 1951 census, shows the distribution of four agricultural categories in U. P. just before the abolition of the tax-farming system. Three of the four agricultural categories represent a combination of a wide variety of types of holdings, land rights, and wealth.⁸ The first category, non-cultivating owners, consisted principally of zamindars and talukdars who paid a land revenue greater than Rs.25 per annum. The petty zamindars were included in the 1951 census in the category of owner-cultivators, which also comprised several categories of tenants who were about to become owner-cultivators under the Zamindari Abolition Act. In other words, the category 'owner-cultivators' comprised all those groups who were to be favoured under the terms of the Zamindari Abolition Act with permanent and heritable rights in the lands they cultivated. The third category, non-owning cultivators, consisted of sub-tenants who did not have occupancy rights to the lands they cultivated and were, therefore, to remain tenants after the Zamindari Abolition Act until their leases expired. The denial of ownership rights to these sub-tenants was a clear indication that the Zamindari Abolition Act was designed to favour the more substantial proprietors and was not meant to secure all cultivators in possession of the lands they tilled. The fourth rural social category defined in the

TABLE I

Mean Distribution of Agricultural Classes and Their Dependents in Uttar Pradesh by Region, 1951 Census (in percentage of total population)

	UTTAR PRADESH	Kumaon	Rohilkhand	Oudh	Eastern Districts	Lower Doab	Bundelkhand	Upper Doab
Non-Cultivating owners	1.09	0.18	1.61	1.18	0.57	1.95	1.72	0.70
Owner-Cultivators	63.34	78.60	65.85	70.25	67.75	60.51	59.24	47.72
Non-owning Cultivators	5.14	4.55	2.88	6.80	6.35	5.14	6.53	3.56
Agricultural	5.55	1.12	2.73	4.56	8.37	4.57	9.89	6.65

Source: Calculated from Government of India [1952, Table E: 114-189]. Means are based on groups of tahsils, clustered to correspond to groups of Legislative Assembly constituencies for the correlation analyses to be presented in part II of this article. The Ns for this table are as follows: Uttar Pradesh (116); Kumaon (9); Rohilkhand (16); Oudh (26); Eastern Districts (20); Lower Doab (12); Bundelkhand (9); Upper Doab (24). The mean percentages are very close to the actual percentages based on total population for the state as a whole and for each region. For a description of the clustering technique used to group and match tahsils and constituencies, see Brass [1978: 95-96].

1951 census was agricultural labourers, those without land before zamindari abolition who were to remain without land after abolition.

It is clear from the numerical distribution of the four agricultural classes in U. P. in 1951 that the Zamindari Abolition Act was meant to favour or at least not disadvantage the overwhelming majority of the rural population of the state, who in turn comprised a majority of the total population. The owner-cultivators comprised nearly 84 per cent of the rural population and more than 63 per cent of the total population.⁹ The leading intermediaries who were to lose rights over land and long-term income under the Act comprised only 1.42 per cent of the agricultural population and only 1.09 per cent of the total population. The sub-tenants, who were to have even less security of tenure after the passage of the Zamindari Abolition Act, comprised only 6.94 per cent of the agricultural and 5.14 per cent of the total population of the state. The landless constituted 7.70 per cent of the agricultural population and 5.55 per cent of the total population. Of these latter three classes, only the bigger zamindars and the sub-tenants suffered major losses because of the Zamindari Abolition Act, although the petty zamindars also lost the right to collect the small revenue that was under their control and some may also have lost rights over some small plots of land not under their personal cultivation.

One major inequality in the rural areas of U. P. after the abolition of zamindari, therefore, clearly was that between the landed, on the one side, and

TABLE 2

Distribution of Agricultural Holdings by Size of Holding and by Acreage, Uttar Pradesh, 1945 (in percentages of total agricultural holdings and total acreage).

<i>Size Category (in Acres)</i>	<i>Holdings %</i>	<i>Acres %</i>
Under 0.5	21.5	2.2
0.5-1	16.3	3.7
1-2	18.0	8.2
2-3	11.6	8.8
3-4	8.1	8.5
4-5	5.7	7.8
5-6	4.2	6.9
6-7	3.1	6.0
7-8	2.3	5.2
8-9	1.8	4.5
9-10	1.4	4.0
10-12	1.7	5.6
12-14	1.1	4.3
14-16	0.8	3.5
16-18	0.5	2.8
16-20	0.4	2.3
20-25	0.6	3.7
Over 25	0.9	12.0

Source: Compiled from Government of the United Provinces, [1948, II, Table 14: 34-39].

the sub-tenants and landless, on the other side. That inequality was not the only one, however. Table 2 shows the distribution of the landed classes by size of holdings and by the amount of acreage controlled, according to the 1945 records of rights. Unfortunately, the 1945 data are based on holdings rather than on persons or households so that two or three separated plots of land held by one person were each listed separately, sometimes under the names of different family members. Consequently, what appears to be a striking inequality in the enormous concentration of landholders holding fewer than three acres of land, who collectively comprised 67.4 per cent of the cultivating households, but controlled only 22.9 per cent of the acreage, is an exaggeration. The figures also show a considerable disparity in the over 25-acre category. However, in this case, the disparity may be underestimated by the way the figures were compiled. In the middle levels, the disparity was of the order of one to two, with 31.7 per cent of households holding between three and 25 acres controlling 65.1 per cent of the acreage.

The Zamindari Abolition Committee, lacking accurate figures on holdings per family and arguing on the assumption that a minimum economic holding was 10 acres, saw no prospect of a redistribution of landholdings that would be both equitable and provide sufficient land to give all landholders a landholding approximating the size considered necessary for efficient cultivation. Moreover, the Committee felt it would be politically unwise 'to arouse opposition among the substantial tenants and increase the difficulty of zamindars in adjusting

themselves to changed conditions' [*Government of the United Provinces, 1948, I: 389*]. The conservative bias in the setting of 10 acres as a minimum economic holding and the concern not to arouse the larger landholders both suggest that it was upon these bigger landholders that the Congress leaders wished to rely to maintain political control in the countryside, that is, upon the approximately six per cent of proprietors who controlled more than a third of the land and were the men generally of high caste status and political importance in the villages of U. P.¹⁰

B. CLASS AND CASTE IN THE U. P. COUNTRYSIDE AFTER ZAMINDARI ABOLITION

The censuses of 1951, 1961, and 1971 provide roughly comparable data on the cultivating population and on agricultural labourers. Because of shifting census definitions, however, the differences in the data from one census to another cannot be taken at face value. Table 3 shows a very substantial increase in the proportion of the working population recorded as agricultural labourers from

TABLE 3

Mean Distribution of Cultivators and Agricultural Labourers in Uttar Pradesh by Region, 1951-1971 (in percentage of total workers).

	1951	1961	1971
UTTAR PRADESH			
Cultivators	68.54	64.54	59.59
Agricultural Labourers	5.80	10.50	19.65
Kumaon			
Cultivators	89.74	88.30	76.18
Agricultural Labourers	0.39	0.54	4.62
Rohilkhand			
Cultivators	66.80	64.29	66.68
Agricultural Labourers	3.19	6.88	12.15
Oudh			
Cultivators	77.50	71.92	68.90
Agricultural Labourers	4.76	11.99	16.82
Eastern Districts			
Cultivators	72.59	63.44	53.30
Agricultural Labourers	8.11	17.80	30.61
Lower Doab			
Cultivators	66.41	64.93	58.20
Agricultural Labourers	4.58	8.87	19.26
Bundelkhand			
Cultivators	66.15	63.91	55.87
Agricultural Labourers	10.06	13.49	26.13
Upper Doab			
Cultivators	53.68	51.87	47.51
Agricultural Labourers	7.57	7.73	16.66

Sources: Compiled from Government of India [1952, Table E: 114-189]; [1964, *Union Primary Census Abstract*]; [1975, *State Primary Census Abstract*]. Means are based on groups of tahsils.

1951 to 1971. Even if the figures were in error by half, it is apparent that there was a very great increase in the population of the landless in this state in those twenty years, particularly in the high density, rice-growing Eastern Districts, where the 1971 census showed the proportion of agricultural labourers at over 30 per cent. It is possible that a part of the increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers may be attributable to the displacement of many of the small holders into the landless labourer class, but there is no way of making this determination from the available data.¹¹

Figures also are available from the 1961 census and from the 1971 *Agricultural Census* on the distribution of holdings in various size categories. Unfortunately, there are striking differences in the proportions of the landholding population placed in the same categories in the two censuses because of differences in the unit of enumeration, that for the 1961 census being the cultivating household and that for the 1971 *Agricultural Census* being the 'operational holding'. Moreover, because of the considerable differences in the economics of wheat and rice production and in the product and income that can be gained from irrigated and unirrigated land, aggregate figures on landholdings can give only a rough guide to class structure in the countryside. Finally, there are some differences among economists and anthropologists in assessing the economic and class status even of peasants with comparable holdings, particularly in the middle ranges.

At the lowest level, there is agreement that the landless and those with less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres constitute a category of rural poor [Mencher, 1974: 1499; Mellor, 1976: 76-77]. It is generally agreed that those with less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land even in rice-growing areas cannot be economically self-sufficient and that some family members in such households may also do labour on the fields of others. Some observers argue that $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres in rice areas and five acres in wheat areas constitute the minimum size holding that separates the middle peasants from the rural poor, but others place the minimum holding somewhat higher [Mellor, 1976: 76-77; Torri, 1976: 27]. The small or middle peasants, those who produce a surplus and also hire some labourers for work in their own fields, would comprise those holding between $2\frac{1}{2}$ and $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres in rice areas and between five and ten acres in wheat. The upper middle and big peasants, then, are those with holdings above $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres in rice and above 10 acres in wheat. These farmers are the ones, particularly in the wheat areas, who are likely to have benefited most from the spread of the green revolution. Beyond 15 or 20 acres, we leave the class of peasantry entirely and enter the realm of the former landlords and the modern capitalist farmers.¹²

In the statistical correlations of landholding size data with party votes to be presented later on in this article, most of the landholding size data have been drawn from the 1961 census because of its proximity to the 1957 and 1962 elections and because only the 1961 census provides tahsil-level data that are essential for regional analyses. However, since it is the author's personal impression that the 1971 *Agricultural Census* more accurately reflects the distribution of control over the land by various size groups, the interpretation of U. P. social structure in this section will be based on the 1971 census, which will also be used where necessary and appropriate in later parts of the text to

TABLE 4

Mean Distribution of Agricultural Classes and Landholding Size Groups in Uttar Pradesh by Region, 1961 Census (in percentages of total cultivating households)

	UTTAR PRADESH	Kumaon	Rohilkhand	Oudh	Eastern Districts	Lower Doab	Bundelkhand	Upper Doab
AGRICULTURAL CLASSES								
1) Proprietors	89.94	64.07	92.47	87.78	91.65	90.50	87.67	95.81
2) Tenants	3.21	16.48	2.40	3.75	2.33	2.18	3.65	1.16
3) Mixed Proprietor-Tenants	6.85	19.46	5.21	8.47	6.03	7.32	8.69	3.02
LANDHOLDING SIZE CATEGORIES IN ACRES								
1) Less than 1	10.23	28.06	6.30	12.41	16.44	8.85	1.83	4.66
2) 1.0-2.4	24.46	40.90	19.65	30.96	31.64	26.14	10.41	14.74
3) 2.5-4.9	26.13	20.03	28.60	29.18	24.93	28.16	19.44	24.91
4) 5.0-7.4	15.94	4.70	19.80	14.05	11.83	17.45	18.67	19.46
5) 7.5-9.9	7.94	1.45	10.08	5.36	5.16	7.25	11.11	12.45
6) 10.0-12.4	5.12	0.53	5.38	3.19	3.23	5.14	9.92	8.10
7) 12.5-14.9	2.72	0.17	3.20	1.36	1.68	2.00	5.67	4.75
8) 15.0-29.9	5.44	0.24	5.30	2.54	3.56	3.84	16.63	8.62
9) 30.0-49.9	1.00	0.03	0.83	0.44	0.75	0.56	4.89	1.23
10) More than 50.0	0.33	0.01	0.30	0.17	0.27	0.19	1.49	0.31

Source: Calculated from Government of India [1966b, Table B-XI]. Means are based on groups of tahsils.

supplement, confirm, or correct interpretations based on 1961 census information and for correlations with party vote shares for the 1974 and 1977 elections.

The census authorities for U. P. have divided the 1971 data on size of landholdings into twelve categories ranging from less than 0.5 hectares (1.25 acres) to 50 hectares (approximately 125 acres) and above. However, in presenting and discussing the data, they have grouped them into four broader categories—less than one hectare (approximately 2.5 acres), one to three hectares, three to ten hectares, and more than ten hectares, which they describe as 'marginal, small, medium and large holdings' and which correspond roughly to the distinctions made in the previous paragraph. In terms of these divisions, two-thirds of the holdings (66.7 per cent) in the state were found to be in the marginal category, nearly one quarter (24.3 per cent) were small holdings, 8.3 per cent were medium-size holdings and only 0.7 per cent were large holdings.¹³ Regional differences in the distribution of the four size-classes were, however, found to be substantial, as indicated in table 5, which shows that more than 75

TABLE 5

Mean Distribution,^a by Number and Area, of Operational Holdings in Different Regions According to Size-Classes, 1971

REGION	SIZE-CLASS (In acres) ^b							
	Up to 2.5		2.5-7.5		7.5-25		25 and above	
	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area
KUMAON	67.75	37.41	26.73	43.62	5.14	15.49	0.38	3.48
ROHILKHAND	60.33	19.32	29.24	39.16	9.80	33.65	0.63	7.87
UPPER DOAB	50.89	12.36	31.73	33.29	16.29	44.83	1.10	9.51
LOWER DOAB	66.68	22.92	25.01	38.05	7.79	32.09	0.52	6.94
BUNDELKHAND	38.70	6.79	34.21	23.33	22.86	44.79	4.24	25.09
OUDH	70.02	27.68	23.93	40.51	5.68	26.04	0.37	5.77
EASTERN DISTRICTS	75.36	28.54	18.44	34.54	5.58	27.60	0.63	9.32
TOTAL ^c	63.77	23.57	26.12	37.08	9.24	30.88	0.86	8.48

Source: Government of Uttar Pradesh, Board of Revenue, 1973.

^a Means are based on districts.

^b The source data were in hectares, the original categories being as follows: up to 1, 1 to 3, 3 to 10, and 10 and above. For the sake of consistency with the 1961 census data and to avoid the confusion of switching from acres to hectares in the text, the size-classes were converted to their approximate corresponding units in acres.

^c The figures here differ somewhat from those given in the text at page 406, because the figures here are district means whereas those cited in the text are actual totals.

per cent of the holdings in the Eastern Plains Districts fall in the marginal category compared to less than 51 per cent in the Upper Doab.

Figures such as these often have been used to paint a two-fold picture of rural social structure in this state as being characterized by hopelessly small landholdings and grinding poverty, on the one hand, with no reasonable prospect of land redistribution because of the relatively small number of large landholdings in relation to the large number of landless and dwarf landholders, on the other hand. The situation is generally also described as particularly grim in the Eastern Districts and somewhat less severe in the west plain. This description of rural social structure in U. P. is, however, misleading in two respects. It ignores the different economies of wheat and rice production and it fails to convey an accurate picture of the dominant social forces in the countryside.

Table 6 brings out clearly the differences in patterns of landholding in wheat and rice districts. The table shows the expected distribution of the proportion of landholdings in the different size categories, with the majority of holdings being in the marginal category, with a greater proportion of holdings in the marginal category in rice districts than in wheat districts, and with a very small proportion of large landholdings in either wheat or rice zones. However, the distribution of

TABLE 6

Mean distribution of Number and Area of Operational Holdings by Size Categories for Wheat and Rice Districts, ^a 1971 (In Percentages), Plains Districts Only (Excluding Kumaon and Bundelkhand)

SIZE CATEGORY ^b	Wheat Districts (N=22)		Rice Districts (N=22)	
	No.	Area	No.	Area
MARGINAL (Less than 2.5 acres)	61.92	20.74	70.77	26.43
SMALL (2.5 to 7.5 acres)	27.34	37.70	22.14	36.83
MEDIUM (7.5 to 25 acres)	10.08	34.35	6.51	28.28
LARGE (above 25 acres)	0.65	7.21	0.58	8.46
TOTAL	99.99	100.00	100.00	100.00

^a "Wheat" and "rice" districts have been selected by ranking the districts with respect to per cent of gross cropped area sown with wheat and rice, respectively, and taking the top half districts in each case. The resulting selection involves some overlap and the elimination of those districts in which neither wheat nor rice is the principal crop.

^b The source data from the U.P. *Agricultural Census* are in hectares, but have been transformed here into the closest approximate categories in acres for the sake of consistency with 1961 census data presented in other tables.

the proportion of acreage held by the different size groups is a more relevant criterion for assessing rural social structure than the mere number of persons in different size categories. Whether one uses the groupings suggested by the census authorities or a different grouping of categories for wheat and rice districts to take account of the differences in the economies of wheat and rice production, it is clear that the bulk of the acreage in the state is held not by the poor dwarf landholders eking out a bare subsistence nor by the former landlords or capitalist farmers, but by the small and middle peasantry with economic or potentially economic landholdings.¹⁴ If one adopts the criterion of 5 acres for a minimum economic landholding in the wheat districts, then nearly 81 per cent of the holdings are uneconomic (table 7). However, by the same criterion, more than half the acreage in those districts is controlled by an elite of peasantry with economic holdings between 5 and 25 acres, who comprise less than 20 per cent of the rural population. These 20 per cent come primarily from the dominant rural classes and castes in the countryside—the Brahman, Rajput, Jat, and Ahir peasantry. The pattern of landholdings in the rice districts is somewhat similar (Table 6). Taking 2.5 acres as the dividing line between marginal cultivation and minimal self-sufficiency in the rice districts, more than 70 per cent of the cultivators are at or below the subsistence level, but the remaining nearly 30 per cent of the landholders control the great bulk of the land, close to 75 per cent of

TABLE 7

Mean Distribution of Number and Area of Operational Holdings by Size Categories for Wheat Districts, 1971 (In Percentages), Plains Districts only (excluding Kumaon and Bundelkhand)

SIZE CATEGORY	No.	Area
Less than 5 acres	80.85	42.60
5 to 10 acres	12.72	26.87
10 to 25 acres	5.77	23.32
Above 25 acres	0.65	7.21
TOTAL	99.99	100.00

See footnote b to Table 6.

it. In the rice districts, the dominant castes whose members control this acreage are the Brahmans, Thakurs, Bhumihars, Ahirs, and Kurmis.

Within the broad groupings of 'wheat' and 'rice' districts, the quintessential regions are the Upper Doab for wheat and the Eastern Districts for rice. There are several striking differences in the social structure of these two regions that are brought out in table 5. First, the Eastern Districts are clearly a region of small holdings with more than 63 per cent of the acreage in holdings of less than 7.5 acres compared to less than 46 per cent in the Upper Doab. By the same token, the Upper Doab is the domain principally of the prosperous peasantry, for here more than 54 per cent of the acreage is controlled by peasants with a minimum holding of 7.5 acres. Second, the stratum of 'middle' peasantry holding 7.5 to 25 acres is much more important in the Upper Doab than in the Eastern Districts. Third, inequality is more extreme in the Eastern Districts, where the middle and rich peasantry comprise only 6.2 per cent of the cultivating population but control 36.9 per cent of the land, than in the Upper Doab, where 17.4 per cent of the cultivators control more than 54 per cent of the land. The political implications of these differences are that the social base for a party of the viable and prosperous peasantry is much stronger in the Upper Doab than in the Eastern Districts and that the political appeals of a party that seeks strength in both regions must perforce be different.

It is evident from these figures that the political stability of the U. P. countryside depends to a considerable extent on the contentment of the middle peasantry. On the other hand, their numbers alone, even if concerted action on their part were assumed, are insufficient to provide majority support for an agrarian-based party in a one man-one vote system. Moreover, there are important internal divisions among the dominant peasant classes both with respect to the size of their holdings and with respect to caste.

Although the Zamindari Abolition Act benefited the former occupancy tenants and the small and middle ex-zamindars irrespective of caste, the leading castes among these groups in size of landholdings and local influence were Brahmans and Rajputs in most of the state, Jats and Tyagis in western U. P., and Bhumihars in eastern U. P. [Brass, 1965: 16-18]. These five castes together accounted for less than 20 per cent of the population of the state, but owned a

much larger share of the land in U. P. before zamindari abolition. Although zamindari abolition affected adversely the very largest landlords among these castes, it left many of their members with substantial holdings of land. The result was that, as a body, the landowning segments of these castes retained their leading positions as landholders after zamindari abolition and acquired an enhanced political position in U. P. villages as a consequence of the reduction of the economic hold and the political authority of the former big zamindars and talukdars. The leadership of the Congress in the rural districts after zamindari abolition also was drawn overwhelmingly in early all cases from these locally dominant rural castes [Brass, 1965: 16-18]. Moreover, as the Congress established its control over local government and cooperative institutions and developed a new system of local self-government under *panchayati raj*, these castes became the principal beneficiaries of the considerable patronage that became available through these institutions. Thus, in the aftermath of zamindari abolition and the establishment of Congress rule in the rural districts of U. P., the middle and large peasantry from among the elite proprietary castes benefited economically and politically.

A second group of castes that benefited to some extent from zamindari abolition were the middle cultivating castes of Ahirs, Kurmis, Lodhi Rajputs, and a few other smaller castes, most of whose members were tenants of the elite castes before zamindari abolition. However, although these castes benefited psychologically by the removal of their former overlords as collectors, most members of these castes probably became *sirdars*, paying the same amount of revenue as before to the state instead of to the tax collector and not holding the right to sell their lands. Moreover, they did not acquire as much political influence after zamindari abolition as the elite proprietary castes. In many districts in U. P., these middle or backward castes often occupy secondary positions both in size of landholdings and in political influence in Rajput and Brahman-dominated villages. And, as already indicated, the Congress structure of rural influence was built upon the elite castes rather than the middle castes. Consequently, it should be expected that Congress would not receive strong support in areas where these middle castes are most heavily concentrated and that they would form a potential source for opposition mobilization.

The bottom of the economic hierarchy in rural U. P. corresponds strongly with the status hierarchy in the sense that most of the landless come from the lowest caste groups. Consequently, common action on economic grounds between the landless and the small and middle peasants would have to cross a social as well as an economic barrier. It should, however, be stressed here that the correspondence between caste and economic class or political influence is far from perfect. Many elite caste persons are small holders in U. P. whereas many middle caste households belong to the middle and big peasantry. There are also some small holders among the lower castes, but very few middle or big peasants. In general, therefore, the socioeconomic structure of rural U. P. does provide a basis for political mobilization that plays upon the dual theme of economic and caste inequalities, but the cross-cutting of class and caste lines also limits the potential for such appeals.

III

Political Geography: The Electoral Evidence for Agrarian Discontent

A. STATE PATTERNS AND PARTY POLITICS

Table 8 shows the percentages of votes polled by all political parties that won seats in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly from 1952 to 1977. It is evident from the table that the party system moved over time from 1952 to 1974 from a relatively high degree of political integration to disintegration followed by the reintegration of the system in the 1977 elections in the aftermath of the relaxation of the Emergency regime of Mrs. Gandhi, which led to the formation of the Janata coalition.

TABLE 8
Percentage of Votes Polled by Political Parties in Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Elections, 1952-1977

POLITICAL PARTY	1952	1957	1962	1967	1969	1974	1977
1. Congress	47.93	42.42	36.33	32.20	33.70	32.29	31.95
2. Congress (O)	(Founded in 1969)	—	—	—	—	8.36	—
	47.93	42.42	36.33	32.20	33.70	40.65	31.95
3. BKD	(Founded in 1967)	—	—	—	21.29	21.22	—
4. SP	12.03	7.45	8.21	—	—	2.90	—
5. KMPP	5.70	—	—	—	—	—	—
6. PSP	—	14.47	11.52	4.09	1.72	—	—
7. SSP	(Founded in 1964)	—	—	9.97	7.82	—	—
8. KMP	(Founded in 1969)	—	—	—	0.48	—	—
9. UPRSP	0.40	—	—	—	—	—	—
10. SSD	(Founded in 1974)	—	—	—	—	0.69	0.31
	18.13	21.92	19.73	14.06	10.02	3.59	0.31
11. Jan Sangh	6.45	9.84	16.46	21.67	17.93	17.12	—
12. HMS	1.43	—	1.06	—	0.29	0.30	0.04
	7.88	9.84	17.52	21.67	18.22	17.42	0.04
13. Swatantra	(Founded in 1959)	—	4.60	4.73	1.25	1.13	—
14. UPPP	1.87	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1.87	0.00	4.60	4.73	1.25	1.13	—
15. CPI	0.93	3.83	5.08	3.23	3.05	2.45	2.56
16. CPM	(Founded in 1964)	—	—	1.27	0.49	0.71	0.58
	0.93	3.83	5.08	3.23	4.50	3.16	3.14

TABLE 8 (continued)

Percentage of Votes Polled by Political Parties in Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Elections, 1952-1977

17. SCF/RPI	1.49	—	3.73	4.14	3.48	—	0.07
18. Muslim League	—	—	—	—	—	1.38	0.20
	1.49	—	3.73	4.14	3.48	1.38	0.27
19. Janata	(Founded in 1977)		—	—	—	—	47.84
20. Unsuccessful Parties and Independents	21.77	21.99	13.01	18.70	8.50	11.45	16.45
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Sources: Compiled from official reports of the Election Commission of India and of the Chief Electoral Officer of Uttar Pradesh.

FIGURES FOR UNSUCCESSFUL PARTIES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1952: RRP, 1.74%; RSP, 0.44%; BOLSHEVIK, 0.01%;

1957: RRP, 0.76%;

1962: RRP, 0.30%;

1969: BCP, 0.15%; BOLSHEVIK, 0.02%; MAZDOOR PARISHAD, 0.56%;
PBI, 0.17%; RPI-A, 0.23%; RRP, 0.01%; SOCIALIST CONGRESS, 0.27%;
SUC, 0.01%; MM, 0.01%; UPSPB, 0.05%; BHOJPURI SAMAJ, 0.01%;
SAMAJVADI CONGRESS, 0.01%; JC, KRP, BAS, UPSSSP, less than 0.01%.

1974: Other parties, 1.20%.

1977: RPI(K), 0.23%; RSP, 0.01%; FB, 0.04%; RRP, 0.03%; SVC, 0.01%;
Other parties, 0.01%.

In Table 8, the 19 parties that won at least one legislative assembly seat in one election have been arranged into eight groupings. The first three groupings consist principally of the Congress and parties that splintered from it (except for the tiny KMP, UPSP, and SSD). The first group comprises only the Congress itself and the Congress (0) that emerged from the split in the party in 1969. The second 'group' consists of the BKD only, which emerged after the defection of Charan Singh from the Congress in 1969. The third group is comprised of seven parties of the non-Communist left, of which the first four were the most important and underwent numerous splits and mergers in relation to each other. The fourth group comprises two Hindu communal parties, Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha. The fifth group is comprised of two parties of the Right, Swatantra and the U. P. Praja Party, which contested the 1952 elections only. The sixth group consists of the two Communist parties. The seventh group contains two parties representing minority interests—the Scheduled Caste Federation (later renamed the Republican Party of India) and the Muslim League. The eighth 'group' is the Janata party. In the seven elections taken

together, more than 90 per cent of the seats were won by eight parties—Congress, the BKD, the Socialist Party, the PSP, the SSP, Jan Sangh, the CPI and Janata.

From the point of view of agrarian policy and leadership structure, the principal state parties in this period can be placed in terms of their electoral appeals as follows. The electoral appeal of the Congress, as befits a party of the Center, has cut across the entire spectrum of agrarian social structure.¹⁵ It has supported minimum wages and rural works programs for the landless and special educational and employment benefits for persons of low caste generally. It has proposed joint cooperative farming for small holders, but has never implemented the proposal. It has distributed most agriculture-related patronage through the more substantial peasants of elite caste status, but has also set up special agencies to help small farmers. It abolished the tax-farming system, but provided generous compensation to the former zamindars and found places for many of them in its organization. Finally, it has consistently favoured reduced land ceilings, but Congress state governments have never implemented them fully. Under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership from 1967 to 1977, the emphasis of party policies was to favour the poor and the small farmers, but Mrs. Gandhi did not alter the social composition of the party leadership in U. P. at least. Nor were any changes in the agrarian structure of the state carried out during that period.

Moving from Right to Left among the non-Congress parties, two parties in U. P. have appealed directly to the former zamindars and rich farmers—the U. P. Praja Party (UPPP) and Swatantra. The UPPP was a purely state party that fought the 1952 elections with little success and disappeared thereafter. Swatantra, formed as a national party in 1959, had only modest success for a time in U. P. It was clearly oriented to landlord and rich farmer interest. Five of its fifteen legislative assembly members elected in 1962 were former big zamindars [*Meyer, 1969: 157–158*]. The party program in 1966 described land ceilings as 'meaningless and unenforceable' and called for their removal, opposed compulsory levies and procurement of food grains, favoured high prices for farm products, opposed any direct charges to the peasantry for the costs of new irrigation works, and favoured abolition of the land revenue [*Masani, 1966: 19–20*].

To the left of Swatantra on agrarian policies were the Jan Sangh and the BKD. Both these parties appealed to the peasantry generally, but paid particular attention to the interests of the middle and rich peasants. The Jan Sangh drew between 20 per cent and 50 per cent of its legislative assembly membership in 1952, 1957 and 1962 from former medium and large zamindars and talukdars. More than 50 per cent of its legislative assembly and party committee members have been drawn from elite castes [*Meyer, 1969: 157–158, 175–181 and Srivastava, 1976: 359–360*]. Although, therefore, the Jan Sangh made strong overtures to the former landlord classes, its appeal was directed principally to peasants and farmers holding between five and 30 acres of land. The party accused the Congress of following policies that would not 'create a social order in the countryside based on peasant proprietorship', but would rather move rural society toward collectivization. Although the Jan Sangh expressed its support for redistribution of large landholdings, it proposed that such redistribution should

take place by direct sale on the part of the landowners rather than through the state bureaucracy [*Jan Sangh*, 1973: 51–52, 61–66, 69–70, 91–94, citation from p. 63].

The BKD's appeal was similar to that of the Jan Sangh, except that its feet were planted even more firmly on the soil of the peasant proprietors holding between 2.5 and 27.5 acres of land [*Bharatiya Kranti Dal*, 1969: 4ff.]. The BKD made no attempt to appeal to or to draw leadership from the former zamindars. Moreover, although its manifestoes were not explicit in this regard, it is generally known that the BKD leadership, particularly its founder, Chaudhuri Charan Singh, had a particular interest in the welfare of the middle castes.

To the left of the Jan Sangh and the BKD on agrarian issues has been the CPI. Although the CPI top party leaders have come predominantly from elite castes, most of its legislative assembly members have come from the middle and lower castes. It has drawn very few of its legislative assembly members from the former zamindars [*Meyer*, 1969, 157–158 and *Srivastava* 1976: 359–360]. Although the CPI has wished to avoid antagonizing the rich peasantry and has called for the unity of all 'the rural masses', its appeal has been directed more to the middle and poor peasants than that of either the Jan Sangh or the BKD. It has called for further reduction in land ceilings and more effective implementation of existing ceilings, for protection of tenants, and for distribution of small plots of land to landless labourers as well as increased wages for agricultural labour.¹⁶

Farther to the Left on agrarian issues has been the radical wing of the Socialist movement, represented in U. P. in the 1960s by the SSP. This party appealed especially to the landless and the poor peasants and to the backward and lowest castes. It called for a reduced ceiling on landholdings to a maximum of three times an economic holding per family, for redistribution of surplus land to the landless and the low castes, for abolition of land revenue on small holdings, and for an income tax on big farmers. It also called for preferential policies in granting jobs to backward and low castes and other disadvantaged groups [*Samyukta Socialist Party*, 1971]. With the exception of the specific appeal of the SSP to the most disadvantaged castes, the policy of the PSP was similar to that of the SSP [*Praja Socialist Party*, 1971: 89–90].

The Janata party in U. P. was a coalition formed principally from the former BKD, SSP, Jan Sangh, and Congress (0). The *Election Manifesto* sections on agriculture appealed directly to the interests of market-oriented and input-oriented farmers. It called for 'primacy' in economic development 'to agriculture and rural reconstruction'. It charged that, heretofore, the farmer had 'been consistently denied reasonable and fair prices' for his produce and that 'allocations for agriculture and related development' had 'been grossly inadequate'. The *Manifesto* promised to rectify these problems by insuring that the farmer would 'get remunerative prices' for his produce, that he would be able to purchase 'inputs at reasonable prices', and that 'rural resources' would be 'honestly' implemented and the surplus land distributed to the landless, but once implemented, the Janata party promised stability in the countryside without recurring threats of 'frequent changes' in agrarian land relationships.

Finally, all landholdings below 6.25 acres would be exempted 'from payment of land revenue' [*Janata Party, 1977: 12-14*].

Independents have played a more important role in U. P. elections than most political parties. Independents, of course, have no program as such, but it is possible that independent candidates and independent voting may reveal a widespread source of discontent not adequately expressed through the established parties. In the first three elections in U. P., between a third and a half of elected independents were from the former big zamindars and several others came from other classes of ex-zamindars. The majority of the successful independent candidates also came in those elections from elite castes [*Meyer, 1969: 157-158, 175-181*]. However, no information is available on the social composition of independent legislators from 1967 onwards. Moreover, almost nothing is known about the backgrounds of the large numbers of unsuccessful independent candidates who, in the aggregate, have polled a more substantial vote in most elections than unsuccessful candidates from the registered parties.

How did these parties and independents fare over time in the electoral history of U. P.? Table 8 reveals a number of prominent trends and changes over time. Four features stand out in regard to the electoral strength of the Congress and its splinter, Congress (O). First, the Congress was consistently the strongest political party in U. P. Second, however, there was a steady decline in Congress strength over the first four elections, with a general levelling off from that point on through 1974 at the low level of less than a third of the popular vote. Third, the decline in Congress strength is clearly related to, though not necessarily entirely explained by, the spread of factional conflict at the state and national leadership levels of the party in the 1950s and 1960s, culminating in the split in the party in 1969 which largely reflected earlier factional cleavages in the state Congress. Fourth, Mrs. Gandhi did not succeed in U. P. even before the declaration of Emergency in 1975 either in rebuilding the party organization or in restoring the electoral strength of the Congress. However, it is also apparent from the tables that Mrs. Gandhi's Congress succeeded in maintaining the electoral strength of the party intact up to 1974 at roughly the 1967 level in the face of the creation of the BKD and of an alternative Congress organization, both formed from former leaders and factions within the parent Congress. Moreover, despite the massive victory of the Janata coalition in the 1977 elections in which the party won 83 per cent of the seats in the U. P. Legislative Assembly, the Congress popular vote share declined only marginally from 1974 when it won 50 per cent of the seats against a fragmented opposition.

Among the more striking features revealed in Table 8 is the sudden emergence of the BKD as the leading non-Congress party in U. P. politics. Charan Singh's party emerged in its first election contest in 1969 not only as the strongest non-Congress party in U. P. in that election, but with the highest popular vote and the largest number of seats ever won by a non-Congress party in any election since independence. Even more impressive is the fact that the BKD maintained its strength in 1974 in the face of the massive intervention of Mrs. Gandhi and her lieutenants in state politics in their efforts alternately to absorb and destroy the power of the new party. One of the most important tasks of these articles is to

explain the rise of the BKD and its social and economic significance and the relationship between the rise of the BKD and the great victory of the Janata coalition in 1977.

The third group of parties, comprising the parties of the non-Communist Left has been the most fragmented of all the groups of parties in U. P. In the first general elections of 1952, three parties from this group won seats, but only the SP and the KMPP won a significant percentage of votes. Moreover, the SP was clearly the dominant party in this group and the principal opposition party in the state at that time. After the 1952 elections, the SP and KMPP merged into the PSP, but the Lohia group split off in 1954 and re-formed the SP. The PSP, however, emerged as the stronger of the two parties in the 1957 elections in both electoral support and seats won. Once again also, a party from this group, the PSP, was the leading party of opposition in the state Legislative Assembly. The relative strength of the two parties in relation to each other was more or less maintained in the 1962 elections, but the PSP declined to third place in strength in the state party system after the Jan Sangh. From this point on, in fact, the Socialist movement entered a decline that approached disintegration in 1974, when the entire non-Communist Left polled only 3.59 per cent of the votes and won only six seats. Between 1962 and 1974, the movement went through several splits and mergers whose cumulative impact was to weaken the main Socialist parties irretrievably [Brass, 1976]. Its principal wing in U. P., the SSP, merged with the BKD after the 1974 elections into the BLD.

For a time, it appeared that the party system in U. P. might be moving towards a dualistic competition between the Congress and the Jan Sangh, which showed a steady increase in its electoral strength and seat-winning capacity over the first four elections. However, the rise of the BKD in 1969 contributed to a decline in Jan Sangh strength and to its relegation to third position in the U. P. party system in the 1969 and 1974 elections. Nevertheless, the Jan Sangh remained a strong force in 1969 and even more so in 1974. Thus, by 1974, there were two leading parties in opposition to the Congress—the BKD, presenting an economic appeal and a direct challenge to Congress dominance in rural areas among the leading proprietary groups, and the Jan Sangh, whose appeal emphasized Hindu nationalism and Hindi-speaking regional sentiment more than economic issues, but which also appealed to the general body of peasant proprietors. These two parties also formed the principal components of the Janata coalition in the 1977 election.

The most noteworthy feature of the next three groups of parties is their persistent weakness over time. No party in U. P. has been able to build strong support by appealing to ex-landlords (Swatantra and the UPPP), by promoting Communist ideology (CPI and CPM), or by appealing principally to the sentiments of Scheduled Castes or Muslims (SCF/RPI and the Muslim League).

The last feature of Table 8 that requires attention is the relative weight in the system of minor parties and independents, which was rather higher in the first four elections than in the next two, after which it increased again. It will be demonstrated below that the decline in the independent vote in 1969 and 1974 and the rise of the BKD were interrelated.

B. REGIONAL PATTERNS

Uttar Pradesh is an enormous state in terms of population, is also among the largest of the Indian states in land area, and is geographically and in social and economic structure quite diverse. It is to be anticipated, therefore, that political patterns also would vary considerably from one region of the state to another. For purposes of further analysis of the support bases of political parties in U. P., the state has been divided into seven regions described previously that follow, more or less, well-known geographical, historical, and social-structural differences.

Table 9 shows the percentage of votes and the rank position by region for turnout (based on valid votes only) and for the six leading parties in U. P. and independents over the seven elections from 1952 to 1977. Looking first at the regional distribution of turnout, it is apparent that there is a very clear-cut east-west division in turnout rates that has been quite consistent over the seven elections. In the first six elections, turnout was highest in the most agriculturally advanced, wheat-growing, Upper Doab districts. In the 1977 elections, the Upper Doab districts dropped slightly in rank position to second place. The second region of consistently high turnout comprised the west plain districts of Rohilkhand, which ranked second on this measure for the first five elections, dropping slightly to third and fourth places in 1974 and 1977. At the other extreme, with consistently low turnout rates over time, were Kumaon and Oudh. In between, with middling turnout rates were Bundelkhand, the Lower Doab, and the Eastern Districts.

Two aspects of the regional pattern of turnout rates need to be particularly noted. The first is that politicization, as measured by turnout rates, has been highest in the districts where agriculture is most advanced in terms of yields, input use, and commercialization, namely, in the wheat and sugar cane districts of the west plain. Second, politicization has not been very high, relative to other regions of the state, in the less advanced, predominantly paddy-growing Eastern Districts, where holdings are smaller and landlessness is higher than in other regions of the state.

Turning to the regional distribution of party support for the Congress, Table 9 shows that the Congress vote share declined over time in every region of the state. However, the Congress decline was most dramatic in the Upper Doab, which was by far the strongest support region for the Congress in 1952, when the party polled nearly 55 per cent of the vote there, but had become the weakest Congress support region by 1969 when the Congress polled a mere 30 per cent of the popular vote. In 1974 and 1977, Congress support in the Upper Doab increased somewhat, but it was still 20 and 18 percentage points, respectively, below its support level in 1952. Taking all the regions together, the Congress has been strongest over time in the two least populous, most remote and backward regions of the state, Kumaon and Bundelkhand (see Table 10). It has also been relatively stronger over time in the Upper Doab than in other regions of the state in the first two and last two elections, but suffered a dramatic decline of support there in the three elections held during the 1960s. It was

TABLE 9

Turnout and Vote for Leading Political Parties by Region, Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Elections, 1952-1977

		<i>Kumaon</i>	<i>Rohilkhand</i>	<i>Oudh</i>	<i>Eastern Districts</i>	<i>Lower Doab</i>	<i>Bundelkhand</i>	<i>Upper Doab</i>	<i>STATE TOTAL</i>
Turnout									
1952	%	26.87	39.68	34.12	35.82	39.15	33.50	48.24	39.16
	Rank	7	2	5	4	3	6	1	
1957	%	25.83	46.24	40.85	45.17	45.23	42.33	53.07	44.92
	Rank	7	2	6	4	3	5	1	
1962	%	27.91	50.44	45.28	49.26	49.55	44.45	54.79	48.59
	Rank	7	2	5	4	3	6	1	
1967	%	34.45	55.42	46.85	50.96	50.88	52.03	56.95	50.93
	Rank	7	2	6	4	5	3	1	
1969	%	38.45	57.24	46.13	52.06	52.70	53.96	59.89	52.23
	Rank	7	2	6	5	4	3	1	
1974	%	42.76	57.86	49.33	54.92	56.89	59.15	61.87	55.20
	Rank	7	3	6	5	4	2	1	
1977	%	33.34	46.71	39.59	47.11	45.51	55.53	49.93	45.52
	Rank	7	4	6	3	5	1	2	
Congress									
1952	%	45.02	44.39	46.91	45.96	46.54	47.43	54.58	47.93
	Rank	6	7	3	5	4	2	1	
1957	%	50.00	39.09	40.11	42.57	40.44	46.36	47.20	42.42
	Rank	1	7	6	4	5	3	2	
1962	%	55.63	32.47	37.17	37.94	32.97	40.19	36.29	36.33
	Rank	1	7	4	3	6	2	5	
1967	%	38.47	27.57	33.95	33.40	31.52	34.77	30.72	32.20
	Rank	1	7	3	4	5	2	6	
1969	%	40.75	32.45	38.24	33.09	30.84	38.46	30.30	33.69
	Rank	1	5	3	4	6	2	7	
1974	%	46.72	28.01	33.76	30.22	32.10	32.49	34.07	32.29
	Rank	1	7	3	6	5	4	2	
1977	%	34.90	30.22	32.21	31.24	29.48	28.11	36.40	31.95
	Rank	2	5	3	4	6	7	1	
Jan Sangh									
1952	%	1.03	9.06	8.76	5.76	4.96	1.30	5.87	6.45
	Rank	7	1	2	4	5	6	3	
1957	%	7.98	10.39	13.53	8.65	8.46	4.16	8.83	9.84
	Rank	6	2	1	4	5	7	3	
1962	%	10.14	18.44	24.64	16.04	11.92	7.66	11.74	16.46
	Rank	6	2	1	3	4	7	5	
1967	%	15.21	24.56	26.19	22.62	18.33	32.34	13.87	21.67
	Rank	6	3	2	4	5	1	7	
1969	%	19.14	18.08	23.59	18.14	16.78	21.83	11.00	17.93
	Rank	3	5	1	4	6	2	7	
1974	%	12.84	16.27	22.06	14.85	18.07	26.48	12.52	17.12
	Rank	6	4	2	5	3	1	7	

TABLE 9 (continued)

Turnout and Vote for Leading Political Parties by Region, Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Elections, 1952-1977.

			Kumaon	Rohilkhand	Oudh	Eastern Districts	Lower Doab	Bundelkhand	Upper Doab	STATE TOTAL	
SP/SSP	1952	%	15.71	13.63	9.55	14.41	13.15	9.33	10.60	12.03	
		Rank	1	3	6	2	4	7	5		
	1957	%	1.75	2.63	11.66	7.15	9.45	1.06	5.64	7.45	
		Rank	6	5	1	3	2	7	4		
	1962	%	1.18	3.95	9.03	11.90	7.46	2.25	7.43	8.21	
		Rank	7	5	2	1	3	6	4		
	1967	%	1.89	2.80	9.91	13.83	15.81	5.07	7.38	9.97	
		Rank	7	6	3	2	1	5	4		
	1969	%	2.10	3.10	9.15	10.80	11.22	2.50	5.01	7.82	
		Rank	7	5	3	2	1	6	4		
1974	%	4.56	1.18	2.83	4.53	3.11	2.14	1.77	2.90		
	Rank	1	7	4	2	3	5	6			
PSP	1957	%	15.91	18.40	13.85	12.99	22.46	18.36	7.79	14.47	
		Rank	4	2	5	6	1	3	7		
	1962	%	10.42	12.55	7.28	11.63	18.05	27.13	7.86	11.52	
		Rank	5	3	7	4	2	1	6		
	1967	%	8.54	4.41	4.50	4.23	2.95	2.51	4.00	4.09	
		Rank	1	3	2	4	6	7	5		
	1969	%	3.70	2.80	1.52	1.92	0.87	1.81	1.34	1.72	
		Rank	1	2	5	3	7	4	6		
	Independents	1952	%	35.81	22.51	16.42	18.89	19.90	20.31	20.21	19.58
			Rank	1	2	7	6	5	3	4	
1957		%	24.35	26.39	14.71	20.87	17.48	26.81	28.18	21.23	
		Rank	4	3	7	5	6	2	1		
1962		%	19.54	18.60	10.43	6.60	13.15	11.70	18.63	12.71	
		Rank	1	3	6	7	4	5	2		
1967		%	23.70	22.87	15.85	11.60	17.86	17.88	28.81	18.70	
		Rank	2	3	6	7	5	4	1		
1969		%	15.49	10.03	5.36	5.07	7.82	8.75	6.72	6.93	
		Rank	1	2	6	7	4	3	5		
1974	%	12.38	13.94	9.66	9.06	10.42	9.82	9.81	10.25		
	Rank	2	1	6	7	3	4	5			
1977	%	15.93	26.41	18.95	15.22	15.53	11.88	9.86	16.13		
	Rank	3	1	2	5	4	6	7			
BKD	1969	%	10.83	27.15	14.90	17.74	21.71	14.97	31.35	21.20	
		Rank	7	2	6	4	3	5	1		
	1974	%	3.26	20.24	16.30	25.08	20.54	9.99	28.29	21.22	
	Rank	7	4	5	2	3	6	1			
Janata	1977	%	46.68	40.36	45.52	48.86	50.79	44.46	52.35	47.84	
		Rank	4	7	5	3	2	6	1		

TABLE 10

Regions Highest in Turnout and Principal Support Regions^a for the Leading Political Parties and Independents in Uttar Pradesh, 1952-1977.

TURNOUT	CONGRESS	JAN SANGH	SP/SSP	PSP	BKD	JANATA	INDEPENDENTS
Upper Doab	Kumaon	Oudh	Eastern Districts	Rohilkhand	Upper Doab	Upper Doab	Kumaon
Rohilkhand	Bundelkhand	Rohilkhand	Lower Doab	Kumaon	Rohilkhand	Lower Doab	Rohilkhand
Bundelkhand	Upper Doab	Bundelkhand	Oudh	Lower Doab	Eastern Districts	Eastern Districts	Upper Doab

^aThe regions are listed in order of the relative strength that each party had in them over time, based on a cumulation of the rank position of the party strength by region for the five elections.

during this period that the market-oriented and cash crop farmers of the Upper Doab would have found considerable grounds for discontent with Congress food and agriculture policies, when the government was importing wheat and distributing it at below the prevailing prices, thereby keeping down prices paid to the farmers, when compulsory procurement of foodgrains was most intense, and when interstate restrictions on the movement of food grains were in effect that also prevented surplus-producing farmers from marketing their grain at the best possible prices.

The non-Congress parties also have drawn support differentially from the several regions of the state. Moreover, the leading parties have, for the most part, had distinctive regional areas of support. For example, Oudh has been a consistent bastion of Jan Sangh support. The second region of Jan Sangh strength has been Rohilkhand, particularly during the first four elections, followed by Bundelkhand and the Eastern Districts. The Jan Sangh, therefore, has had its principal strength in the northern plains, in the districts north of the Ganges, but its support has been consistently strong relative to other regions in the state only in Oudh. The SP and the SSP had a more central-eastern orientation of political support, with their strength concentrated primarily in the Eastern Districts, the Lower Doab and Oudh. Support for the PSP was more scattered than that for any other of the leading U. P. parties, with its pockets of strength having been concentrated in Rohilkhand and Kumaon, with less consistent support in the Lower Doab and the Eastern Districts.

It deserves to be especially noted that none of the longer established opposition parties in U. P. had their principal area of regional strength in the Upper Doab, where the Congress decline was most marked. Moreover, although Rohilkhand was a region where three opposition parties and the independents did relatively well, only the PSP, among the older opposition parties, had its principal strength over time in Rohilkhand. Consequently, there was for four elections in U. P. in these two populous regions a vacuum left by Congress weakness that was not filled or was filled only partially by the major opposition parties. Instead, this vacuum was filled by independents, whose principal concentrations of strength were in Kumaon and in these two regions. Then, in 1969, the BKD moved in strength into western U. P., winning over 31 per cent of the vote in the Upper Doab and a greater share of the vote than the Congress in this region and more than 27 per cent of the vote in Rohilkhand. In 1974, the BKD retained its principal strength in the Upper Doab and remained strong also in Rohilkhand, but it broadened its base of support to include the Eastern Districts. Averaging the two elections, the BKD polled marginally better in the Eastern Districts than in the Lower Doab, but it is clear that the latter region also was one of strong support for the party. Thus, we begin to see the significance of the inverse relationship between the independent vote and the BKD vote shown in the previous section. The independent vote between 1952 and 1967 reflected in large part the existence of discontent with the Congress in two regions of the state particularly. When the BKD organized and contested the 1969 and 1974 elections, the bulk of that discontented vote was transferred to the BKD.

As for the Janata party, formed as a coalition principally of the BLD, the Jan Sangh, and the Congress (0) in U. P., three features of its regional distribution of strength deserve special notice. The first is that it built upon the previous discontent that the BKD drew upon in the Upper Doab in 1969 and that the BKD in union with the old SSP drew upon in 1974. The second notable feature is that the alliance with the Jan Sangh, with its firm base in Oudh, did not mean that Oudh became one of the top regions of Janata support. Third, Rohilkhand, which had been the second most important regional bastion of the BKD in 1969 and which had lost ground in this respect to the Eastern Districts and the Lower Doab in 1974, dropped to last place in terms of its relative contribution to the Janata victory of 1977. Both Oudh and Rohilkhand seemed least contented with the Congress-Janata choice and gave very high vote shares to independent candidates in 1977. Overall, the principal significance of the regional distribution of Janata support is that, as in the case of the BKD-SSP alliance in 1974, it bridged the traditional regional differences between the western and eastern districts of the state.

The Janata and the BLD alliances also bridged previous differences in party support bases between wheat and rice districts. Before 1974, two political parties in U. P.—the SSP and the BKD—and independents in 1967 had shown a strong differentiation of their support bases with respect to wheat- and rice-growing plains districts as measured by the Pearson correlations between party vote shares and per cent of cropped area devoted to rice and wheat (RPERCROP) and (WPERCROP). The SSP had strong support in the rice growing districts in the 1969 elections ($r = .33$, $s = .017$, $n = 40$ with RPERCROP), but was decidedly weak in the wheat-growing districts in the 1967 and 1969 elections ($r = -.42$, $s = .003$, $n = 41$ for 1967 and $r = -.46$, $s = .001$, $n = 40$ for 1969 with WPERCROP). The BKD had a strong negative correlation with RPERCROP in 1969 ($r = -.44$, $s = .002$, $n = 42$) and a positive correlation with WPERCROP ($r = .39$, $s = .006$, $n = 42$). The third clear pattern was that displayed in the independent vote in 1967, which was negative with RPERCROP ($r = -.41$, $s = .003$, $n = 43$) and positive with WPERCROP ($r = .36$, $s = .008$, $n = 43$). These correlations are of particular interest in light of later shifts in U. P. politics. The correlations for the Independent vote in 1967 reflected the existence of discontent in the wheat-growing districts, which found expression in the BKD vote in 1969. The complementary correlations between the SSP and the BKD votes explain and demonstrate clearly the political wisdom of the BKD-SSP merger before the 1974 elections, which had the effect of smoothing out the correlations between the BKD vote and per cent of cropped area devoted to rice and wheat cultivation. The strong negative correlation with RPERCROP does not appear in 1974. The correlation remains negative, but weakly so ($r = -.15$, $s = .173$, $n = 43$). The correlation with WPERCROP is also weak ($r = .07$, $s = .335$, $n = 43$). The 1977 correlations between the Janata vote and RPERCROP and WPERCROP are also weak, being $-.12$ ($s = .231$, $n = 43$) and $.06$ ($s = .356$, $n = 43$), respectively. Those for the Congress in the same elections are also unremarkable at $-.19$ ($s = .105$, $n = 43$) for RPERCROP and $.05$ ($s = .366$, $n = 43$) for WPERCROP.

In regional terms, therefore, the political history of U. P. can be divided into

two periods. The first period is between 1952 and 1969 when discontent with the Congress developed and expressed itself most strongly in the western, wheat-growing districts through independents and then the BKD, but also in the rice-growing Eastern Districts, where the radical Socialists were strong. The second period begins in 1974 and, in retrospect, should be seen as an attempt by the non-Congress political parties to build a viable winning coalition that transcended regional differences, building particularly on the complementary discontents in the Upper Doab, the Lower Doab, and the Eastern districts. It remains to explore the social bases of this regional discontent and to determine whether or not the BKD, the BLD, and Janata drew their support from similar or different social categories in the different regions of the state.

Abbreviations

AIKS	=	All India Kisan Sabha
BKD	=	Bharatiya Kranti Dal
BLD	=	Bharatiya Lok Dal
CPI	=	Communist Party of India
CPM	=	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
INC (O)	=	Indian National Congress (Organizational)
KMP	=	Kisan Mazdoor Parishad
KMPP	=	Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party
PSP	=	Praja Socialist Party
SP	=	Socialist Party
SSP	=	Samyukta Socialist Party
UPPP	=	Uttar Pradesh Praja Party
UPRSP	=	Uttar Pradesh Revolutionary Socialist Party
SCF	=	Scheduled Castes Federation
RPI	=	Republican Party of India

NOTES

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1. Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950, cited in Singh and Misra [1964: 68].
2. For a concise summary and critique of the Zamindari Abolition Act, see Thorner [1976: 22-27]. A more detailed analysis may be found in Johnson [1975: ch. iii].
3. Brass [1968: 100-112] describes these measures and the political conflict surrounding the land tax issue in its early phase.
4. For an analysis of the spread of the 'green revolution' technology and its political consequences, see Frankel [1971: ch. iii].
5. The literature on the 'green revolution' is enormous. On these points, see, for example, Frankel [1971: 192-196]; Franda [1972: 1-6]; Byres [1972: 102-110], and Mellor [1976: 48ff. and 82-89].

6. The average population of the district in U. P. in 1961 was over a million, that of the tahsil was approximately 275,000.
7. This regional division differs somewhat from other efforts to define the internal boundaries of U. P. The division used here attempts to combine ecological and historical features, but sometimes choices have to be made between the two. Thus, I have chosen to retain the historical unity of Oudh because of the special features of its land tenure system rather than to divide it according to differences in terrain and agricultural economy. However, cf. Brass [1965: 6-8] and Government of India [1966: 1-3].
8. They are defined in Government of India [1953: 228-248].
9. The figures in *ibid.* are based on total rural population, whereas those compiled for Table 1 used total population as the base.
10. On this point, see also Johnson [1975: ch. iii].
11. The difficulty arises from the fact that although the definition of an agricultural labourer remained the same in both 1961 and 1971, considerable leeway was given to the enumerators to list persons as agricultural labourers if work on land held or owned by others was their major activity even if they also owned some land. However, I have not seen any adequate discussion of the issue in the census volumes.
12. The categories used here follow largely Mencher and the Communist Party of India. Cf. Mencher [1974: 1495-1503] and Ahmed [1968: 15-16].
13. [Government of Uttar Pradesh, Board of Revenue, 1973: 47-48]. The corresponding figures from the 1961 census are substantially different, showing 34.7 per cent in the marginal category, 42.1 per cent small farmers, 21.2 per cent holding from 7.5 to 30 acres—roughly corresponding to the medium group in the 1971 census—and 1.3 per cent large holdings. The difference arises from the fact that the 1961 unit of enumeration was the cultivating household, which might comprise several adult males, each one operating a marginal holding, which would, therefore, reduce the proportions shown in the marginal size categories and increase the proportions in the middle and medium categories in contrast to 1971. See Table 4 for a detailed break-up of the 1961 census data on landholding size categories.
14. Moreover, as indicated in the previous footnote, if one accepts the 1961 census categories based on cultivating households, the numbers assigned to the small and middle peasantry are even larger.
15. For various statements of Congress policy on agrarian issues, see the publications of the Indian National Congress listed in the References and also Nehru [1959].
16. Some examples of CPI policy statements on agriculture are the following: Ahmed [1972]; Rajeswara Rao *et. al.* [1970]; Communist Party of India [1968]; and the AIKS journal, *Indian Peasant*.

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