CHAPTER 3

State, Democracy, and Modernity in Postcolonial India

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There is a contradiction in the study of politics in India—while practices of Indian politics are replete with symbols of monarchical sovereignty, there is very little analysis of the antecedents of this form of power in the dominant scholarship on Indian politics. In an attempt to fill this analytical void, this chapter seeks to sketch the rise and fall of 'princely states' as an object and site of study within the disciplinary domain of political science in India. 'Princely states' that are seen as anachronistic in modern-day democracy provide a useful entry point to critically engage with the liberal epistemologies of state and politics in India. This chapter is a part of my engagement with princely histories of the Indian subcontinent and its ramifications in the post-independence period. It partly emerges from my own experiences of studying and teaching political science in two cities (Delhi and Kolkata) in institutions that served as the hubs of political science pedagogy in contemporary India, while straddling the 'regional' princely context of my research on Rajasthan; and partly from the hypervisibility of the monarchical idioms and the mythical pasts in contemporary political practice in India—something that is evident in the populist language of power today.

The conceptual richness of princely terrains mostly remains obliterated in the discourse on politics in India, which, for the most part, has used European and later American epistemic lens. The discipline of 'political science' that developed in the context of the nationalist movement in the 1940s expunged any apparent 'pre-modern' objects from its field of knowledge, making them a historic curiosity. The marginal focus on princely states in this period could be owing to the nationalist project of indigenizing universal experiences, as well as the dominance of British

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institutionalism in political science (Rudolph and Rudolph 2010). Some of the earliest political science scholars in India were trained as historians, and many were against the idea of giving the discipline of political science an independent position. The domain wars in these disciplines perhaps also had a role to play in keeping the princely states outside of political science, on the pretext of them being irrelevant to postcolonial state. A conventional classroom of political science usually keeps its engagement with history in general and princely histories in particular minimal. Over time, even courses on colonialism and nationalism have been removed from the curriculum of political science.

With the expulsion of 'history' from the epistemology of politics in a bid to establish its scientificity, the 'political scientist' has lost touch with the questions of their own times. The ensuing crisis of the discipline has amounted to and is reproduced by serious gaps in methodological discussions within political science. Its overt emphasis on legalism, institutional crisis, political instability, and rapid political change reflected the 'academic colonialism' of the discipline, emanating from an uncritical import of Western theoretical frames (Kaviraj 1978: 6–7). In calling out the 'ahistoricity' of political science in India, Kaviraj laments, 'political analysis often works with wrong genealogy,' presuming the nation state in India as a direct descendant of modern European states, neglecting the traces of pre-modern Indian empires (2010a: 4–5). The historical method in political science was also oriented to study European, particularly British, political institutions that provided the model for the evolution of similar institutions in the Indian context as well (Bains 1971; Chatterjee, Dutta Gupta, and Chaube 1976). Thus, the temporal and institutional histories of political science in India were drawn from its British counterpart in the early phase of the discipline's development (1940s and 1950s), while disregarding the forms of power and authority in the subcontinent itself.

Mapping the Discipline

In an attempt to understand the ordering of political science in India within the triadic logic of state, democracy, and modernity in the period from the 1940s to 1970s, the chapter seeks to historicize the development of its categories of knowledge. This also necessitates an outline of its intellectual debates and profile of its practitioners. What did they deem as important and why? The questions asked by the prominent figures of political science were emerging from their contexts, albeit mediated by dominant epistemic

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infrastructures and imperatives of state-making, in the process assuming an abstract universality and citational power. The distribution of educational and cultural resources in a region also determined its pedagogic and epistemic reach, giving leverage to the British Indian provinces. Most of the educational institutions in the princely states, even when they started owing to efforts of their 'progressive' rulers or modernizing ministers, imported the pedagogues from the colonial centres of education like Agra, Allahabad, Calcutta, and Bombay. Of the immediate post-independence period, Jaffrelot and Zerinini-Brotel talk about the 'Delhi-centeredness of political science' with the opening of centres for political studies and international relations in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and the Faculty of Social Sciences in Delhi University (DU) (Jaffrelot and Zerinini-Brotel 2001). To borrow Dipesh Chakrabarty's phrase, there is perhaps a need to 'provincialize' the disciplinary categories of politics.

Methodologically, the chapter sifts through the domain of political science through a reading of papers and keynotes presented in the meetings of its first professional association, the Indian Political Science Association (IPSA), and published in its flagship journal, *Indian Journal of Political Science* (*IJPS*), in the period from the 1940s–1970s. This is supplemented from a re-reading of texts that are considered 'canonical' in the conventional pedagogy of political science or cited in academic scholarship on Indian politics. The chapter also attempts to flag some major debates that emerged in this field in the 1940s–1970s. In relation to this, which I call the 'national voice' of political science, a regional scholarship was growing within the discipline in the 1960s and 1970s. I interpret this as marked by a duality—on the one hand, it was methodologically attuned to the national framework and on the other, alert to the 'region forming processes' in their political analysis. I trace this regional scholarship through some of the journals that were coming out of regional universities, especially those with distinct princely histories, to examine their engagement with their own contexts and histories. *Political Science Review* was one such journal, which was published since 1962 by the Department of Political Science, University of Rajasthan. The journal had a spate of articles on Rajasthan's politics by scholars living there, covering common domains like election studies or sociological profiles of bureaucrats and legislators, while a few engaged with regional forms of power and legitimacy (Verma 1971; Singhi 1972; B. Singh 1985). Other similar journals included *Indian Journal of Political Studies* (Jodhpur), *Indian Journal of Politics* (Aligarh), *Indian Political Science Review* (Delhi), *Teaching Politics* (Delhi) and the Hindi translations of these, such as *Rajya Shastra Sameeksha* (*Political Science Review*). This

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rich, yet dispersed archive of regional political science is yet to be explored in any systematic manner and offers further directions to understand the multiple interpretations of the national discourse of politics, as well as the diversity of voices within the discipline in different contexts.

In an evocative essay written in 2002, a rare fieldworker among political scientists, Paul Brass lays open the two 'political cultures' in India, reviewing an array of literature written in the discipline to describe this inevitable tension in Indian politics—the elite national political culture and the mass local popular culture of politics variously termed as 'idioms' of politics (W. H. Morris Jones) or 'lower culture' (Myron Weiner).[1] He remarks that there is an 'indigenous vocabulary to make sense of India's political world to ordinary Indians', which includes the religious–mythological lexicon and symbols (Brass 2002: 3027). It is this vocabulary that had threatened to dismantle the Nehruvian consensus and the neat package of liberal democracy that the Indian state had adopted in the post-independence period. In rescaling politics to the regional level, Brass argues against the homogenizing predilections of the 'developmentalist' framework to study Indian politics, mainly derived from America, to find new ways and methods to comprehend the current dispensation of Indian politics. Following Brass's argument, one notices that from the early 2000s to now, the religious–mythological vocabulary has only grown stronger and more popular, even translating into electoral gains for its supporters, calling forth a re-examination of the epistemological structures of political science in India—its dominant voice and the voices that remained in the margins. We may call the former 'national political science', which was preoccupied with categories like state, constitution, development, and modernity. As opposed to this, one encounters a 'regional political science', methodologically placed in the local terrains of politics, using contextual social and cultural categories to understand political power. The following sections will delve into the intellectual chasms and linkages between these two voices of political science to trace the presence of 'princely states' as an object of study in both, in turn analysing the modes of its deployment in them.

National Political Science

The institutionalization of political science as a separate discipline in India goes back to the first professional association of political science in India, the Indian Political Science Association (IPSA), formed in the late 1930s, in addition to its study in select universities at the time of independence. Notably, in 1938, only five Indian universities had political science

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departments. As per the University Grants Commission (UGC) reports of the subsequent periods, departments of political science increased over the next three decades, reaching 59 in 1971 (Bains 1971). In the early decades, one notices an institutionalist–statist bias with the Eurocentric conceptual framework in the study of politics, reflected in the themes of the papers presented at the conferences, publications in the journal of the association, pedagogic focus in departments, and the keynote speeches in the annual conferences of the IPSA. The first conference of IPSA took place in 1938 in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) at the behest of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder vice chancellor (VC) of BHU. It was presided over by G. B. Pant, the prime minister of the United Provinces at the time. In his opening remarks, he advocated a connection between academics and real currents of life, which could lead to self-realization or *swaraj* (Pant 1939). The nationalist tenor of the IPSA was set in the very first meeting itself, where national integration was extolled, 'Bande Mataram' was sung, and freedom was a recurring theme of discussion. The conference reflected a focus on formal institutions of state and political theory—with papers on nature of sovereignty, democracy, Muslim political theory, pluralism, idealism, League of Nations, myths and political theory, conventions in the Indian constitution, and fiscal reforms and autonomy in rural areas, among other things. An inaugural debate was held on 'socialist vs bourgeois democratic revolution in India', reflecting the larger focus on the nature of democracy in India.

The founding provisional committee of IPSA included scholars trained in history, sociology, economics, and politics, like Beni Prasad from Allahabad University, Benoy Kumar Sarkar from Calcutta,[2] D. N. Bannerjee (Dacca),[3] P. A. Wadia (Bombay),[4] and E. Asirvatham from Madras,[5] among others. Narendra Deva from Kashi Vidyapith[6] and Gurmukh Nihal Singh (Benaras),[7] as the convener of the IPSA, were both notable political leaders and participated in state institutions later on. Another member, V. S. Ram from Lucknow, was one of the few trained 'political scientists' in the committee, having received a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a PhD from Harvard University in 1920 on municipal government's evolution in India. He returned to India to first teach at the Department of History in Calcutta University (CU) and then became the founder of the very first political science department in India in 1922 at the newly established Lucknow University. In the founding committee, only A. R. Wadia represented the princely university at Mysore,[8] even though he was from the British Indian province of Bombay originally. If one looks at the list of participating universities, there is a dominance

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of institutions located in British Indian provinces, notably Agra, Benaras, Delhi, Aligarh, Annamalai, Bombay, Nagpur, Patna, Madras, and Dacca, barring the exceptions of Mysore and Osmania universities. The first conference's proceedings were published in the *IJPS* in 1939, which became a site for several prominent figures of this nascent discipline to publish their ideas in the ensuing decades.

Paradoxically, the first conference also became the stage for a ceremonial spectacle and *durbar*-like assembly to mark the beginning of IPSA, with G. B. Pant, as the conference president, receiving the 'Guard of Honour', followed by an 'at home' reception. The ceremonialist idiom of the meetings was enhanced with the presence of several national leaders and dignitaries in them, most notably G. B. Pant at the inaugural conference, Defence Minister V. K. Krishna Menon in 1957 in Poona, and Lal Bahadur Shastri as the home affairs minister in 1961 at Cuttack, among others. In IPSA's thirty-third conference held in Calcutta in 1973, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi delivered the special address at the inauguration titled 'Political Process and Political Science in India'. While emphasizing the need for a 'total science of politics' looking at realms of sociology, ethics, psychology, and history, Gandhi was critical of the intellectual dependence of political scientists in India on American and European models of democracy. She exhorted them to do an 'Indian' analysis of politics, her speech peppered with references to India's history, uniqueness of its democracy, and unity during crisis, referring to the 1971 war (Gandhi 1973).

As an epistemological corollary to state-building in India, political science was directly connected in its early years to the cultivation of an active citizenry and administration of a welfare state (Majumdar 1952). This followed the earlier form of 'civic' education that had emerged as the pedagogic tool to shape the 'citizen' in the 1920s–1930s in syllabi and question papers of several universities in India.[9] The 'elementary' textbooks of civics in this period were written by scholars such as Mihir Kumar Sen (1929) from CU, V. S. Ram (the IPSA founder member), B. M. Sharma (1934) of Lucknow University, and S. V. Puntambekar of BHU (1933). Reflecting on the paradox of citizen autonomy under empire, these studies circumscribed Indian citizenship within the 'dominion status' emanating from the British Empire, creating an imperial order of citizenship apart from a national one (Sen 1929: 83–84).

In the enunciations of 'civic' membership, princely states remained a blind spot—territories of varying sizes under ruling dynasties and mediated by colonial indirect rule. The question of the 'princely' states was deemed to be resolved by their merger in the Indian state post-independence;

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however, their epistemic accommodation within the largely 'statist' science of politics was chequered, branching into domains as distinct as political thought, constitutionalism, and institutional histories.

Accommodating the 'Princely' (1940s–1950s)

In the 1944 issue of the *IJPS*, Jaipur's constitutional reforms were published in the form of a proclamation by the ruler (S. M. Singh 1944). The interesting aspect about this proclamation was the enmeshing of the two idioms of politics in India at the cusp of its transition into a new nation state. The maharaja of Jaipur started the proclamation by addressing the people as 'my beloved subjects'—a form of personalized address by the ruler, alluring to an imagination of historical ties between him and 'his people'. As opposed to the more abstract 'we the people' of the Indian constitution, this 'people' was historically inscribed and thick with affect. Even when the 'reforms' themselves were generic, with the promise of limited representation in the representative bodies, the sovereign proclamation was paradoxical. In princely states, the discourse of democracy was nestled in a language of reforms, constitutionalism, and the 'modernizing prince', a figure who gained immediate legitimacy in historiography on the princely states generally (Nair 2011). Just like the British Indian provinces, which were cradles of nationalist assertion, princely states were seen as 'modernizing' entities armed with constitutional reforms, constitutional design, political institutions, and question of representation in them (B. Narain 1939; Sherwani 1940; Sinha 1940; Rajkumar 1940; Rao 1940; I. Sharma 1941; G. N. Singh 1941; Oza 1948; Venkatarangaiya 1950; Banerjee 1949).

The seventh annual report of IPSA (Khosla 1945) revelled in the fact that as many as eight states participated in the annual conference. These states were Jaipur, Bhalwalpur, Mysore, Kotah, Bharatpur, Rajkot, Faridkot, and Hyderabad. It was the first time that Indian states accepted the invitation of the association to participate in discussions on political science. The conferences held in princely states like Mysore (1940), Jaipur (1945), and Hyderabad (1951) saw addresses by their prime ministers or maharajas and discussions on the states and their future role were held. When IPSA met in one such 'modern' princely state, Mysore, in 1940,[10] a separate panel was held on the 'Reforms in Princely States'. Here, papers were presented on liberal democratic trends in states like Mysore, Baroda, Travancore, Gwalior, and Orissa, hailing them as precursors to democracy (G. N. Singh 1941). As opposed to the 'accommodative' discourse on princely states within the discipline, states also became sites for 'counter-narratives' by their rulers.

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For one, the maharaja of Mysore skirted the usual nationalist and reformist narratives and criticized the 'egoist' sovereign nation state with its 'menace' in the context of fascism in his address at the IPSA conference of 1940. His address focused on the perils of the Great War and the role of political scientists and economists in rebuilding a 'new world order' (H. H. 1941). His attention to the international domain rather than the national at the height of popular nationalism in India is notable.

As opposed to this global rhetoric, Sir Mirza Ismail,[11] the Mysore-bred prime minister of 'modernizing' Jaipur, extolled the *nationalist* moment in his address at the IPSA conference in the state. He addressed the anxiety around the impending merger of states, urged the political scientists to contribute to 'practical planning', while pledging cooperation of the states in the 'nationalist' demands (Ismail 1945). He alluded to liberal democratic principles through his reference to constitutional reforms, political enlightenment, and the notion of civil obligations and civil rights. J. C. Rollo (Minister of Education, Jaipur) spoke in a similar tone and felt happy that the soil of Jaipur could be a ground for discussions on the future of India. He spoke about the 'Jaipur Scheme of Government' with its 'planned efficiency in administration' and a 'planned development of resources' that could be used as a template for discussions (Rollo 1945). In a timely gesture, both Ismail and Rollo stressed on 'planning', a template for which was already being discussed in nationalist bodies like the National Planning Committee (1937) and by the Indian industrialists in the Bombay Plan (1944). Modernizing ministers from princely states, like M. Visvesvaraya who had served Mysore, were active voices for 'planned economy' (Zachariah 2005). IPSA's alignment with the planned development discourse also comes through in its shared meeting with the All-India Economic Conference in Bombay in 1941, inaugurated by one of the authors of the Bombay Plan, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas.

In the decade of the 1940s that marked the transition for the princely states in the form of merger with the Indian Union, the papers on the states published in the *IJPS* reflected their anxieties and aspirations to assimilate with the democratic nation state. The papers came from a generation of political scientists, who had been trained as historians and talked of democratic evolution of the states under their progressive rulers, or deliberations on categories specific to princely states—like sovereignty, paramount power, or political thought emerging under conditions of monarchy. In addition, there were papers that intervened in political theory from the vantage point of the states, most notably by K. V. N. Shastri from Mysore University in 1942 and by S. V. Puntambekar of Hindu University,

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Banaras in 1944. Trained as a historian at Oxford University, S. V. Puntambekar taught at BHU and then Nagpur University in Maharashtra and went on to write a book, *Paramountcy in Indian Politics*, in 1947. His work on political theory engaged with sources from the Indian context, including myths and treatises of statesmen from the princely states. He was also one of the few political science scholars in the period to have seriously engaged with the notion of 'paramountcy', a concept devised by the British in relation to Indian states, especially at a time when many from the discipline did not see any relevance of this idea due to its colonial connotations.[12] As opposed to the princely position on their independence after the lapse of British paramountcy, Puntambekar had justified the continuance of this power in the service of security and integrity of the Indian state. He interpreted the Indian state as 'feudal-imperial' where paramount power was a necessity for maintaining 'unity, tranquility and good government' (Puntambekar 1947: 45–52). Puntambekar's paper in the *IJPS* discussed the ideas of Raja T. Madhavrao Rubgunde, a late nineteenth-century statesman from the court of Baroda,[13] in the context of what he calls 'law of dependent monarchies' as a part of the 'British imperial school' of political thought (Puntambekar 1944). Puntambekar hails Madhavrao as a pro-British reformist and a supporter of good government, unlike the 'feudal school of thought' reflected in the ideas of ministers like Salar Jung or Raja Sir Dinkar Rao Rajwade of Gwalior, both serving their states in 1857–1858.

In a distinct voice from the modernization discourse, were ideas within the rubric of 'Hindu political theory', rooted in notions of kingship and *dharma*. It was invoked in discussions on 'Indian political thought' in the Madras conference of IPSA in 1949, where vernacular sources were discussed as a source of political ideas. In a reflection of this, K. V. N Shastri's paper delved into the regional history of Karnataka to discuss the theory of state in Mysore in the eighteenth century as a 'happy combination of the ancient dharma and local tradition' (Sastri 1942: 381). This seemed in tandem with the 'Hindu political thought' premised on interpretations of early Hindu treatises (shastras and smritis) on kingship and *rajdharma* by scholars like Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Beni Prasad from the 1920s.[14] While on the one hand, Sarkar sought to generate the abstraction of the 'state' underpinned by *danda*, the Hindu practice of sovereignty over and above an anarchic society based on *matsya-nyaya* (Sarkar 1921), on the other, Beni Prasad in his multiple writings on Hindu theories of state and government claimed that religion was intertwined with politics, so much so that 'political ideas and institutions acquired a religious tinge that never wholly left them' (Prasad

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1927: 3; 1928). While delineating a 'Hindu' theory of politics, their writings kept oscillating between the lexicon of European liberal philosophy and those of pre-colonial political formations in the subcontinent—reflecting the anxieties of the nationalist project in India in general.

A piece on Hyderabad by historian H. K. Sherwani[15] from Osmania University traced the evolution of the legislature there. It also drew the connection between the Mughal empire and the Asafjahi dynasty, and how history shaped the constitutional practice in Hyderabad. Somewhat in line with Rollo's 'Jaipur scheme of government', Sherwani gave an account of the 'peculiar theory of representation' in Hyderabad through an overview of Salar Jang's reforms (Sherwani 1940). His interpretation of Salar Jang's reforms could be placed within his reading of Persian and Arabic sources from the eighth to the fourteenth century that formed the basis of Islamic political thought in the 1940s.[16] Like their Hindu counterparts, Islamic scholars focused on concepts of state and sovereignty; however, unlike the Hindu notion of *danda*, the Islamic conception of sovereignty in this period was seen as originating from below—the laws of the community (Sherwani 1942). Just as Sherwani relativizes Islamic ideas to European political philosophy, Illyas Ahmad went on to draw a direct lineage of the Islamic state to 'social contract' theories that emerged in Europe (Ahmad 1942). There was a similar anxiety to engage with European thinkers and categories, while delineating an alternative framing of knowledge about politics in Islamic scholarship too.

This paradoxical rootedness of political ideas in regional kingdoms, while engaging with more abstract epistemic categories like 'good government' or 'feudal' and 'imperial', was evident in most scholarship emanating from the Indian context, generating what Bayly calls a global 'knowledge complex' (2023).

Regional Frames (1960s–1970s)

The period of 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of states as sites of development and politics, along with a focus on public administration in many universities, especially in Mysore, Madras, Rajasthan, and so on. The linguistic reorganization of states in 1956 and loss of Congress in several states in 1967 also led to a reorientation in the study of politics in India. Debates within the discipline centred on questions of curricula, methodology, orientation, interdisciplinarity, and a regional and ideological balance (Chatterjee, Dutta Gupta, and Chaube 1976). Regionalism became a frame of studying politics in India in this period, first within the discourse

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on political development, with writings of Iqbal Narain, Myron Weiner, and Rajni Kothari in the 1970s. It took a sociological turn through the works of M. S. A Rao and Paul Brass.[17]

For the first time, the analytical potential of state politics was discussed in a Committee for State Politics in India, formed informally by Myron Weiner under the auspices of the Committee on South Asia in the Association for Asian Studies (AAS), a part of the burgeoning area studies discourse in Cold War America. This idea grew in two seminars—one at the University of Chicago in 1961 and another at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1964, influenced by the paradigm of 'state politics' in American political science. In November 1966, Iqbal Narain, a faculty member at the University of Rajasthan, spearheaded the Indian reflections on state politics in an issue of *Seminar*. He remarked that 'a probe into the intricate labyrinth of state politics is basic to an intelligent, meaningful and critical understanding of Indian Politics as a whole' (I. Narain 1966). Weiner's adoption of a 'political systems approach' placed states within the larger political system to test its functionality (Weiner 1968). Narain treated the states as full-blown entities, within a system but also having unique features; history and society are different, lending the study a sociological aspect (I. Narain 1976b).[18]

Additionally, the states became important from the 1960s onwards in the sub-field of election studies in India, a direct thematic and methodological impact of American political science. Rajni Kothari, a US-trained political scientist from India, went on to get a grant from Asia Foundation (American) to set up an independent research centre in Delhi called the Centre for Study of Developing Societies that pioneered a systematic study of Indian elections in 1962 (with Myron Weiner), 1965 (Kerala elections), and 1967 (general elections).[19] By the 1960s, 'empirical' studies emerged within the American variant of behavioural political science, crediting survey research and quantitative analysis, ousting the Eurocentric, historical, institutionalist narrative in its wake (Rudolph and Rudolph 2010; Jaffrelot and Zerinini-Brotel 2001). The abstract people of European liberal philosophy were now measurable units of analysis for mid-level theorizations on party structures, public opinion, and voting patterns, among others (Brass 2002). The importance of state-level analysis in political science is also reflected in the structural changes in the format of the IPSA conference itself by the mid-1970s. Panels on individual states where the conference was organized were introduced, and a separate panel on professional issues in political science was envisaged alongside. Many studies on social composition of political institutions such as legislature and executive (Mohapatra 1973; Raj Rani

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Avery; Ray 1974), political behaviour and socialization, and constituency-level studies in Indian states (Sisson 1970) came out in this period. In the 1962 issue of the *IJPS*, Dwight Waldo, Professor of Political Science and Director, Bureau of Public Administration, University of California, Berkley, discussed the state of contemporary political science in America (Waldo 1962), and cited the growth of new areas such as study of public opinion, political parties, and public policy within the gamut of political science. However, this 'American–Huntington–Princeton' variety of political science (Hooja, Mathur, and Narain 1973) met with criticism from different shades of Marxist scholarship. These scholars found the American approaches to be devoid of both history and methodology, instead placing a 'ceremonial attention' to technique and 'disembodied theory' (Kaviraj 1978: 8; Chatterjee, Dutta Gupta, and Chaube 1976: 9).

In three consecutive issues of the *IJPS* in 1973–1974, a rather acrimonious exchange took place between two political science scholars, both representing two distinct frames of political science in India. C. P. Bhambri from the Centre for Political Studies in JNU called out Rajni Kothari's major work *Politics in India* (1970) as representing a 'conservative ideology' of 'functionalism', as counter to his variant of Marxist social science (Bhambri 1973). In an equally strongly worded rebuttal, Kothari called Bhambri's perspective 'polar', coming from 'stale and superficial discourse' propounded by one 'school' or 'master' as opposed to his more 'pluralist' framework, which is based on empirical experiences from India. He expressed the need to go beyond the 'Marxist-functionalist binary' to shape a distinctively 'Indian model of politics' (Kothari 1974b). His arguments on the 'consensual' model of politics in India met with a more complex theoretical challenge in Sudipta Kaviraj's critical essay on political culture (Kaviraj 2010b). While for Kothari, the basis for 'India's political culture' was the 'traditions' of 'tolerance' in Indian society,[20] Kaviraj questioned his 'romanticized' interpretation of Indian traditions and past and characterized Indian democracy as a limited consensus of the 'feudal-bourgeois' classes. For this reason, in times of political crisis, authoritarianism could replace the democratic political system with ease (Kaviraj 2010b). These debates were rife throughout the 1970s in the IPSA conferences as well, which saw few panels on political culture. The papers on 'political culture' touched upon the very contradictions inbuilt in Indian democracy that Kaviraj seemed to allude to in his critique of Kothari's 'functionalist' diagnosis of Indian democracy.

In the view of the larger disciplinary changes after the 1960s, the conceptual and thematic focus of articles on the princely states also registered a shift

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and could be categorized under three overlapping discourses of structural Marxism, systems analysis, and political sociology. With the rescaling of political science in the 1960s and 1970s from the nation to the states, the voices from the regions were becoming louder.

Multi-vocality

The merger of princely states into the Indian Union had led to the shaping of what Narain called 'split personality states', where old and new loyalties coexisted to create a distinct regionalism (I. Narain 1976a: 906). Most of the new literature was coming from a regional scholarship located in state universities in ex-princely territories. For instance, works of S. C. Dash and B. C. Das (Utkal University) on Orissa, Iqbal Narain, P. C. Mathur, and K. L. Kamal on Rajasthan, and Krishna Rao on Mysore are noteworthy. Conversely, it came from scholars influenced by the American political development approach, making larger claims about the institutional and cultural stability of the political system from the location of the princely states (Wood 1984; Richter 1971; Sisson 1972; Manor 1977; Narain and Puri 1976; Kamal 1967; Bhargava 1972; Chaturvedi 1972; Puri 1978; Narain and Lal 1969). The structural Marxist analysis placed the princely territories within the debates on postcolonial state formation, bureaucratic class, and dependency relations vis-à-vis the British paramount (Jeffrey 1978; Kamal and Stern 1973; Stern and Kamal 1974), while the works emerging from the political sociological domain were more sensitive to the internal social dynamics of power in these states reflected through caste, clan, or 'feudal' relations in each case, making the analysis specific and rooted in history (Rudolph 1963; Rudolph and Rudolph 1984; Saksena 1965; C. Sharma 1975).[21] As an example, in writings emanating from the context of Rajasthan, one sees engagement with the notion of 'feudalism'. While Rudolph's piece in the *IJPS* was a part of her ongoing work on transition in Rajasthan from 'traditional' to 'modern' state and offered a refreshing analysis of 'form and character in a princely state, including its ethic, authority and structure' (Rudolph 1963), another article by B. S. Saksena decries 'feudal loyalty' in local institutions of Sirohi in Rajasthan as a continuation from the princely era (Saksena 1965).

The field of political science was becoming multi-vocal, with the rise of such regional scholarship in the form of several state university-based journals that seemed to bridge the gap between the two voices of political science. *Political Science Review*, one such journal from the Department of Political Science, University of Rajasthan, produced some significant

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interventions in the discipline and was abstracted in the *American Political Science Review*. Prominent national and international scholars, particularly from the field of comparative politics, published their articles or they were reproduced in the journal. It also showed an active collaboration between the faculty and students of the department, who wrote book reviews and reports on seminars in the journal. The journal contained a spate of articles on Rajasthan's politics by scholars living there, including the field of election studies, sociological profile of bureaucrats and legislators, princely power and legitimacy, among others (Verma 1971; Singhi 1972; B. Singh 1985).

Iqbal Narain, from the University of Rajasthan and an editor of this journal, is an interesting intellectual figure in the domain of political science in the 1970s, situated at the cusp of two languages and geographies of political science in India. Attuned to the national trends in political science, he participated in collaborative projects with Rajni Kothari in undertaking election studies in India. He seamlessly adopted the systems approach of American comparative politics in his analysis of Indian politics, specialized in Indian government and politics, and published several times in the *IJPS*. His first monograph, *Twilight or Dawn: Political Change in India* (1972), assessed Indian democracy using a comparative political framework of political development and political decay. However, as a professor of political science at the University of Rajasthan in the 1960s and 1970s, Iqbal Narain was placed in a regional academic setting, more specifically in a former princely state in a university set up by the modernizing prime minister of Jaipur in the 1940s. During his stint in Rajasthan, he widely published on issues of regionalism and state politics in India, first from a systemic lens, later veering into a thick regional sensibility. He delineated three dimensions to study state politics in India—contextual, structural, and operational. The contextual dimension included the history, topography, economic development, human resources, and patterns of education and urbanization in the states. While the structural dimension was preoccupied with formal political institutions, the operational dimension studied the orientation of political actors, political behaviour, and functional dimensions in the states. His earlier involvement with electoral studies had placed him right at the centre of the field of behavioural studies in India, which also got reflected in his analytical framing of state politics. He was optimistic about the break-up and decimation of Congress in the 1967 state elections, as he believed this would unleash the forces of political polarization that would be beneficial for both democracy and federalism. It resonated with his piece in the *Asian Survey* in 1976, where he saw 'regionalism' as a stabilizing factor of Indian politics. In an article co-authored with P. C. Mathur, Narain

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disapproved of the uncritical adoption of the political development approach in the Indian context. He called it a reflection of 'conceptual fecundity and empirical infertility' (Narain and Mathur 1982: 1). They were concerned with the lack of operationalization of the concept in India. Narain was critical of his contemporary Myron Weiner's work, which was taken as an example of the failure of US scholars to elaborate on the 'Princetonian' framework of political development in the phenomenological realities of India. Narain and Mathur further went on to criticize the Eurocentric view of politics, where it was held as imperative to dig into European history to make sense of the present political reality in India, something that had been a staple of political science in the colonial and immediate postcolonial periods. His engagement with the state-level politics led him to think of social and historical questions in the context of Rajasthan, leading to the powerful analysis of 'Rajput Hinduism' in the state, as a distinct idiom of power (Mathur and Narain 1990). As the editor of *Political Science Review* for many years in the 1960s and 1970s, Narain contributed to the growing field of state politics from the vantage point of princely territories.

The discourse of state politics in the 1960s and 1970s, in rescaling Indian politics to study the regional, invariably left out the question of 'form' of power from analytical discussion. It is perhaps the reason for the theoretical stunting of this field by the 1990s. Some of these lacunae were taken up by the later anthropological turn in the study of Indian politics that began to take cognizance of diverse forms and idioms of power in Indian politics.

Conclusion

The nationalists since the nineteenth century had a difficult relation with traditions and postcolonial political scientists with history (Narain and Mathur 1982). The political institutions that were opening for them since the early twentieth century had to be modern and democratic. These were stepping stones to a democratic narrative of the Indian state. Princely states got limited space in this political narrative—they were seen as 'backward', 'feudal', and 'traditional' from various theoretical vantage points. Their place in the postcolonial nation state was even more contentious, where their presence seemed to mar the modern nation-building process. Hence, the strategy was to merge them with the British Indian provinces after 1947. The merger resolves what one may call the 'princely question' in postcolonial India, and since then, the textures of time in these territories were ironed out by a modernizing and developmental thrust of the Nehruvian state.

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In an elective course on citizenship in India at MPhil level in one of the most reputed public universities in India, with a stress on liberal arts, I had presented one of my first writings on princely states in India—placing them within the tumultuous time of transition from the 1950s–1970s in the context of privy purses abolition. One of my classmates asked, almost judging my choice of topic, as to why I am discussing princely states and princes in a paper on citizenship. He was reproducing the presumed dichotomy between feudal and modern, princes and people that had been the benchmark of the democratic state and political science in India. Democracy and princely states did not sit well together—each was anachronistic for the other. A legitimate research on Indian politics after the establishment of constitutional democracy could never speak seriously about princely states—they would remain a historical aberration. The 'people' in princely states were late entrants into the discourse of citizenship and democratic rights. They were deemed as *praja* and had no place in nationalism, except for the Congress-backed Praja Mandal movements. This could be best depicted through the essay by Partha Chatterjee in his evocative compendium, *Texts of Power*, on the colonial history of disciplines in India. While translating parts of the Bengali text by Ananda Chandra Mitra called *Vyavahāradarśana*, Chatterjee interprets the author's usage of *praja* in order to understand his engagements with the received European notion of citizenship. The author was at the cusp of the colonial and the indigenous forms of power, using lexicon from one to make sense of the other. Through this, Partha Chatterjee argues that 'new discourses of modernity were produced' in institutional sites in India, for instance, a 'science of politics' was written by Ananda Chandra using familiar yet traditional terms like *praja* for people, re-inscribing the subject as citizen under popular sovereignty (Chatterjee 1995). Even as Chatterjee is sensitive to the location of the subject of Indian politics, he did not translate the relation between the king and the subjects, reflected in the use of *bhakti* and *sneha* by Mitra (Chatterjee 1995). In doing a genealogy of politics in India, he concentrates more on the *praja* than the raja.

In foregrounding the problematic of the 'princely states', the chapter aims to stress the multi-vocality and multi-temporality of power engendered in practices of the state in India. The 'state' as a primary object of study in Indian politics very often remains myopically defined in terms of its colonial lineages and gets abstracted from the thicket of politics on the ground. Not only does this produce an alienated classroom engagement with the 'science' of politics but also precludes many other histories and idioms and processes of state formation in the postcolonial context.

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While some strides are made in the historiography of princely states, rethinking their role in the 'state-making' processes in South Asia (Datla 2015; Mantena 2023; Beverley 2020), they are not sufficiently explored in terms of configurations of power offered by the complex social, political. and economic dynamics of princely states. More recently, new works on postcolonial legality and constitutionalism have questioned the 'elite' interpretations of constitution-making, highlighting its popular and princely histories (Benton 2008; De and Shani 2024; Dar and Tillin 2025). This re-reading of law and constitutionalism in postcolonial contexts veers away from mythical foundations of postcolonial state and law to present its profane genealogy-located in the 'popular' domain. The multi-vocality and multi-temporality of power were engendered in the nationalist state-making, which instead prioritized a liberal democratic form over myriad other affective forms of power. However, the language that we used to make sense of them remained predominantly European. Even today, when we interpret charismatic leaders or populist politics, we use frames emerging from the West, of 'authoritarianism' or 'fascism', rather than delving into the 'princely' lineages of power in India. This quest for new languages of politics becomes more relevant in today's times—especially as our present political practice is very much informed by an idiom of sovereign spectacle, antithetical to the liberal imaginations of democracy. The 'princely' as an epistemological 'other' of political science in India, constructed through tropes of feudalism, autocracy, and colonial indirect rule, offers an entry point into a methodological interrogation of the discipline, with its conventional appendages. It begins with the probing of its Western trajectories to think of new languages of understanding and analysing Indian politics.

Notes

* I would like to thank the editors of the book, Professor Prathama Banerjee and Professor Baidik Bhattacharya, as well as the participants in the manuscript workshop held at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies for their feedback on the paper. I especially thank my discussant, Professor Anupama Roy, for her suggestions and notes. I am grateful to Professor Sobhanlal Dutta Gupta for sharing a rare article from his personal collection and his insights on the various aspects of political science, as well as to Himadri Chatterjee for his comments on the paper.

1. Brass highlights the analysis of Myron Weiner, W. H. Morris Jones, Sudipta Kaviraj, the Rudolphs, and Ashis Nandy among others to bring home the point about the dichotomous cultures of politics in India.

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2. Sociologist and publisher of a quarterly in 1921 called the *Hindu Theory of State*.
3. D. N. Bannerjee was the founding head of political science in CU in 1948 and taught political economy at the university. He also authored *Indian States and the Future Constitution of India* in the 1949 issue of the *IJPS*.
4. A trained economist who taught at Wilson College, Bombay.
5. He was the first head of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration that started in Madras University in 1937.
6. He was a leading theorist of Congress Socialist Party and participated in Indian nationalist movement. He also became member of UP legislative assembly, served as the VC of BHU, and Lucknow University in early years after independence.
7. G. N. Singh was the second chief minister of Delhi from Congress and the first governor of Rajasthan. His books include *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development, 1600–1919* (1933) and *Indian States and British India: Their Future Relations* (1930).
8. A sociologist from Mysore, who had been called from Bombay to teach philosophy in Mysore when Dr S. Radhakrishnan was there.
9. I would like to thank Professor Anupama Roy for this reference.
10. Jointly held with Indian Economics Conference.
11. Mirza Ismail was the prime minister of Jaipur state from 1941–1944, and was known to be close to nationalist Praja Mandal in the state. He is also attributed with several developmental works and institutional reforms on the lines of other 'modernizing' states like Mysore.
12. See discussions on M. Venkatarangaiya's paper on the Indian states at the 1950 conference, when he used the concept of 'paramountcy' in the context of postcolonial Indian state (Venkatarangaiya 1950).
13. While Raja Madhavrao was in the administration of princely state of Baroda, his weekly lectures to the ruler Sayajirao Gaekwad III in 1881 got published in form of *Minor Hints*, an elementary grammar of politics for Indian princes.
14. One prominent scholar, who was writing from the 'Hindu' vantage point in several American and European political science journals was Benoy Kumar Sarkar, a sociologist with varied intellectual pursuits. The other figure was Beni Prasad, a student of H. J. Laski from London School of Economics and Political Science, who taught first in the Department of Indian History and then in the Department of Civics and Politics in Allahabad University in the early twentieth century. He would go on to become a prominent figure in the early Indian Political Science Association.

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15. Haroon Khan Sherwani was a historian, trained in Aligarh Muslim University and then in Cambridge, London, Oxford, and Geneva. He was the head of Department of History and Political Science in Osmania University and the principal of Nizam College, Hyderabad from 1945, before moving to Anglo Arabic College, Delhi in 1947–1948. He contributed to the study of Deccan history and knew Urdu, English, Hindi, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, and French. He was also passionate about Hyderabad's heritage.
16. One may see this in articles of H. K. Sherwani (Osmania) and Illyas Ahmad (Allahabad) in *IJPS* in the 1940s.
17. M. S. A Rao and Francine Frankel produced two volumes on 'dominance and state power in modern India' in the late 1980s, where they argued for an overlap of rational and charismatic power in the Indian context. The compendium brought together several essays on politics in different regions. In the 1960s, the emergence of 'political sociology' also opened up the field of princely states in politics. In the late 1960s, two seminars on methodology and political sociology were funded by the United States Educational Foundation in India (USEFI), and sessions were held on the scope and content of political sociology in India, including study of parties, voting behaviour and elections in India, community power structure, and political and social change, among other things.
18. Haridwar Rai and Jawaharlal Pandey called for an analytical framework of state politics in India (Rai and Pandey 1979). M. V. Pylee (VC, University of Cochin) wrote a rejoinder in 1979 to Rai and Pandey's piece on state politics supporting their plea to have a 'full blooded and life-sized portrait of state politics in India' (Pylee 1979). For an excellent review of literature on state politics, see Pai (1989). A golden jubilee special issue of the IJPS was taken out in 1987 on state politics in India with articles on Rajasthan, the Northeast, Manipur, Himachal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Haryana, Punjab, Orissa, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and on President's Rule. Another special issue on state politics came out in 1994. By the early 2000s, the field of state politics in India had deepened further to look into intra-state dynamics; see Kumar (2009).
19. Iqbal Narain, P. C. Mathur, and C. P. Bhambri from University of Rajasthan compiled a volume on 1967 elections. Kothari also introduced modernization theory and Parsonian structural-functionalism in India. This was popularized by writings of David Easton in 1956 in the US and followed up by Gabriel Almond, with whom Kothari collaborated. Almond gave a universality to political system and political functions everywhere in the world, setting the stage for comparative analysis of politics. Kothari

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spent a year (1968–1969) in Stanford under the mentorship of Almond and published his work, *Politics in India*, under the *Little Brown Series of Comparative Politics* in 1970. For an account of the development of US behaviouralism in India, see Rudolph and Rudolph (2010).

20. I thank Professor Anupama Roy for pointing out this debate and for sharing the insights and notes on it from a working article by her and Professor Ujjwal Kumar Singh.
21. The exception is scholarly discussions on the constitutional validity of the abolition by S. P. Sathe and Nani Palkhivala among others and a detailed account of the process by William Richter in an *Economic and Political Weekly* article in 1971, seeking to understand it in context of electoral studies in Indian states. Richter, who retired as a professor from Kansas State University in the USA was trained in University of Chicago in 1960s, when the thrust in Indian political studies was moving towards state politics under the mentorship of Myron Weiner, to be discussed later in the chapter. He has also worked on other 'developing' democracies of South Asia including Pakistan and Nepal as well as served in special government committees on these regions.

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