

CHAPTER-1

Introduction

Defining a political party is not as easy as it looks. Various definitions of parties highlight their function as instruments to mediate between citizens (voters) and government, their function as a tool to gain power or to focus on the ideological roots of parties. Any definition has, therefore, less explanatory power, and will probably provoke disagreement rather than consensus.¹ It is also difficult to identify the relative position of a political party in comparison to any other political party. However, for the purpose of this examination, it is less important to find a common definition of political parties or to differentiate political parties from each other than to examine a political party's general roles and functions to find out which forces influence the party's behavior and to get a glimpse of the relationship between society, party and government. This examination will help to better understand party behavior and its changes over time.

Roles and Functions of Political Parties in Democracies

Political parties in democracies fulfill various functions. Depending on the type of political party, these functions are revealed differently. In principle, the main function of political parties in a democracy is to serve as a connecting link between the people and the political entities. They serve this function in various ways. First, political parties are a means for representation of the people. Second, they communicate the opinions of the people and social groups to the state and the public realm. Third, they reconcile interests of various social groups. Fourth, they mediate between the people and the political entities. Fifth, they help to select people for official posts. Altogether, political parties finally fulfill a role to ensure legitimacy for democracy and state institutions.²

One of the major functions of political parties in a democracy is representing the people. Who is to be represented and forms in which the representation should occur

¹ John Kenneth White, "What is a Political Party?" Handbook of Party Politics, eds. Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (London: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 5-15.

² Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, "Types and Functions of Parties," Political Parties and Democracy, eds. Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 3-39.

depend on the political system in the country, on the organization and composition of the political party and on the individual delegate. In principle, a delegate can represent a group of the people (based on demographic criteria), an opinion of the electorate, and the constituents by following their direct instructions or acting in the interest of the electorate by using his own judgment, or serve as an ombudsman for the electorate. In the same matter, political parties can serve in various ways as means for representation. But, political parties always represent just a specific part of the electorate. The electorate as a whole is represented by the parliament and the sum of all delegates and political parties.³

By communicating with the electorate and its various social groups, political parties integrate different political opinions, interests and expectations and form a new position which includes major points of all relevant groups and can gain support from the majority of the party's electorate. Therefore, political parties fulfill an important function in the process of opinion forming and participation of the people in a democracy. In contrast to interest groups which represent the interests of different power groups, political parties can serve as a forum for those people who have no access to interest groups or they can bring various groups together. Without political parties, it is probable that poor people would gain no influence in the opinion building process of a country. Their participation in politics would, therefore, be limited to participation in elections.

As shown, the function of political parties in the process of opinion forming is not limited to serving as a vehicle for interests of different social groups. Additionally, political parties serve as a filter to reconcile different interests and find a consensus or a compromise for representation in the ongoing process of opinion forming and decision making. This filter function leads to a marginalization of extreme positions, balances different interests, and helps to make the decision making process on the state level more efficient.⁴ This positive consequence of the process is affiliated with the negative effect that, for example, legitimate claims of minorities often get lost in the process except when the minorities find an independent party for representation of their

³ Richard S. Katz, "Party in Democratic Theory," *Handbook of Party Politics*, eds. Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 34-46 and 42-44.

⁴ Ken Kollman, John H. Miller, and Scott E. Page, "Political Parties and Electoral Landscapes," *British Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 1 (January 1998): 139-158.

interests.⁵

With their mediating position between the people and the political entities, political parties are also able to mediate directly between the people and the government. Especially in cases where decisions of a central government may have major impact on specific regions or specific groups of society, political parties play an important role in negotiating between the government and the persons affected. Political parties have more access to the decisive political power institutions than interest groups, know the rules of the political “game” and can balance between the claims of the people and the interests of the government. By taking care of this function, political parties can gain more legitimacy for speaking on behalf of the people.⁶

Because of their special position in the democratic process, political parties are a major resource for the selection of personnel for leading posts in a bureaucracy and the executive branch. One obvious argument for this function is that the government has to rely on loyal obedience in the executive branch. Another argument is that political parties gather a lot of experience with political procedures and are, therefore, particularly suited to selecting the right persons for relevant posts in the political sphere. However, critics of this function of political parties argue that loyalty is less decisive for leading posts than qualifications and knowledge. Additionally, they criticize that the argument about expertise of selection by political parties hides the fact that political parties misuse their opportunities to select people for official posts to establish a kind of patronage system or nepotism.⁷

Political parties are part of the process of formation of political objectives in a democracy. Without political parties, the opportunities of the people to become involved in the process of formation of political objectives are reduced. People would have fewer opportunities to express their opinions and interests and to gain influence. How far political parties fulfill these different functions depends on the country’s individual political system, the individual circumstances of the country and on the

⁵ Peter M. Leslie. “The Role of Political Parties in Promoting the Interests of Ethnic Minorities,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne De Science Politique* 2, no. 4 (December 1969): p. 419-433.

⁶ Hans Keman “Parties and Government: Features of Governing in Representative Democracies,” *Handbook of Party Politics*, edited by Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, (London: Sage Publications, 2006). P. 160-174.

⁷ Marjorie Randon Hershey, “Political Parties as Mechanisms of Social Choice,” *Handbook of Party Politics*, eds. Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 75-88.

individual political party and its voter base. In principle, one can argue that political parties have more importance in a parliamentary system than in a presidential system where associations and different interest groups are more involved in the process of opinion formation. In the case of India, this is likewise true for the role and the function of the BJP.

India's Political System

India is the largest democracy in the world. Its constitution provides human and minority rights, freedom of religion, and ensures free and fair elections. India's political system follows the example set by the political system of Great Britain. India's parliament consists of the Council of States or Rajya Sabha and the People's Assembly or Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha is a body consisting of not more than 250 members up to twelve of whom are appointed by the president. The remainder is chosen by the elected members of the state and territorial assemblies. The members serve for a six-year term. The Lok Sabha has 545 seats. Two members of the Lok Sabha are appointed by the president. Five hundred and forty three are elected by popular vote in 543 constituencies by a first-past-the-post-system. The members serve for five-year terms. Chief of the state is the President. He is elected by an electoral college consisting of elected members of both houses of Parliament and the legislatures of the states for a five-year term. Chief of the government is the Prime Minister. He is chosen by the members of Parliament (Lok Sabha) after the legislative elections. The cabinet is appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

The political constellation of India differs from the political constellation in Western democracies. Political parties in India have been dominated mainly by political dynasties or interest groups. Inner party democracy is widely uncommon. The construction of and development towards a relatively weak state in India is combined with a highly competitive political party system. Elections are decided by the first-past the post system. Decisive for the success of a party in this system is just the number of votes a candidate receives in a district in comparison to his or her competitors. Only a few parties are represented in all India. Most parties represent individual groups of the society or have just a regional basis. In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, 230 parties were recognized, of that were six national parties and fifty-one state parties. To win elections and be successful in such a system is just possible if a party is able to mobilize masses

of people. In the case of India, this often means consolidating and mobilizing groupings along cultural, ethnic or linguistic lines. Party identity is therefore often a means to mobilize voters and a precondition for party success in elections on the state level.⁸ As a result, the Lok Sabha consists of over forty parties and is highly fragmented. The emphasis of party identity along fault lines of society in combination with India's federal system has led to a diversification of the political party system in India and strengthens the division of society.⁹ Or, according to Sridharan and Varshney, "Together, the diversity and institutional features of the polity have created an increasingly plural-but not sharply polarized-party system at the national level. They have also led to a wide and often confusing array of political parties."¹⁰

Several reasons were supportive of this trend towards regionalism. Besides the decline of the Congress and the rising self-consciousness of marginalized groups, the economic reforms of 1991 led to a sustainable rise in the multiparty system in India. In principle, they affected the power distribution between the center and the states in India by reducing the role of the national government in the economy. Therefore, industrial development and the shift of responsibility to the individual states marked a major shift in Indian federalism.¹¹ The center lost power and the periphery gained power.

This fragmentation in combination with a trend towards regionalism has led to the fact that most parties do not focus on national interests. Rather, their emphasis lies on representation of regional, sectoral or group interests. To gain political power in the states, group identities become more important than a national identity. Therefore, domestic issues in India are predominant. Under these circumstances, forming a stable government by building a majority coalition is very difficult. Parties in India, which wanted to have a real chance in power participation had to win the support of different social groups, make compromises, and build coalitions. State politics became more important for political parties. Political parties focus more on the situation of the

⁸ Lawrence Sáez, *Federalism without a Center: The Impact of Political and Economic Reform on India's Federal System* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 43-70

⁹ Chhibber and Kollman, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) p. 199-208.

¹⁰ E. Sridharan and Ashutosh Varshney, "Toward Moderate Pluralism: Political Parties in India" In *Political Parties and Democracy*, eds. Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 207.

¹¹ Chhibber and Kollman, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 139

individual state in order to participate in power. Small parties fill key positions in single states by establishing strong regional voter bases. Major parties which contest nationwide have to adjust their behavior according to the public opinion of individual states in order to gain votes in the various states. Moreover, they are often dependent on smaller coalition partners in order to gain power in a state or to participate in power over a state.¹²

The discussed development of India's democracy and its party system shows the increasing difficulties in building social consensus and forming a stable government on the national level. But, according to Gowda, the effects of fragmentation have not been only negative. "This fragmentation of the party system from Congress dominance to multiparty coalition governments in India's regionalized and 'ethnicized' party system has not undermined the basic power-sharing character of the system, and has thus helped to consolidate democracy."¹³ Today, power sharing and the bargaining process for political goals is not only an internal matter of a single party but part of public discourse between different political parties.

However, India's democracy shows some flaws when transferring democratic processes into political practice. Kohli mentions that "Personal rule has replaced party rule at all levels – national, state, and district. Below the rulers, the entrenched civil and police services have been politicized."¹⁴ This judgment of the year 1990 is still true today. Political practice in India is often dominated by a patronage system and populism. Coalitions were not formed along the ideological orientation of political parties, but by the promise of advantages and special incentives. Political decisions often followed the interests of some influential groups but not the necessities of the majority of the population or of the nation-state.

Evolution of the BJP as a Political Party

The rise of the BJP as the major force in Indian electoral politics has been mostly recognized to its Hindu nationalist plank. Although Hindu nationalism is an important part of the rise of the BJP, it is not the entire story. If Hindu nationalism was the only attraction for the electorate, they had another sound choice—Congress.

¹² Sridharan and Varshney, *Toward Moderate Pluralism: Political Parties in India*, 206-237.

¹³ Gowda and Sridharan, *Parties and the Party System, 1947-2006*, p. 21.

¹⁴ Kohli, Atul. "Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability", p. 3.

Although Congress is frankly secular in its policy announcements, it is, and has been, nevertheless a Hindu nationalist party in its own right, even though more modest than the BJS and the BJP. Congress, especially after Indira Gandhi also played the Hindu Card in times of need. It is well known that Congress policy announcements themselves are filled with coded messages targeted towards the Hindu electorate. The key question at this stage is to ask what influenced the Hindu electorate to increasingly vote for the BJP. Although there is no single foundation for this phenomenon, there are noticeable trends and developments that shed further light as to why the BJP was able to gather support in the way it did.

With India's independence in 1947, the Hindu nationalist movement was given an electoral cover by the formation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), BJP's predecessor. The BJS advocated the ideal of One Country, One Culture, and One Nation. Electorally the BJS was largely overshadowed by Congress from the 1950s to the early 1970s. What made Congress so powerful a party is its ability to control the central government supporting secularism and its control over local level politics. Incumbency provided Congress a powerful means of limiting the rise of communalism.

While it is tempting to attribute the rise of the BJP and other right-wing Hindu nationalist political parties to a shift in public opinion, or some "transformation of the social structure" (Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*) in India, the rapid success of the BJP and its allied factions can only be explained according to their strategies in terms of mobilizing the public to their cause and the reasons that society was receptive to this. Joseph D. DiSilvio stated "I have found three major factors that have served as the fuel for this unexpected and dynamic change from Congress to BJP dominance. The BJP's success, rather than simply a result of a shift in public opinion toward religious nationalism or right-wing politics, has been mostly a result of its ability to accommodate and adapt to society through strategic alliances with other political parties, exploitation of corruption and weaknesses in the Congress party, and programs aimed at social welfare."¹⁵

The rise of the BJP starting in the 1980s is seen as one of the most incisive factor in Indian politics.

¹⁵ Joseph D. DiSilvio, "Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in India", *The Orator*, August 2015, p. 18.

It can be explained by various aspects. Among others there is the collapse of the hegemony of the Nehruvian Consensus taking place. Because Nehru's middle way between capitalism and socialism had not lead to a wider development in India, there was a deep dissatisfaction in the population about the failed promises of modernization and an ideological confusion attending on this failure. The BJP could benefit from this political and ideological vacuum and place itself as serious alternative to Congress. This was supported by the historic decline of the Congress, which was constantly challenged with accusations of corruption. In times of socio-economic change and ambiguity, the concept of Hindu unity worked as social stabilization. Or as it Aijaz Ahmad in his work "On Communalism and Globalization" articulates in a more polemic way: "an aggressive kind of rightist nationalism [...] takes advantage from the misery of the masses."¹⁶ (Ahmad 2002) But especially the middle classes that witnessed the economic success of other Asian countries, felt left behind and switched support from Congress to the BJP.

Moreover, there were other decisive developments that encouraged the "Saffron Wave" (Hansen 1999). In the 1980s the government employed land reforms that allowed previous bounded peasant to own land and upsurge economically. Besides, the Mandal Commission was established, which guaranteed reservations for Other Backward Castes (OBC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in governments and public institutions. These developments lead to a feeling of threat to their social status in the predominantly Hindu urban middle classes. As a consequence, Hindu nationalist thinking around themes of the endangered nation became attractive. Stories about competition over jobs and education because of Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh fell on fertile ground. However, in the beginning of the 1980s, the BJP tried to keep track of the integration into the center of society by rejecting a radical Hindu nationalist program. To reach wider segments of society, the BJP accepted first detachments between the party and the RSS. Yet, at the same time Congress politicians used a language acknowledged from the Sangh Parivar and therefore contributed to a "communalization" of Indian politics.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ahmad, Aijaz. "On Communalism and Globalization. Offensives of the Far Right", New Delhi, 2002, p. 23.

¹⁷ Hansen, Thomas Blom. "The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India." Princeton, 1999, p. 140.

For the BJP, the, ‘moderate’ did not prove successful on the ballot box. In the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress won a great majority and the BJP received only 8% of the votes. This poll devastation caused a radical reshuffle of the party towards more rigorous communal politics.

L.K. Advani was elected as party president in the repercussion of the elections and the RSS took over more control again. Consequently, a more “purist” stance as defender of the “Hindu society”, in addition with more populist and anti-Muslim politics, was taken up. A central element in the re-orientated program of the BJP was the Ayodhya campaign. The insistence on building the temple of Ram on his assumed birthplace became part of the official ideological inventory of the BJP from 1989. The Babri mosque in Ayodhya was claimed as a religious Hindu place already since independence. In the course of the, ‘radicalization’ of the party, the issue was pushed forward. In 1990, BJP’s president Advani started the, ‘RathYatra’, a rally through the whole country to agitate for support for the Ayodhya campaign and to call anti-Muslim sentiments in the society. The BJP election manifesto from 1991 comprised the lines: “It [the BJP] seeks the restoration of Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya only by way of a symbolic righting of historic wrongs.”¹⁸ The Ayodhya campaign can not only be seen as “the most radical phase in the party’s evolution in terms of ideological harshness, but also its most militant phase.” Dr. Sebastian Schwecke, a scholar on Indian history states in his work “New Cultural Identitarian Political Movements in Developing Societies: the Bharatiya Janata Party” from 2011, that the campaign helped the BJP to overcome the dilemma, which it faced due to the Mandal report. Traditionally a party with an upper-class Brahmin constituency, the upsurge of OBC’s and Dalits as a political voice, created a challenge for the BJP. Since no political party in India could refuse Mandalism without disadvantages, the Ayodhya campaign and anti-Muslim distress also served as a policy of disruption. The history of Hindus as victims of injustice in their country was told.

Muslims were blamed for destabilization, job snatching and exploitation of “goodhearted Hindus”. (cf. Schwecke 2011, p. 81 and Hansen 1999, p. 159) To make

¹⁸ Schwecke, Sebastian. “New cultural identitarian political movements in developing societies: the Bharatiya Janata Party”, London 2011, p. 81.

a monster out of the Muslim community supposed to facilitate receiving votes from all classes and castes including the lower ones. Hence, the BJP by the end of the 1980s links Mandalism and Ayodhya (Mandal and Kamandal), but also the rise of the middle class, rent scarcity and liberalization within the bounds of a radical Hindu nationalist ideology. This radicalization of the BJP is conveyed by large-scale communal violence throughout most of India culminating in the destruction of the Babri mosque in 1992. The mosque was eventually entirely demolished by large crowd of around 150,000 people without protection from the BJP state government.

The impact of the Ayodhya campaign and the Babri mosque devastation can be evaluated in different ways. On the one hand, the campaign proved successful in electoral terms. The BJP could gain the support of millions of Hindus and win the elections of the 1993's Delhi Assembly and the 1995's Gujarat and Maharashtra state elections. The incident had created a feeling of strength and self-confidence amongst broad sections of the Hindus and "these fragments of Hindu nationalist discourse gained enormous popularity and ubiquity". (Hansen 1999, p. 184) On the other hand, some of the party members were stunned by the magnitude of the violence. And while the VHP was pushing forward the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, a dialogue about the violent actions emerged within the BJP. In contrast to the hardliners in the RSS and the VHP, BJP leaders compromised on a rather, "moderate" way. They agreed on a strategic reorientation which included a new line of divergence of issues, e.g. to promote OBC's, Dalits and Tribals concerns. Therewith, the BJP climbed down its dependence on religious symbolism and a "normalization" of the party took place after 1993. (cf. Schwecke 2011, p. 82f. and Hansen 1999, p. 198) The reorganization of the party towards a moderate orientation proved successful on in electoral terms. In the 1996 elections the BJP became the party with the most seats in the Lok Sabha. Yet, other parties did not want to form a coalition with the Hindu party. But in 1998, the BJP could overcome its isolation (political untouchability) in the political constellation and joined the government of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The Hindu nationalists' party also won the 1999 elections and stayed in government within the NDA until 2004. The consolidation of the BJP in the political mainstream was possible through the assertion of the liberal wing within the party around prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee vis-à-vis the traditional wing around L.K. Advani. The BJP-liberals encouraged liberalization of the economy, reconciliation of the religious communities

and positive relation with the South Asian neighbor states. (cf. Skoda 2005, p. 182) Hence, the 1999 election and following years in government can be seen as consolidation of the Hindu right and a, 'normalization' of the BJP. "The, party with a difference" was gradually perceived to be less different from other political parties, especially the INC." (Schwecke 2011, p. 88)

However, the turn towards moderation was never overt in the Sangh Parivar and the BJP leaders always wavered between centrist politics and commitment to Hindu nationalist ideology. The Gujarat pogrom in 2002 can be seen against this background. The inter-communal riots took place in the federal state Gujarat until May 2002 and led to more than 1,000 deaths. The BJP is claimed to not interfere sufficiently to prevent an escalation of the violence. Furthermore, the party did not show any adequate efforts to pursue the culprits and resisted demands for the resignation of Narendra Modi and his government. Although the Gujarat violence showed, that the radical wing in the BJP and the Sangh Parivar has not vanished over time and is able to employ certain pressure on the modest elements of the party, it can be constituted, that it was incompetent of broadly challenging the moderate's dominance in the party. After 2002, the party advanced the contradictory agendas by concentrating on development issues, which were predominant in the 2004 election race. (cf. Schwecke 2011, p. 95f.) In this 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP veteran a surprising defeat. In the election campaign, the BJP prided itself on its achievements in development policy. It celebrated the rates of economic growth achieved in the last incumbency with a campaign called "Shining India". This slogan was supposed to address the "new middle class". But rural India with its 750 Million people and the lower castes, living in poverty, could absolutely not identify with this campaign. Because also the religious minorities were worried after the Gujarat pogroms, these factors lead to a decisive loss of votes. In 2009, Congress repeated it success in the general elections and got the mandate to govern again. In short, we can say that the period of 2004-2014 was the 'political eclipse' for the BJP.

The rise of the BJP began at the end of the 1980s. It developed from an ideological-fundamentalist Hindutva bloc, to a major party with integrative character and elements of Hinduism. The lapse of the Ayodhya campaign led to a reorganization of the party including the assertion of the moderate wing with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as central

figure. The BJP integrated into the political mainstream. Its ‘normalization’ made it possible to form coalitions and enabled the BJP’s rise as governing party from 1998 to 2004. The 2004 defeat came shocking for the BJP leaders. However, it was no fundamental weakening of the Hindu nationalists. The BJP has developed to a nationwide operating major party and the most serious opponent to Indian National Congress.

Understanding the Results of 2014 General Elections

The 16th Lok Sabha elections have made history for more than one reason. For the first time since 1984, a single party won an absolute majority and for the first time in the Indian history, this party was not the Congress but the BJP (with 282 seats). However, for the first time (again!), this party won an absolute majority with less than 40 per cent of the valid votes—and in fact much less than that: 31 per cent. This result comes from the fact that the BJP’s strongholds were all concentrated in the north and the west of India.

India’s sixteenth general election was remarkable for a number of reasons. At nearly 67 percent, voter turnout was the highest ever, and first-time voters, of whom there were more than 100 million, turned out at an even higher rate. The urban middle class, long disenchanted with democracy, returned to vote in substantial numbers. More than anything, however, it was the massive victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi that made the latest elections truly distinctive. For most of India’s post-independence history, the Indian National Congress (INC or Congress party) has dominated national politics. With the partial exception of 1977, no single party other than Congress has ever won a majority of seats. The BJP’s 2014 electoral performance has changed all that. The BJP on its own now controls 51.7 percent of seats in the 545-seat Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament. Congress won a mere 19.3 percent of the national vote, dipping below 20 percent for the first time ever. It now controls only 44 seats (8.1 percent) in the Lok Sabha. It has been virtually wiped out across northern and western India, where the BJP and its alliance partners performed spectacularly well and which account for roughly 60 percent of all seats. Although the BJP holds a majority of seats on its own, it has maintained its campaign coalition, the National Democratic Alliance, after the elections. For all practical purposes, however, it is a BJP government. If necessary, the party can abandon its alliance partners and yet the

government can last its full term. Although non-Congress political hegemony has long existed in several states, never before has a party other than the Congress exercised such dominance in Delhi.

Yet in 2014, the BJP's vote share exceeded that of the Congress for every key social group, except for Muslims. Although the BJP and its allies won an unprecedented share of the upper-caste vote—roughly 54 percent to the Congress party's 12 percent—what was more surprising was the BJP's performance among groups at the lower rungs of the social ladder. The BJP won 24 percent of the Dalit vote as opposed to the Congress's 18.5 percent; 37.5 percent of the Scheduled Tribes' vote versus the Congress's 28.3 percent; and 33.6 percent of the middle-caste vote to the Congress's 15.1 percent. The BJP also outperformed the Congress among rich voters, middle-class voters, and both urban and rural voters.

Thus, the BJP defied most articles of conventional political wisdom in these elections, with one major exception. The party simply could not win any significant support from India's 170 million Muslims. Although the BJP won a larger share (8.5 percent) of the Muslim vote

in 2014 than in 2009 (4 percent), 91.5 percent of Muslims remained unwilling to put their faith in Modi or the BJP to lead the country. The Congress, by contrast, won almost 38 percent of the Muslim vote. Perhaps one of the biggest questions resulting from this election is how the relationship between the BJP and the Muslim community will evolve. Other minorities, including Christians, view the BJP with suspicion and fear as well. Yet no inter-communal relationship in India is as fraught as that between Hindus and Muslims. That cleavage is a master narrative of Indian politics.

By contrast, the BJP scored remarkably in areas of northern and western India where it was already strong. It won 190 of the 225 seats of the Hindi belt: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Jharkhand—that is 84 per cent of the seats. That figure increases to 86 per cent if one adds Gujarat. It decreases to 80 per cent if one adds Maharashtra. But if one includes the performance of its allies—including Apna Dal (2 seats in UP), Lok Janshakti Party (6 seats in Bihar) and the Shiv Sena (18 seats in Maharashtra)—the BJP-led coalition bagged 86 per cent of the seats in these 11 states. If the BJP obtained 31 per cent of the vote share nationally, it conquered the Hindi belt states (and Gujarat) with 45 per cent of the average vote share. In Uttar Pradesh it surpasses in vote share its three opponents combined (Congress, BSP and SP) in 22 constituencies and won an unprecedented 71

seats, out of 80 – which means that 25 per cent of its Lok Sabha MPs came from this state.

However, the men who make history are usually the product of their time. They meet more or less latent expectations of society. Certainly, the multi-faceted personality of Narendra Modi was a major factor of the BJP success, but the transformations, frustrations and aspirations of India after years of high rates of economic growth (and a sudden slowdown) have to be analyzed too.

Further, my intention is to address a puzzle that is the formation of one-party majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system. The BJP has entered into pre-electoral alliances with its partners and fought elections as NDA. The theoretical standpoint is that one party majority can be formed either in a one-party dominant system or in a two-party system but not in a fragmented and regionalized multi-party coalition system. But it has happened in India and what we have witnessed that the BJP got the full majority on its own. So, this is a puzzle. I think it is very important to the consistently investigation of the causes of the rise of BJP and how this party manage to form the majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system at national level?

The denationalization of the Indian multilevel party system is related to the electoral demise of the Congress Party and the incompetence of an alternative polity-wide party to assume its place (party system nationalization expresses the degree to which a party system is territorially integrated). After the 1980s, however, the BJP emerged as a new ‘national political force’ to be reckoned with, although its territorial spread of the vote was lower than that for the rival Congress Party. The 2014 general election result is remarkable insofar as it produced only the second election result in which the BJP’s electoral support was spread more evenly than the Congress Party’s. This had happened only once before (in the 1998 general election). At the same time the more even geographic spread of the BJP replicates a long-term trend. A decision to contest more seats in general and state elections since 1991 facilitated the party to break out of its initial strongholds in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Coupled with its ‘Mandir’ mobilization politics, the BJP established (temporary) strongholds in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh, among others. Furthermore, the inability of the BJP to craft a majority on its own after the 1996 general election contributed to the party’s realization that it could not govern the centre without programmatic (toning

down its Hindutva agenda, for instance) and strategic adjustments (for example, by forging seat-sharing or coalition alliances with a range of regional parties across India ahead of and following these elections). Hence, in the 1998 general elections, the BJP alliance consisted of 13 pre-election and 10 post-election allies (parties). Combined, the BJP strengthened its influence in south and east India, areas that had been mostly outside its reach in the 1996 elections (Sridharan 2010: 125). In 1999 (following early elections after the withdrawal of the AIADMK, the BJP entered the federal elections as a coalition (National Democratic Alliance) consisting of 20 pre-election allies and a common national platform. Congress suffered two further Lok Sabha election defeats (1998, 1999) before it recognized the same difficulty (Yadav and Palshikar 2009). Although in time state parties have swapped costly pre-election seat-sharing arrangements for more profitable post-coalition deals, it is striking that in the build-up to the 2014 general elections, 22 small or state-based parties entered seat-sharing arrangements with the BJP, against only 10 with Congress (Sridharan 2014: 31). This not only accelerated the Congress Party's electoral losses, but it also made Congress support more territorially concentrated – confined to those states where the party could still win (more or less) on its own.

Further, my intention is to address a puzzle that is the formation of one-party majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system. The BJP has entered into pre-electoral alliances with its partners and fought elections as NDA. The theoretical standpoint is that one party majority can be formed either in a one-party dominant system or in a two-party system but not in a fragmented and regionalized multi-party coalition system. But it has happened in India and what we have witnessed that the BJP got the full majority on its own. So, this is a puzzle. I think it is very important to the consistently investigation of the causes of the rise of the BJP and how this party manage to form the majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system at national level? Further, I will put emphasis on how BJP is expanding itself from its traditional strongholds i.e. Hindi-heartland (Cow-belt) to Southern, Eastern and North-Eastern part of India. Moreover, BJP came to power on the promise of development and governance, but now promoting polarisation based on its militant Hindu nationalist agenda. The party is gradually drifting the attention of voters towards more sustainable political tool (imaginary feeling of nationalism, Hinduism). Polarization was not the cause of BJP's coming to power, but is a consequence of its being in power (to polarize the society

based on certain emotive ideas (based on nation, race or religion) is an integral feature of any right wing party such as BJP.

Rise of BJP as New Congress?

The formation and functioning of the majority party under BJP, after 2014 General election, where pre-election coalition partners have no voice at all. Although the BJP holds a majority of seats on its own, it has maintained its campaign coalition, the National Democratic Alliance, after the elections. Some alliance members even gained prominent positions in Modi's cabinet. For all practical purposes, however, it is a BJP government. If necessary, the party can abandon its alliance partners and yet the government can last its full term.

At present the party system is once again in a state of flux. The party is functioning more like a dominant party, rather than a leading party in the coalition (NDA). It is functioning in a way the Congress party functioned during the Indira era and expanded itself apart from its traditional stronghold i.e., Hindi-heartland. That's why it looks like the rise of BJP as new Congress. So nothing can be said regarding the emerging nature of party system in India based on the developments in the past 3 years only (2014-17). The 2019 verdict and the assembly elections till then will clarify whether or not we are really heading towards another era of one-party dominance.

“Rise of BJP as New Congress?” This is a puzzle. The demise of the Congress party's dominance vacated a political as well as an ideological space. However, no single party could occupy that space till 2014. The sudden (and unexpected) rise of BJP initially led some observers to wonder whether the BJP, which has indeed occupied the political space (being the majority party) will occupy the ideological space as well. This assumption was based on the moderate tone the BJP had assumed while leading the NDA coalition during 1999-2004.

However, the anecdotal evidence since 2014 shows that the BJP seeks to create Congress style dominance, not via centrist, all-inclusive politics, but via less inclusive, rightist (Hindu nationalist) politics. Thus the answer would be yes and no. Yes, because of the two reasons: (a) the BJP has risen as a dominant party, a status enjoyed by the Congress till 1989 (b) The PM Modi is replicating the style of Indira Gandhi, especially

installing the Chief Ministers from above. No, because, it does not seek to be an all-inclusive party. Nehru's narrative of Modern India (secular developmentalism-based on the mixed economy) carried forward to some extent by Indira lost appeal by the end of the 1980s. There was no alternative "grand narrative" in the 1990s which could inspire people to vote for one party and one leader (like voters did during Nehru—Indira era). Modi invented a new narrative of developmentalism which struck a chord with people. So far the party has maintained its winning streak through assembly and municipal elections (except one setback in Bihar).

So the dominance of the BJP has the same "form" as that of the Congress party during its dominance, however the "substance" of this dominance is poles apart.

Review of Literature

A turning point in Indian politics is the dramatic rise of the BJP to the national political scene. Expectedly, the efforts made by the BJP to occupy the political center-stage caused a lot of academic interest, as a result of which, a surplus of literature dealing with the ideology, social base, leadership, organization, electoral performance of the BJP saw the light of the day. In order to have a clear understanding on the very topic, it is highly essential to make an in-depth analysis of 'inception, evolution, rise and rise, rise and fall and resurgence of the BJP in Indian electoral politics.

The book "Electoral Politics in India: The Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party", Taylor and Francis Groups, Routledge, (February 2017) edited by Suhas Palshikar, Sanjay Kumar, Sanjay Lodha, gives a scholarly idea on the resurgence of the BJP. The contributors of the book are prominent political scientist in their own field. The general elections held in 2014 India to elect the 16th Lok Sabha brought in dramatic results. This important volume explain not only the amazing victory of the BJP but also the equally surprising debacle of the Congress party. It examines not why BJP won and the Congress lost, but why the scale of BJP's victory and that of Congress's defeat was so very different from the results in the years 2004 and 2009. The volume presents an in-depth analysis of electoral results, state-wise studies, the factors leading up to these outcomes, and the road India has travelled since then. The book explains the resurgence of BJP is explained by the Charismatic leadership in the form of Narendra Modi.

C. P. Bhambhri's book, "Bharatiya Janata Party: Periphery to Centre" critically deals with the ideology, organizational structure, the party in government, strategies,

Partha Ghosh in his book “BJP and the evolution of Hindu Nationalism: periphery to center” deals with the historical background of the BJP, its rise to power, its ideology and political program, foreign and economic policy. The author states the hope that the future of India does not rest with BJP’s Hindutva or on secularism as protected in our constitution but it lies in the hands of people. So long as plurality is there, nobody can harm the Indian society.

Achin Vanaik, in his book, “Communalism Contested: Religion, Modernity and Secularization” gives an analysis of the dramatic emergence of Hindu communalism and the growing skepticism about the importance of the secularism and secularization. Vanaik advocates in his book that a powerful, organized Left and Women’s movement together can only ensure secularism and secularization.

Achin Vanaik, in an article entitled, “Communalization of the Indian Polity” argues critically how the BJP attempted to fill the space left by the Congress through communal politics. Professor Vanaik also highlights the dangers the communal politics poses to the plural democracy in India.

Jayal and Mehta, discuss that Indian politics is shaped by the long term structural features of the society. The social ladders, economic prospects and historical legacies influenced the nature and character of the democracy. The Indian political system did well in various fields particularly voter turnout, turnover of incumbents, empowering new groups, maintaining a set of liberal freedom, civilian control over armed forces and political contestation etc. The volume covers widespread ranging issues from elections to economic reforms, politics to redistribution and social justice, coalition politics to judicial activism and foreign policy. In nutshell, the book contains thirty eight essays contributed by leading political scientist, namely Partha Chatterjee, Atul Kohli, James Manor, John Harrison, Neera Chandhoke and Rob Jenkins etc. These articles are broadly divided into eight parts. The first part devoted to the institutional setting, second deals with social cleavages; identity and politics, third section covers political processes, fourth concerned with ideological contestation in Indian politics, and so on. The two essays-“The Party System” and “Political Parties” analyzed by E. Sridharan and Zoya Hasan, respectively.

Ashutosh Varshney, expresses views on Indian polity, which cover wide range of themes such as federalism, pressure groups, democratization, caste, identity politics, party system and so on. The author brings together the ideas of prominent scholars like Gabriel A. Almond, Lucian W. Pye, James Manor, Kanchan Chandra and Steven I.

Wilkinson etc. The volume is divided into three parts. First part, deals with party politics and democracy. The second covers ethnic politics and diversity with reference to leading dalit/ scheduled caste party of India, particularly the BSP. The last section devoted to political economy.

Baldev Raj Nayar in his article “BJP’s Economic Nationalism in Theory and Practice,” demonstrates that the BJP could not afford to be ideologically pure and did not force an ideologically motivated economic policy on its coalition partners. According to Nayar, the BJP embraced pragmatist approach towards economic policy rather than strict to ‘swadeshi’. More or less, the Congress Party and the BJP after 1991, mostly agreed on liberalization. The papers in the book pay rich acknowledgment to and build upon Weiner’s insight, ideas and arguments about Indian politics.

L.K. Advani in his autobiography, describes various events such as partition of India, Emergency, fall of Janata government and inception and evolution of BJP, problems of Punjab and Kashmir, Ayodhya movement and ‘Rath Yatra’, Kargil war, Gujarat riots, cross-border terrorism, the BJP’s rise to power and its defeat in 2004 polls as well as chaos in party and contentious remark of Advani on Mohammed Ali Jinnah at Jinnah’s Mausoleum in Karachi etc., from childhood to writing of the book. L.K. Advani categorizes his life journey into five broad phases from 1927 to 2007. The book was a calculated effort in pursuit of Advani’s desperate ambition to obtain an image.

Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, in their book “The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India”, describe the origin and growth of Hindu nationalist, BJP, which emerged as the largest party in national elections of 1996. The dynamics of Indian politics, in general and party system in particular, pointed out that the BJP possibly reached its saturation point in the northern and western states in the late 1990’ and to expand further, in geographical terms, party needs more alliances. The party’s success in Uttar Pradesh, pushed it to repeat the Lucknow tactic in Delhi. It tried to engineer defections, first in Gujarat and then at the Centre. The bid to form Vajpayee led NDA government, by accepting anyone’s support, was a part of a rigorous effort to break the barrier of unacceptability. The shift proposed the BJP’s readiness to compromise the principles, which it pretended to be the very embodiment of and to look for short-cuts to power. The book covers various papers, which analyze from different viewpoints, how it dealt with restraints and compulsions, in different states. In addition, the BJP’s stand on the liberalization policy, the obvious contradictions

between the 'rhetoric' 'swadeshi', and rather pragmatic governance of the economy, also discussed by the scholars.

Partha S. Ghosh in his book "BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism, From Periphery to Centre", studies BJP, which not only brought to the fore, a new idiom of Indian politics, based on the concept of 'Hindutva' (Hinduness), but also challenged, the very idea of secularism. The remarkable rise of the BJP, and corresponding growth of Hindu political resurgence, was variously branded as Hindu fundamentalism, Hindu revivalism and Hindu nationalism. Since religion and communalism was used by the BJP to mobilize its support, it would be useful, if they are introduced conceptually and historically, as well as from, perspectives of recent international experience. Ghosh tries to assess party's future and also to vertically analyze its ideological foundation and intellectual depth.

Ghosh's "The Congress and the BJP: Struggle for the Heartland", opines that, whosoever, controls the Hindi heartland, also known as cow belt, controls the government at the Centre. It constitutes nine Hindi speaking states, namely Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan. The Hindu majority or Hindu factor, influences the thrust of national politics. The essay is based on wide-ranging empirical data, historical facts and electoral performance. Ghosh evaluates the relative strengths and weaknesses of both the Congress and the BJP, to dominate the politically important region, during the last five decades. The scholar finds out that decline of the Congress was attributable to the fact, that this balance was shattered. The BJP formed a position for itself in the heartland, largely at the cost of the Congress and reimburse, through the NDA partners. Nonetheless, the larger question is whether the heartland would remain the epic center of power or not. The way technology is moving in other parts of India, most notably, the south and the west, are taking advantage of it.

In their book, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon H. Pammett, "Dynasties and Interludes: Past and Present in Canadian Electoral Politics", (Paperback – August 2016, Second Edition) has analyzed why political parties win elections. This edition includes an analysis of the 2011 and 2015 federal elections as well as an in-depth discussion of the "Harper Dynasty." This book delivers an extensive and exceptional overview of elections and voting in Canada from Confederation to recent flood of minority government. Its prime argument is that the Canadian political landscape has comprised of long period of hegemony of a single party and/or leader (dynasties), interrupted by

short, sharp disruptions brought about by the sudden rise of the new parties, leaders, or social movement (interludes). Change in the configuration of the electorate and in the technology and professionalization of election campaigns are also examined in this book, both to provide a better understanding of key turning points in Canadian history and a deeper interpretation of present day electoral politics. Rightly shows that after one or two elections we can't be sure we're experiencing a dynasty or trend.

In his article, Milan Vaishnav, "Understanding the Indian Voter", (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2015) states that the 2014 election presents a mixed picture. Economic factors played an unusually large role in shaping voting behavior of Indian electorate. Traditional patterns of caste-based voting were much less evident, and regional parties, often thought to be gaining ground, suffered a setback. A slightly deeper look, however, reveals that these changes were not necessarily unique to the 2014 general election. There is evidence to suggest that many of these trends have been percolating beneath the surface for some time. What the 2014 election has done is to bring these trends to the fore of public consciousness. On other dimensions, 2014 elections signaled more continuity than change. Further he reveals myths about Indian voters on the basis of Lok Foundation findings:

- Good economics does not mean good politics
- Vote your caste, not cast your vote
- Regional parties are surging
- Voters are fed up with dynasties
- Lack of information breeds criminality
- Muslim voters vote differently

Pradeep K. Chibber and Susan L. Ostermann in their article "The BJP's Fragile Mandate: Modi and Vote Mobilizers in the 2014 General Elections", (Studies in Indian Politics, 2014 CSDS, Sage Publications) gives a very beautiful analysis of the concept "Vote Mobilizers". Vote mobilizers, a group of individuals who keenly help a campaign but who are often neither party members nor partisans, were important to BJP's 2014 victory. Vote mobilizers were drawn to the BJP in greater numbers than to other parties by the BJP's leader Narendra Modi; they were then to work by the party to motivate other voters, particularly in rural areas. But vote mobilizers, because they were motivated to support the BJP by Modi, because they do not have a long-standing organizational connection with the BJP, and because they are interested in aligning

with the winning party, are a source of future instability for the party. We still have little understanding of why or how Modi was able to draw so many vote mobilizers into active participation in the BJP's 2014 campaign. It may have been ideology, authenticity or any number of other factors, including the fact that Modi and BJP were challengers and not incumbents.

Ashutosh Varshney in his article "Hindu Nationalism in Power?", *Journal of Democracy*, October 2014, makes argument that though the BJP have won 2014 elections unprecedentedly but the BJP could not manage to win a large chunk of votes in minorities. The party simply could not win any significant support from India's 170 million Muslims. Other minorities, including Christians, view the BJP with suspicion and fear as well.

Joseph D. DiSilvio mentioned in his article, "Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in India" (*The Orator*, August 2015) that "I have found three major factors that have served as the fuel for this unexpected and dynamic change from Congress to BJP dominance. The BJP's success, rather than simply a result of a shift in public opinion toward religious nationalism or right-wing politics, has been mostly a result of its ability to accommodate and adapt to society through strategic alliances with other political parties, exploitation of corruption and weaknesses in the Congress party, and programs aimed at social welfare."

Research Question(s)

- What accounts for BJP's success in forming majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system?
- How do we understand the dynamics of party system in India in the light of 2014 election results?

Hypothesis

- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the rise of charismatic leadership in BJP in the form of Narendra Modi. Modi filled the leadership vacuum or leadership crisis in this election.
- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the decline of the Congress party. It was an anti-Congress voting.
- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the decline of State Parties in national elections. Voters preferred to vote for BJP rather than State Parties in this election.
- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the polarization of Indian electoral politics based on Hindu Nationalism.
- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the rise of new demand, especially rapid economic development, which BJP promised to deliver. 2014 general elections fought in the name of ‘Development’.
- A stable “two-national alliance system” or a “binodal system” has established in India.

Methodology

I use case study method to present the case of BJP rising to power in the era of coalitions. This case study would involve the interpretive techniques to analytically disclose why, how or by what means political parties do what they do while showing how this knowledge can be used to understand observable election outcomes.

My data includes qualitative as well as quantitative data. As qualitative data I use anecdotes and as quantitative data I use election results of various national and assembly elections spanning from 1991 to 2014. The election data will be obtained from the CSDS and Election Commission website.

Since my data includes qualitative as well as quantitative data, I will use mixed method approach that is qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. As a part of the qualitative analysis, I will analyze texts, especially commentaries and research-based writings of leading political scientists. As quantitative analysis, I will analyze the trends and fluctuations in the seat share and vote share of the BJP in a comparative context. (i.e., in comparison with the shares of the Congress—its key rival national party)

Tentative Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: BJP during the years of Congress System

Chapter 3: BJP reinvents itself: 1989-1996

Chapter 4: BJP tastes power: 1998-2004

Chapter 5: Eclipse of BJP: 2004-2014

Chapter 6: The puzzle of BJP's majority: 2014 elections

Chapter 7: Conclusion