Chapter 4

SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF EMERGING COALITIONAL AND ELECTORAL CONFIGURATION

The process of political formation is a complex process wherein multiple forces meet and coalesce, form and reform, diverge and digress, assert and articulate, relate and correlate, centralize and decentralize, all at the same time in the time and space of a modern nation-state. In the homogeneous societies of the West, where uniformities rather than multifarious identities, communities, social mores, religious and other assumptive and ascriptive practices are found, this is not an easy task. On the other hand, in the heterogeneous pluralized societies such as that of India where within one country one can find baffling co-existence of a plural universe, compendium of universal diversity at all levels finding manifestation in the most remarkable fashion, these encyclopaedic diversities and multivariate specificities of social, anthropomorphic, ethnic, racial heterogeneities have constructed a truly challenging verisimilitude where the process of political formation is difficult, to say the least. Competing identities are at loggerheads in the
process of creation of a base for political mobilization. In such locations we find alliances and coalitions at the social level operating assiduously for creating political space and articulation.

The political act of mobilization therefore, involves, in the Indian setting, the task of aggregating social alliances and groupings for knitting them together for providing numerical majorities in democratic parlance and transforming them into political power. The importance of social coalitions has to be understood in that it is a powerful magnifying glass that shows not only the social intent but also its economic and political gravitas or content. In India, various social formations, identity forms, regional and ethnic aggregations have mushroomed and these define, impinge on the process of political formation and identity articulation and thereby on the coalition politics, reflecting, in the process, the dynamism of pluralism of Indian society. 'The unfolding of social processes leading to definition and redefinition of social belonging, construction and contest of identity, assertion of deprived groups and communities, enlarging circle of politics and its changing social map define the major trends of the emerging political formation.'

A decennium of coalitional politics at the Centre has marked the resolute shift from the Congress hegemonic one party rule to the era of multi-party coalitions, to the assertion of ethno-religious identities, resurgence of newly empowered social groups and realignment and reconfiguration of castes and communities, and formation of multiple social enclaves.' This transformation, as we
have seen in the earlier chapter, has been the most remarkable political reality of our times, one which is the result as also the creator of a different form of political allegiance. In other words, coalitional politics has provided a schema whereby tolerance and accommodation is seen to take place in a multilingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious setting.

In this chapter we would like to see in depth the various overlays and underlining factors that form the social background to the various coalitional formats that have presented themselves in recent times. It is informed of the conviction that there is a close and inescapable link between social bases, electoral performance, regional configuration of political parties, nature of power and governance and state formation in India. It is also understood that these define at any given moment of time, and also get defined in return, as there is an inevitable close correspondence between them. We are witness to the important upsurge in Indian politics, that social constituencies are making vital political choices of their own, which are now being ‘exclusively determined by the identity imperatives and socioeconomic necessities of the concerned sociocultural groups’ and that various groups are weaving social coalitions on the basis of commonality and complementarities of their perceived interests and social position. Indeed, this aspect of political importance of social coalitions has been forcing political parties to relocate, define and rearrange their social base. One finds manifestation of this in the regionalization of the electoral process and party system. We can lay claim to the fact that our understanding of the dynamics of coalition politics would be lop-sided unless we trace the soil of
coalitions - and in the context of vexatious politics of India it means we have to closely follow the intricate nexus of caste and sub-caste, class religion and its power to translate into votes, the venal and corrupt ways of parties as they aggregate votes, the dalits and other seemingly nebulous but very powerful cleavages that operate.

I

SOCIAL PLURALISM

It is very significant that we understand what pluralism means. Generally speaking, we tend to believe that it is a civilisational category dealing with co-existence of multiplicity of different but not distinct cultures, caste groupings, religions which are also further differentiated on regional, ethnic existential realities. Scholars tend to agree broadly on these fundamentals, though they add significant dimensions to it. Furnivall for one feels that the description of a plural society is that where: “Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet but only in the market place, in buying and selling... There is a plural society, with different sections of the community being side by side, but separately within the same political unit. Even in the economic sphere there is a division of labour on racial lines.”

McLennan, giving a post-modernist

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perspective on it says, "Pluralism indicated amongst other things, a suitably humble and re-relativistic acceptance that there is a range of cultural values; opposition to all forms of cultural imperialism; release from the dead hands of Enlightenment scienticism and rationalism; fruitful methodological diversity; endorsement of different ways of knowing and of being; creativity and openness in theory; and embrace of a wide range of social interests and interest groups in the modern political scene, none of which are 'primary' in any demonstrable sense; affirmation of democracy as an end in itself; attention to the complexities of political allegiance; the sense that our social and political identities are now chosen rather than inherited; anti-utopian political horizons; enshrinement of the principle of 'equal but different'.'"

It is clear that the meaning of pluralism has not been uniform among scholars. Similarly, the concept of pluralism changes in changing contexts and societies as values change and existential modalities transform.

But it is true that "Pluralism in its basic meaning refers to the existence of multiplicity, of modes and methods, thoughts and ideas, culture and political forms, and plurality of identities. It is deconstructive of any form of monism and uniformity." It provides a schema whereby tolerance and accommodation can take place in a multilingual, multi-religious, multicultural, caste-plural setting. Consciously it tries to be non-homogeneous and non-hierarchical to magnify the

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democratic values of equality and liberty to all its constituents. It is a paramount condition for the sake of dissipating conflict and peace. Most importantly, it gives a certain dignity to the wide diversity and difference in the body politque. By so doing, it proffers social and political space for expression and vindication of multiple identities.

Democracy is possibly the best form of governance for a plural society. As Rasheeduddin Khan wrote, 'Democracy as a system sustains, and even promotes pluralism. And if democracy is federal, then pluralism not only flowers but also strikes deep roots in the political system.' Democracy is a very articulate and competitive model of political system. It provides the forum for different groups to such a degree that if when it is or if it is utilized properly a level playing field and political space can be granted to all. Federalism similarly is premised on the value of collective life and on the recognition of collective and individual identity.

If one looks at pluralism that exists in India, with the help of the perspectives on this concept as discussed here in this section, one seems to notice that India is a classic case of a pluralist democratic society, as it has constitutionally been ordained. However, the providing for constitutional provisions on pluralism doesn't automatically make for a veritable equable pluralism in our midst. The growth of coalitional politics as traced earlier is evidence to show that the

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benefits of the constitutional schema had not translated into reality and that innumerable pluralities, groups of differing and diverse people with conflicting interests and identities were unable to find opportunity and political space. As conveyed here pluralist democracy not only accords them the liberty to remain different but free, yet it inspires them to be participants in political consociationalism. In other words, real pluralism starts when the diversities and multiple identities find articulation in power sharing at the apex level, and the segmental realities (such as caste, religious exclusivism, linguistics, regionalism etc) of Indian society have been traversed and brought into the foci of political power and made equal participants in the power sharing process. The idea behind this is that the divergences, diversities being a part of the reality, they cannot be wished away, nor can such multiplicities be ironed out or uniformity ingrained in society by any means, including the power that the modern State has at its disposal. Nor is it desirable as differences reflect the strength and depth of its historical milieu, its cultural attainments etc. The next best alternative is that such social diversities should be reflected in political power formation or political formation in any State.

Why Pluralism? Why should one, in this age and day, harp on the ethos of pluralist democracy and conservation of multi-culturalism? Apart from the fact that our project of linking this to coalitional politics is our main motivation, there are some other reasons as well. All across the globe there has been an universal interest in inter-cultural and ethnic dialogues. A recrudescence of faith has been commensurate with
the increasing onslaughts of modernization, leading to the alienation from primordial loyalties of the past. Not merely that—a re-evaluation of the worth of cultural ties is being done on a massive scale today.

At the World Economic Summit at Davos in January 1999, Roman Herzog, the then President of Germany stated that he regarded the intensified dialogue among cultures as the most important thing to have occurred of late. According to him, "...every human being needs to have deep roots in his own history, culture and religion. A dialogue on values would help to increase confidence between nations, secure peace and should be regarded as a pre-condition for future policy." It is being also posited that the seeds of good democratic governance has to be found among the values of each culture and out of these elements democratic structures can be developed, almost everywhere. It is true that assertion of ethno-religious identities is a global phenomenon. "The hyphenated 'nation-state' has been seen and perceived as homogenizing, hegemonic and repressive construct. Minorities and subordinate groups have demanded greater 'recognition' and 'representation'. Identity assertion has (also) led to the redefinition of boundaries. This has also advanced the agenda of power sharing. The emerging reality of identity assertion and movements for autonomy has put formidable challenge to the professed model of 'nation-building' in plural societies...The Indian case is more problematic in this regard." These have

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6 Kumar, Suresh. "Identity Articulation and Emerging Political Formation in India" in A.Majeed _op. cit._ p.18.
relevance for India because, as seen from this perspective, India's claims to be a heterogeneous, multi-faceted polyglot society and provides perhaps the maximum scope for such a realization. But why is it that the democratic spirit-de-corps has not percolated, nor internalized in Indian society? Rather, the heterogeneity has manifested in a stratified society - a stratification that is found manifested at the political level also. The political power as we have known was in the hands of a couple of elite classes and very few political parties. No major national level political party gave representation to the manifold heterogeneities, though they have been claiming to and at best assuaging their ego for vote bank politics. Moreover and very significantly, another shortcoming of the Indian state is that despite a half century of existence and inspite of a plethora of measures undertaken ever since, the state has not been able to do away with disparities in the distribution of wealth, power, prestige among castes, classes, religious and linguistic segments. A certain degree of imbalance co-exists within reasonable parameters and emerges out of the process of competition in any regime where equality of opportunities are granted. (Even in the case where the state is bound by constitution to take care of the uplift of the Scheduled castes and tribes this has not been achieved) “However, when this imbalance is based on group affiliations it becomes illegitimate and contentious. In independent India, this imbalance has manifested in over and under representation in the bureaucracy, police force, armed forces and in prestigious occupations etc and has become problematic ... the democratic value of equality of opportunity is being violated by the Indian state according to some, through enunciation and
implementation of the policy of protective discrimination. This criticism is voiced especially with reference to bourgeois elements among SC and ST and OBC.\footnote{Oomen, T.K. "From Plural Society to Pluralism: Towards a Just and Humane Social Order in India" in A.P. Vijapur (ed.) Dimensions of Federal Nation building. N.Delhi: Manak Publishers (1998) p.11}

We can reasonably appreciate Barrington Moore’s suggestion that the balance of class power in India, given the weakness of the bourgeoisie and the persistence of the rural poverty of the peasantry was not at all conducive to participatory democracy in India especially since civil society (in the European sense of the term) can hardly be said to have existed. ‘Sudipta Kaviraj… has argued that because of the weakness of the bourgeoisie in India, it comes necessarily to depend on a state-bureaucratic agency to bring about social transformation. Transformation, in short, does not come about as a result of a process from within society, but is sought to be achieved by administrative fiat… Partha Chatterjee and Kaviraj are … on firm ground when they draw attention to the doubly dirigiste nature of Indian high modernism: to the fact that it was effected in the name of the people by an executive arm of the state, and that its success would depend upon the power of that executive to secure a sufficient degree of autonomy from India’s propertied elites both to issue its administrative decrees and to see them carried out at the local level.\footnote{Corbridge, S. & J. Harriss op.cit. p38.} Unfortunately, this has not been effected and the ruling elite has not been able to be neutral and impartial in its task of nation building, thereby creating imbalances in the process, as also a crisis in the system.
The idea that there is in India a ‘growing crisis of governability’ was caused by the close connections between democracy and rising discontent of the people. This has been explored in depth by Atul Kohli.\textsuperscript{9} It is widely agreed that though India has become more democratic than it was initially, in the sense that more people were able and were allowed by constitutional process to take part in the political process, parliamentary or otherwise (though this was not comprehensive nor did it encourage fuller participation of the rural dispossessed, the dalits, minorities). It is to be insisted however, that the democratization of the public sphere went hand in hand with corruption, deliberate Machiavellianism of the vested interests, sidetracking of the democratic idealism inherent in the principles inherent in the Preamble, giving rise to discontent of the masses who were at the receiving end.

Unless this revolution of rising frustrations is addressed to, our professed social pluralism would not get a chance of being implemented.

II

EMERGING POLITICAL FORMATION

We are going to address the problematique of lack of governance and absence of real participation of the heterogeneities in the power process and the resultant crises posed by the revolution of rising frustrations of the

Indian people largely through the contraption that the political formation is manifestly showing a trend towards coalition politics logically as a response to it, that is, in other words, the co-ordinational process of political power aggregation is a outcome of it and is leading to defining and redefining social belonging, construction and contest of self identity of various groups and communities that feel deprived as also ‘enlarging the circle of politics’ in the bargain. That co-ordinational politics is a revolt against the established and dominant mode of political formation wherein political manipulation kept the various multi-polar centres of regional and ethnic power out from the centre or the mainstream, opting to co-opt them or assuage their identities by subsuming it in the monolithic ‘Congress system’. The efflorescence of multi-party coalitions and a shift from the dominant ideology of nation – state and political ideology of nation – building to the assertion of ethno – religious identities, resurgence of newly empowered segmental groupings based on regional, linguistic, religious and other loyalties and the reconfiguration of ( hitherto ‘kept away’ from power ) castes and communities is the result of the challenge that the subalterns and dispossessed have taken up in earnest to come into the national mainstream.

As noted above, the power representation process in India, for a long time was not taking cognizance of the complex base of politics in India and the Congress system was foisting an artificial Unitarian content to political formation, though it is accepted that even within that party, the splits of 1948, 1969 and 1978 were indicative of the challenge of the dispossessed groups who were being.

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10 This epithet is the contribution by Ramashray Roy in “Caste and political Recruitment in Bihar” in Rajni Kothari (ed.) Caste in Indian Politics N. Delhi : Orient Longman, (1970).
steamrollered for long and were discontented and ready for a political intervention. It has been opined that over the years, the trends however there have been towards strong state with centralizing bias which demand shifting of primary loyalties and submergence of cultural diversity to the constructed homogeneity by the state. These loyalties however proved to be stronger and of an enduring nature, and have not been depleted at large.

It is clear that the multiple forms of identities prevalent in India, which we have identified here, were being neglected by the politics of the day and these were catalysts to the rise of social coalition and coalition politics. Suresh says “This context of identity assertion and articulation has negated the original hypothesis that these identities would disappear from the public realm under the new dispensation of modernization... These identities have not only been contextualized according to the changing dynamics of society and social transformation but have also been reinforced in electoral politics in India. And it is this context of dynamics of electoral politics that social coalitions emerge and give space for their political manifestation... Thus, the emerging form of coalition politics in India is, in its basic essence, a manifestation of the emerging social context.”

Thus there are some of the more representative types of political formations around whom various social identities are aggregated and constructed for forming social coalitions and later these serve to be the basis for political power aggrandizement. Alongside this, there are some lesser known trends

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11 K. Suresh *op. cit.* p40.
that are in the fray. These are minority trends where the rights, demands of a particular social or at times regional groups may be involved for e.g., the Gorkhaland Liberation front, Jammu and Kashmir liberation movement etc. These are ignored in our analysis because these may not have political significance in so far as they don’t have any political impedance or presence in coalitional politics. Perhaps the most significant background behind the upsurge of coalitions has been the disenchantment of various groups, even including those ones who were inside the Congress party due to their real and perceived isolation, negligence, outrage on their identity formation, lack of development and avenues for growth. In no small measure this is the outcome of the breakdown of the monolithic ‘Congress system’. As we have noted above, the Congress party had weaved an almost sui-generis modality of becoming the umbrella party that would seek the consent or manufacture it by commanding allegiance to it of various minority groups, linguistic and religious formations for a long period of time. However, over the course of time, this crumbled along with a slow but steady fall from grace with decline in leadership and perception of the party. In course of time, those very groups that had traditionally been voting for the Congress started asserting on their own or in alliance with other parties. The lid to the can of regional political parties was opened wide. It is not that regional parties were not in existence earlier. But the real growth of regional parties and their increased self-importance was triggered when it was felt that the Congress was paying lip-service to them and was hankering after power for its own interests.
Even when there were splits within the Congress, there was a premonition of the things to follow— but the party paid no heed or possibly it could not. The more that the Congress(I) and other opposition parties suffered organizational decay, ideological laxity, and the imposition of personal control by those at the apex, the more they resembled each other. Potential defectors from one party to the next therefore felt that they had less distance to travel. They stood exposed and vulnerable to thrusts from smaller parties which had sprung up in the states.

In India, political parties of all hues function, as ours is a multiparty system. All parties strike out a definitive identity, a separate character and style, even though there is very little to choose among them. With the possible exception of the Left parties, there is not much ideological variance in them. Very much in consonance with the body-politique and socially stratified nature of Indian society there are multitudinous parties in the Indian firmament representing the various linguistic, regional, religious variety that we possess. And most of them represent majoritarian fraternity.

A) THE CONGRESS AND ITS NATION-BUILDING THRUST

We have noted in Chapter 3 that the Congress experiment of earlier years was in line with its nation-building thrust. There was a promise of modernization of the state along with growth on the basis of liberal principles of
democracy, liberty and equality. This, as we have noted above, led J. Manor, R. Kothari et al. to characterize that the 'Congress system' was a means to this end. It operated in the Indian model which had a society where despite the powerful centralizing and homogenizing modern state the fascistic tendencies of modern state had not been in existence. The state was made an instrument of human freedom and social justice largely because India was heir to powerful humanistic traditions 'emanating from a dynamic interaction between the Western world and a reawakened Orient' and the leadership of the nascent state chose to follow a development profile wherein some form of Gandhian swarajya (a belief in national self determination and self reliance, freedom, democracy, justice and service to the poor and to society at large) was philosophically ingrained. The Congress system, according to Kothari, "...crystallized around two seemingly opposite political and psychological pulls. .. A nation-building ethos emphasized the need for integration, especially with the forceful reminder of a long history of political fragmentation and disunity. At the same time, the uninhibited development of competitive party politics and its penetration at so many levels of the social and administrative hierarchy gave rise to a differentiated, highly varied structure of competition and dissent, which has since expressed itself in ever new forms by a large spectrum of social and political groups in opposition to the ruling groups. All of this results in a unique style of nation-building - a constant search for unanimity amid a shifting structure of factions ... It was from a very small and homogeneous (upper class, English educated) elite that the ruling class of India was formed, and it was from this ruling class that oppositional
elements emerged. This situation was perpetuated by (a) the length of dominance of the Congress and of the governmental and patronage structure to which it gave rise, (b) the process of selective assimilation in the Congress, through which leaders from other social groups were co-opted into the framework of dominance, and (c) the socialization within the Congress of the men who challenged its dominance... a tendency towards accommodation by agglomerating various groups and sub-groups into a loose and amorphous organizational structure reflecting the cultural style of traditional Indian society. The result was a fragmented and amorphous structure of authority that bred even more fragmented oppositions, which were often hard to distinguish from the coalitions in power. This made it difficult to identify positions and demarcations; all entities seemed to dissolve into the ‘ruling class’.  

The Congress also harped on the ideological baggage that it had inherited from being the nationalist party during the freedom struggle. Apart from this, the Congress projected itself as the great champion of secularism Due to this the democratic character of the party structure which developed set it apart from the one-party models of other countries. This operated from 1947 till about 1967 and in an abridged form till 1975. As Kothari says, “While continued dominance and a nationwide spread led to an impressive consolidation of power in the hands of the Congress, this did not lead to authoritarianism because of the free working of the

electoral process, the crystallization of a factional structure within the party of consensus, the continuous pressure exercised by the opposition, and the general tendency of the leadership to preserve democratic forms, to respect the rule of law, to avoid undue strife, and to hold various elements together in some sort of a balance of interests. In the development and consolidation of the Congress as a party of consensus, the role of dissent, of movements of protest, and even of a wide variety of agitational politics was preserved, and any suggestion of imposing an authoritarian model of the party system in order to avoid dissidence and preserve unity was categorically rejected. The 'one party dominance' as found in India was based on consensual authority and not simply on civil or military power."¹³

However, there were upsurges from below when it was realized that the leadership failed to relate institutional and programmatic means to fully satisfy the pluralities that had given consensus to the Congress party in course of time. There was no improvement in their condition and no restructuring of their political reality took place. The great promise of distributive justice that was so inherent a part of the nation building exercise and growth paradigm did not get effected. When the leadership was unable to provide the developmental part of the promise, it started losing its legitimacy and slowly became authoritarian and structurally broke down the decentralized system of governance and centralization of authority with one may associate with purposive intervention by a disciplined elite turned out to the strategy of

¹³ R.Kothari *ibid.* p.115.
mere survival based on a breakdown of the federal structure and of wider affiliations that were built through it.

The "failure to deliver...points to a need for basic structural changes in the system but produces a politics of postures, a purposely diffuse populist rhetoric aimed at the poor and the dispossessed, dramatic overtures to socialism (which boil down to nationalization and state ownership) and an avid assertion of developmentalism as the principal *raison d'être* - in short, a new genre of statism according to which the fate of the socially deprived and the destitute rests securely in the hands of the state and a strong central authority...As the political system failed to stand the test of performance that the new leadership had itself invoked, it ended up in directing public discontent more anymore upward – from party and other functional agencies to the government, and ultimately from a large spectrum of national and regional elites to the Prime Minister. The result was that when the end came in March 1977 there was little to fall back on by way of a framework of power linking various levels of institutions."¹⁴

The Janata party, as we noted earlier stepped into the institutional and legitimacy morass that the Congress left. It however, did little to fill it and it lacked both the political will and time span to build a truly federal and decentralized structure of power and authority, bolstered by necessary policy

¹⁴ R. Kothari *ibid.* p.120.
correctives to fulfill people's expectations and channelize them towards a new pattern of development. "In absence of a commensurate political structure that could implement these measures, such an approach boomeranged as it provoked a counter-offensive on the part of established interests - which succeeded in defeating the new politics and destabilizing the regime...A centralized polity is inherently incapable of dealing with such challenges; what it does is to aggregate discontent and direct it all to the central apparatus of power instead of dealing with it at various levels and in a disaggregated and decentralized manner. It is equally unable to deal with the backlash from established interests in the form of atrocities against the poor and the weak and resort to settling conflicts outside the institutional framework, by the use of money power on the one hand and muscle power on the other. A centralized polity is also ill-equipped to deal with centrifugal and divisive forces and leads to a sense of alienation among the 'peripheries'. Under the circumstances, resort to force is the only means left to deal with strife and challenge which are inherent in a democratic polity."  

Indira Gandhi's return to power and subsequently the Rajiv era and the Narasimha Rao postscript on the epitaph of the Congress did nothing of note to redeem the crises that had set in. The basic thrust, as if it were of the Congress system was to provide for an unified system that was located on a centralizing thrust of an ideology of development and bureaucratic apotheosis inherent in the Westminster model of governance. This was in the initial stage 'moderated by pressures from

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15 R.Kothari *ibid.* p121.
below and imbued by a culture of accommodation and consensus. With the decline of
party as the basic institution of the system and its displacement by the bureaucracy on
the one hand and personal charisma on the other, the system ...entered a period of

crisis.16

B) ELITE DOMINATED DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CHANGE

If we analyze the empirical matter traced herein one finds the
deinstitutionalizing role of the national leaders and also regional leaders, the
growing weakness of national parties went hand in hand with the political
mobilization of various caste, ethnic, religious and other types of groups. This also led
to increasing instances of conflicts between the poor and the rich sections in the civil
society. These variable factors namely the role of leadership, the crumbling of
political parties and the connected phenomena of undisciplined political mobilization
are all political variables in the sense that they pertain to power sharing or
distribution and conflicts over access to the state's resources.

Atul Kohli believes that this scenario of the Indian situation as described
above is due to a facile characteristic of the Indian political system. We may rejoice at
the fact that periodic free and largely fair elections take place and that percolation of
civil liberties in an extant fashion are our cherished political possessions. However, it
needs to be known that "India's democracy has been democracy from above. For

16 R.Kothari ibid. p124.
most of its existence, it has been more of a gift from the elite to the masses than something the masses have secured for themselves. There is no doubt that the longer democracy is practiced, the more difficult it becomes for the elite to take away basic democratic rights. Nevertheless, a tremendous concentration of power in the hands of a few leaders is an undeniable feature of India’s democracy. The concentration of power cannot simply be wished away. It is part of the overall design by which leaders have made democracy a gift to the society. One recurring consequence of that design is that whenever the ruling elite are threatened, further centralization of power is a readily available alternative. An elite-dominated democracy has also structured the patterns of political mobilization. Leaders have mobilized socio-economic groups more as power resources in intra-elite struggles and less to satisfy group aspirations. That pattern of elite-led mobilization is distinguishable from the more conventional concept of social mobilization that accompanies industrialization, urbanization, literacy, and so forth. Whereas social mobilization is generally produced by economic development and ‘modernization’, elite led mobilization often reflects patterns of intra-elite conflict. Thus, Indira Gandhi discovered India’s poor when she was pressed politically by other members of the Congress elite. Devraj Urs and Karpoori Thakur (in Karnataka and Bihar respectively) similarly discovered the backward castes when they desperately needed to establish new ruling coalitions. The Akalis began stressing issues of Sikh nationalism only when thrown out of power. The suggestion here is not that such patterns of mobilization are bad or wrong; they are the stuff of democracy. What is wrong here is the disregard for the
consequences of such mobilizations." Mobilization from above indeed has exacerbated existing inequalities along regional, rural- versus urban, ethnic, class and caste lines.

Thus it is clear that the organizational vacuum in Indian politics is the seminal cause for the hiatus between how power is won and is used; or the increasing elite led mobilizations coming a cropper in initiating real action against inequalities; and between personalization of power and the inability to use that power to solve problems of the people or provide effective governance. How can genuine political change come about in such a context and confidence of the masses in the political institutions of governance be maintained?

There is a point of view also expressed that the ‘diversity of India’s social structure militates against the development of cohesive national parties.’ It is within the nature of the social formation to find local and regional variants of political parties as they are expressive of the sui-genris nature of their articulation, demands and aspirations. Even within the confines of a single state it is difficult to find a state-level political party that can adequately catch the imagination of the entire state. For e.g., in Bihar, southern belt was and is traditionally against the political party that is strong in the north and in power in Patna. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha was representing the southern belt and here the RJD party could never gain major electoral gains as in the north. This dominance of JMM and its insistence on a separatist political identity ultimately was instrumental in creation of the separate state of

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Jharkhand. It will be difficult to claim which party has a complete hold over Bihar, as of now.

Hence, the multivariate nature of Indian society provides the base for the rise of regional parties and localized politics that is at variance with the national politics or what is posed as thus by the national level political parties. This is a very serious point which has to be recognized. Moreover, there has been an absence of any formal requirement for the representation of all minorities, localized people such as the citizens who are out of the mainstream, the marginalized poor and the withdrawal of the Congress system and lack of any viable political contraptions thereafter, forced the regions to come up with their variants of political parties. The coalitions that were formed subsequent to the 1998 and 1999 elections project this fact. As can be seen from Table Nos.III.4 and III.5 the BJP was heading a coalition where apart from itself there was no other national party. All the other parties such as the Biju Janata Dal, Telegu Desam, Trinamool Congress, Akali Dal, Arunachal Congress, Himachal Vikas Congress etc. are single - state parties i.e., they are represented in only one state. These are regional parties some of which are recent entrants into politics. There are also some which were brought into focus in the aftermath of the vacuum created with the withdrawal from regional political space by the Congress. For example, the growth of Biju Janata Dal is an outshoot of the Janata Dal (Orissa region) which was arranged in the state to counter the post - Indira Gandhi period of uncertainty and chaos. This Janata party was no doubt, an affiliate of the Janata Party which formed a coalition at the Centre. But, in itself, it was a separate
unit from the national Janata Party (and Janata Dal, as it came to be known later),
insofar as it was dominated by the personality of late Biju Patnaik, an one time
associate of Jawaharlal Nehru and Congress aficionado who later broke away from it.
Hence, the Orissa chapter of Janata party after the death of Biju Patnaik, decided to
craft a different identity and in consonance with its regional aspirations and
philosophy of Biju Patnaik of ‘aamara Mahaan Orissa’ (Our Great Orissa). It
decided to call itself Biju Janata Dal which had very little in common with its
erstwhile linkages with Janata Party as such. This clearly establishes the fact that the
breakdown of the Congress system was responsible for the growth of regional parties
all over India.

C) THE SPREAD OF REGIONAL PARTIES IN INDIA

The rise of regional parties in our country needs to be documented in
order to stress its linkages with the onset of coalitional politics. It has been estimated
by a study that there is prevalence of mostly bi-polar party systems in most state
legislatures. Only three states namely, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Manipur can claim
to be classified as hosting multiparty systems. Lawrence Saez using Juan Molinar’s
‘number of parties index’ and the work of Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman’s
study of India found that most states in India are two and two-and-a-half party
systems. He claims that “the increase in the number of parties in India’s state

18 See Molinar, Juan. “Counting the Number of parties : An alternative index” American Political
legislatures is evidence of the transformation from a one-party dominant system to a multiparty system of governance."\(^{19}\) This transformation typifies a specific type of political party realignment. Based on the pioneering work of V.O. Key and the theoretical reformulation by Walter Dean Burnham, James Sundquist distinguished between two main types of party realignment: critical and secular. Critical realignments are by their very nature sharp and sudden electoral realignments between parties. On the other hand, Sundquist defined a secular party realignment as a 'long term, rather than a sharp and sudden, redistribution of party strength'.\(^{20}\) The gradual, almost imperceptible, nature of party system change in India could be described as an example of secular party realignment. The Congress system of dominance had always provided a low level of electoral volatility in both national and state legislative elections.

Although most of the regional parties now gaining currency have come up in the recent past, it is a fact that some of these regional parties or regional movements have predated India's independence. "However their importance in state as well as national politics flourished with the political party realignment over the 1980s and 1990s. For instance, the Shiromani Akali Dal and its splinter groups returned to power in 1977 and became a dominant political party in Punjab. Similarly, in Jammu and Kashmir, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference re-emerged victorious in 1977 in the state assembly after the absence of one decade. The success


of the AIADMK from 1977 to 1984 is also notable. In addition to the re-emergence of traditional regional parties, the early 1980s saw the emergence of new regional parties and movements, some formed almost spontaneously. In Andhra Pradesh, the Telegu Desam was created in 1982, a couple of months later, it routed the Congress Party in the 1983 state assembly elections. Similarly, the Asom Gana Parishad was founded in the early 1980s and quickly challenged the Congress for power there. The presence of regional parties have a rather localized presence. In only twelve states there is a presence of regional parties. The presence of regional parties in remaining state legislative assemblies is either marginal or non-existent, however. Table No. 4.1 does not include regional units or splinter groups of national parties such as the Indian National Congress (O) in UP, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. This table indicates that over time the share of votes of these regional parties has become more widespread. It shows that regional parties account for a growing share of votes in the assembly elections in India. For example, during the 1992-96 period of state assembly elections, regional parties accounted for 77.2% of the vote in Sikkim and 67% of the vote in Tamil Nadu. In Andhra and Meghalaya the regional parties accounted for a good 44 and 42 percent respectively.

Though it has not been conclusively proved that the greater number of regional parties have contributed to the greater share of electoral votes, it may be

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21 Lawrence Saez *op.cit.*, p.54.
assumed that possibly it has. Some other factors such as voter's ennui and desire to seek a regional alternative may have contributed in no small measure. The impact of regional parties has been accompanied by the growing importance of national parties with a concentrated regional agenda. The CPI(M) in West Bengal and the Janata Party in Karnataka are two examples of national parties with a concentrated regional appeal. ...although not specifically regional in outlook, these two parties have acted as proxy regional parties in the 1980s and 1990s, primarily, by articulating demands for a more decentralized federal system. An important implication of the localized growth of the regional parties is that it has tended to limit the political space for national alternatives to the Congress party. For instance, the BJP has been most competitive in those state assemblies where regional parties are weak or non-existent. At the same time, the localized growth of regional parties combined with the gradual fragmentation of the Congress system of dominance has provided an opportunity for new forms of identity-based mass politics to thrive. These parties (such as the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party) are sometimes counted as regional parties. However, they have an electoral presence in various states and their appeal to voters is based on caste allegiances rather than region."

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22Saenz, L. *op.cit.* p.58.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>General Election Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telegu Desam</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asom Gana Parishad</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand M. Morcha</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Conference</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akali Dal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIADMK</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim Dem. Front</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biju Janata Dal</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinamool Congress</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiv Sena</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattali M. Katchi</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marumalarchi DMK</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Vikas Cong.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samata/Janata Dal(U)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashtriya Janata Dal</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samajwadi Party</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahujan Samaj Party</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are here tracing the rise of regional parties to suggest that neither this is a new phenomenon nor is it that they did not play a role in state level politics. The point that needs to be cognized now, more clearly than ever before, is that the growing magnitude of regional parties is being reflected in national politics as the new feature of regional parties in multi party system of governance is their direct impact on national government coalitions. Thus the changing nature of party systems at the state level has certainly impacted upon the composition of recent governments at the national level.

Table IV.1 shows categorically that the presence of regional and caste based parties has been significantly on the rise. If one calculates it percentage wise, then some 10 percent of the Lok Sabha seats were occupied by regional parties (according to Saez) and if one takes the caste based parties such as the BSP, the Samajwadi Party and Samata into account then this percentage rises close to a quarter of the total membership of the Lok Sabha.

It one looks at the results of Lok Sabha elections from 1977 onwards one would view that over the years the percentage share of the top five major national parties has been shrinking. Whereas they controlled 88.8 percent of the seats at one time (in 1977), by 1999 they had control over only 65.2 percent of the seats. This is evident from the Table No.IV.2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Lok Sabha seats</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janata Party / Dal</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI(Marxist)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of 5 National Parties</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: @ - The BJP was a constituent of the Janata Party in 1977.
The role of regional parties in the formation of national governing coalitions is very clearly before us all. We have noted above that since 1989, many different national governments have been formed with the assistance of different regional and caste-based parties. For example in 1989, VP Singh's National Front coalition included the representation of three national parties (the Janata Dal, CPM and CPI) and two regional parties (the TDP and DMK). In 1991, the Congress Party minority government also included two regional parties (the AIADMK and Sikkim Sangram Parishad) and three other allies (the Muslim League, Janata Dal[G] and Kerala Congress). And as we have seen in 1998 and 1999 the 13 and 24 party behemoths headed by the BJP were all regional or caste-based parties.

If one sees Table No. IV.3 it would be evident that what is seen reflected at the national level can also be visualized at the level of the Indian states'. There is an increasing evidence to suggest that the regional forces are also predominantly gaining importance at the level of Assemblies' in various Indian states.

Thus, it is clear from the evidence and analysis provided in this section that firstly, the expansion of regional parties/caste-based parties have prevented the expansion of national party alternatives. Secondly, the critical role of the regional parties has also affected the composition and duration of national governing coalitions and that they have played a catalytic role in the gradual mode of transition within Indian democracy.
**TABLE NO: IV.3**

GROWING WEIGHTAGE OF REGIONAL PARTIES IN SELECTED STATE LEGISLATURES

*Figures represent percentage share of vote in state assembly elections [1952 – 1996]*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ANDHRA PRADESH</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ASSAM</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. BIHAR</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. HARYANA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. JAMMU &amp; KASHMIR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. MANIPUR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. MEGHALAYA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. NAGALAND</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. PUNJAB</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. SIKKIM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>77.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. TAMILNADU</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. TRIPURA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lawrence Saez - *op. cit.* p.55.
As posited herein, the nature of elite democracy is such that it gives rise to various forms of articulation at the regional level as a response to the rising frustrations, however much this elite democracy stresses on shibboleths such as secularism, equality, majoritarianism etc. for they remain mere platitudes in the absence of real representation of the masses and their problems in day to day governance.

III

THE RISE OF HINDUTVA (OR HINDU NATIONALIST) POLITICS

We are going to focus here on the second stream of political formation which is running parallel to the nation-building development thrust of the Congress. As indicated earlier this is also nomenclatured as the Hindutva brigade – one which has emerged as the most potent cultural desideratum of our times. It is using very different mobilization strategies to bring the majority community, in particular, to its fold which posit threatening, if not sinister implications for the polity. There are quite some parties who are in this bandwagon such as the Shiv Sena and Hindu MahaSabha, but it is BJP that has been closely identified with the rise of the Hindu nationalist politics in India as also with the emergence of phony religio - secularism into the mainstream of the body politique. Though originating as a political party in the garb of Jana Sangh, today BJP is more than a political party. It operates through the identity of a party only partially; its more astute and diabolical identity is masked in 'parivar'
organisations like the RSS, Viswa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas etc. Hence it would be unwise to treat BJP merely as a party; it'd be better if we analyse the BJP as the progenitor of mobilizing the Hindus on communal lines. Some critics have called it fascist and anti Muslim. But the party rejects these remarks. It is perhaps the most competitive and aggressive in terms of its agenda and manifesto and has seen the most remarkable growth in membership, electoral fortunes, having captured power at the centre breaking in the process, the entrenched Congress system which dominated Indian politics close to some five decades. BJP however, had modest beginnings and it took a long time to reach its pinnacle.

The emergence of Hindutva as the dominant political force and the ideological articulation of the fundamentalist rightist wing, though seemingly of recent origin, goes back in time. When the Indian National Congress was representing various diversities, the Hindu Mahasabha, the progenitor of Hindutva politics was engaged in the task of an alternate agenda around exclusive Hindu aggregation and identity. It was projecting a Hindu content as against the composite national identity of India as espoused by the Congress. Though its sister organization (the Jana Sangh) tried its best, Hindutva could not become a part of State power till the fall of the Janata led coalition in 1977. It remained a latent political force. There is little doubt that the concept of Hindutva is neither religious nor purely cultural but a political category with sharp ideological overtones which aims at constructing an exclusive identity of Hindus by aggregating the wide range of diversities into a cohesive whole.
The BJP's historical background needs to be studied in order to highlight its decisive role in Hindutva politics.

III a). THE ORIGINS OF HINDUTVA: THE UMBILICAL LINK

The BJP's parent body was the Jana Sangh which was founded by Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. A former Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University, he was made the finance minister in provincial government in Bengal headed by Fazl ul Haq in 1941. He joined the Hindu Mahasabha in 1938, later going on to become its working President. In national politics he was known for his moderation and administrative ability made him a cabinet minister, from which he resigned in 1950. The Jana Sangh began with the advantage of having a genuine leader and tried to exploit the widespread sympathy for Hindu traditionalist ideas when these were germinating in the flush of post independence nascent resurgence of a nation. It brought into vogue a rigid organizational cadre of pracharaks who had been seconded to the party by the Rashtra Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS) but met with little electoral success.

As can be seen, the party could not manage even double figures in the fifties', hovering around 3 and 4 seats in the Lok Sabha. Mookerjee favoured a course which implied building up his party by attracting other parties and constructing a broad non Congress front. His death in 1953 saw to it that his successors like Mauli Chandra Sharma & Upadhya Deen Dayal would follow a course which was diverging sharply from that of Mookerjee. Upadhya upheld the view
TABLE No: IV.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JANA SANGH'S ELECTORAL SUCCESS VS. THE CONGRESS:</th>
<th>THE EARLY YEARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Elections to the Lok Sabha 1952-1971)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total seats  489  494  494  520  518</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jana Sangh    3    4    14   35    22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress      364   371  361   283   352</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

that the approach to party building was to be cautious and defensive, an approach which reflected the reluctance of the RSS to accept the compromises and pragmatism of the established party system, which unusually high value (almost fascist like) on discipline, conformity and loyalty, and which relied on the ability of a young, untried, but zealous leadership to make a successful bid for power at some time in the future, not in the present, when the older generation of politicians had been revealed as a spent force. Upadhya guided the party till the mid sixties.

Nehru's passing away meant that the opportunity to break through the congress hegemony by reaching new audiences was at hand. The party brought Balraj Madhok and much credit is given for the Jana Sangh's successes at the hustings at the 1967 polls was given to his robust and direct leadership. (Jana Sangh got 35 seats - the maximum so far) This success could well have been taken as a vindication of the principle that a Hindu nationalist party does best when it trusts its constituency and leaves controlling power with its parliamentary groups and their leaders. But the Jana Sangh took the opposite course and subsequently reaffirmed the primacy of its central organizational groups, in the conduct of the party's affairs. Thus "The Jana Sangh under Upadhya from 1955 onwards, adopted a style of party activity which maintained discipline and control at the expense of openness and adaptability and which therefore left the party badly placed to exploit the weaknesses of the Congress party's political empire which were revealed in the early 1960s...The Jana Sangh's remoteness enabled it to maintain discipline, and to preserve its privileged connection with the RSS, but
left it beyond the reach of those interests which were beginning to break away from
the Congress party in the second decade of independence.”

III b. BJP - THE SECOND PHASE

The BJP's growth chart can be divided into three phases

- First phase: from its emergence as a party till the 1966.

- Second phase: begins with the 1967 election till the 1984 elections.

- Third phase: possibly began in post 1984 elections, consolidating with the 1989 elections' gain of 86 seats, continuing till today.

We have already charted the first phase. The second phase can be called the period of gradual rise when the BJP made concerted attempts to increase its tally in Lok Sabha after meeting its first blood in terms of success in 1967 elections when it secured 9.4% of the vote share with 35 seats. The BJP's forerunner, the Jana Sangh had very good and lofty ambitions. This can be seen from Deendayal

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Upadhaya's exhortation early on. In 1964 he said "Jana Sangh is a party with a difference. (It) is not a party but a movement. It springs from the craving of the nation to come into its own. It is the urge of the nation to assert and accomplish what it has been destined to." It has been the refrain of much of the followers of Jana Sangh ever since, trying to seek glory by any means; though posing as Hindutva, following an aggressive agenda of ethno-religious mobilization. The type of which has not been seen or followed by any other political party in India.

The second phase saw the marriage of traditionalist integration with the sanghathanist populism in the party. The strategy which the party adopted in the seventies' entailed a new social and economic radicalism and an appeal to the patriotic sentiments engendered by the war with Pakistan in 1971. The efforts of Vajpayee and others, in pursuing this course of action met with stiff opposition from conservatives among the party. In any case it was difficult to use populism as a means of building support when the Congress(R) under Indira Gandhi was also exploiting the same appeal with great success. Populism as Edward Shils points out "proclaims that the will of the people as such is supreme over every other standard, over the standards of traditional institutions, over the autonomy of institutions and over the will of other strata. Populism identifies the will of the people with justice and morality. It exists wherever there is an ideology of popular resentment against the order imposed on

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society by a long-established, differentiated ruling class, which is believed to have a monopoly of power, property, breeding and culture.\(^{25}\)

The Hindu nationalist surge that is associated with the BJP has affinities with populism because its populist slant places a high value on general will of the Hindu community implying that the existing institutions, including those of the state were not expressions of the will of the people called Hindus and therefore lacked definite legitimacy. "But it was difficult for the RSS and the Jana Sangh to make these ideas explicit because they also represented the social and political interests of the upper and intermediate castes, and thus the principle of hierarchy. Gradually, however, these organizations, added populist overtones to their election campaigns".\(^{26}\)

The Sanghathanist discipline was entrenched and the RSS had taken over and tightened its hold over the Jana Sangh. In 1967 Upadhya had taken over the presidency of Jana Sangh after Madhok, giving his alliance plans the go by.

The Jana Sangh tried to adopt Gandhian Socialism - an idea that Congress under Nehru and his allies in the Bombay club had rejected as early as in 1944 – as its economic philosophy. "The Jana Sangh did not feel the compulsions, hence, to defy the economic philosophy the RSS had adopted. It was Deen Dayal Upadhyaya who put in place the Sangh's economic policy sometime in the 1960s. he did not formulate anything new. he simply appropriated the economic thinking among

\(^{25}\) Edward Shils *The Torment of Secrecy* Heinemann, Melbourne(1956)p.98 & 100.

the socialists (splintered by then into as many groups as there were leaders) and this was how the Jana Sangh too signed up for Gandhian Socialism.” Madhok's public denouncement of the leftward drift in the party, which he blamed for its electoral reverses of 1971 and his fight against the control of RSS over the party and call for the party's internal working be made democratic were cause enough for his being expelled from the party. Vajpayee's reelection as President of the party during 1969-1972 allowed him to train his populist strategy. Claiming that it represented the people, the Jana Sangh with its eye increasingly on future electoral successes began to promise social reforms that were often unrealistic.

The Bhartiya Janta Party was formally put in place on 5 April 1980. There were strong reasons for this. After the low of 22 seats in Lok Sabha registered in 1971 with a vote share of only 7.4%, the Jana Sangh had fought the elections as a constituent of the Janta Party in 1977 and 1980 elections. It as a party distanced itself from the former Jana Sangh. It accepted the Janata Party's electoral manifesto. Vajpayee proposed that the party's creed was 'Gandhian socialism' and 'positive secularism' and presented them as a cooperative third path that was particularly close to the Jana Sanghi tradition because of its decentralizing and social reformist implications. In its efforts at distancing from the Jana Sangh's ideological moorings, the BJP moved towards recognition of the composite character of the Indian nation. BJP's Lok Sabha election manifesto of 1984 stated that "Unity in diversity has been the hallmark of Indian culture, which is a unique, multihued synthesis of the cultural
contributions made over the centuries by different peoples and religions. Simultaneously, socio-economic issues were highlighted in a manner that recalled the populism of the Jana Sangh in the seventies. It supported the Janta Party from outside but realised that they would not gain much by amalgamating with them. The reason was there for all to see. The period from 1980 till 1984 saw that in its post Jana Sangh avatar as part of the Janata coalition the party had tried to present itself as a moderate, centrist political party but it did disastrously in the 1984 elections (just 2 seats in Lok Sabha though fighting/fielding candidates in 229 constituencies).

Hence in a context of deepening uncertainty and flux the BJP and the Sangh combine were the one collective force that had the organizational means, the ideological clarity and the inclination to pursue the politics of mass mobilization (within the country).

The BJP was helped by the 'Sangh parivar' (the cluster of family organizations such as the RSS, VHP et al.), in particular by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the transformations of the 1980s. As Thomas Hansen has argued, what was new in the 1980s was not so much the employment of the new idiom of communalism per se, but rather the ingenuity and the scale with which this idiom was differentiated and disseminated through an array of new technologies, of mass

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mobilization. The VHP set up in 1964 had been established to revitalize Hindu society and aimed at mobilizing Hindus - defined as all people who believe in, respect or follow the eternal values of life that have evolved in Bharat - against the threats presented as being posed to them by Christianity, Islam and Communism. In the eighties, the BJP began to reflect the VHP stance whose incipient defensiveness transformed into an aggressive, anti-Muslim cultural nationalism. The VHP, despite its association with Hindu religious leaders in a blatant manner is not at all a scriptural organization, and as van der Veer argues, it rather articulates a modern Hinduism as the national religion of India, appealing in particular to an urban, middle-class constituency. This brings it into conflict with the principles of secularism as laid down in the Constitution, for by the VHP's definitions Muslims and Christians, are not part of the Hindu nation.

In the eighties, the critique of secularism that was sustained by the Jana Sangh earlier - a critique which had protested against the special treatment of Muslims and campaigned for a politics of equal 'religious' privilege - was repackaged by its successor organization, the BJP as a more forceful affirmation of the claims of the Hindu majority. More so than the leadership of the Jana Sangh, the leadership of the BJP in the 1980s aimed to recover an ideology of Hindutva from the works of Veer Savarkar, and others, and to present these ideas forcefully, imaginatively and without

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apology to the Indian public. L K Advani in particular after the party shifted from its attempt in the early 1980s to present a centrist image was keen to press home the argument that India was labouring under a doctrine of pseudo - secularism which had been imposed on the country by Nehru and the modernizing wing of the Congress party.

The electoral successes of the BJP in the 1980s and 1990s were remarkable, being the product of various reasons. Not all of it goes to the party's Hindutva ideology as the Mandal issue of reservations had exercised the voters and sought to vote for an alternate party not in power. It was also due to the failure of the left parties, as Corbridge and Harriss have opined.

It can be seen from Table No.IV.5 that the BJP started increasing its tally from 1989 onwards after a dismal show in 1984. It also became confident to contest more and more Lok Sabha seats, reaching the high of 471 constituencies wherein it fielded its candidates in 1996. This is significant because BJP is primarily a North based party having its bulk of support from the states of Delhi, UP, Gujarat, Rajasthan, MP, Himachal. As can be seen from Table No. the BJP received its bulk of support from its primary catchment area (31.4% of the voters in this region voted the BJP) of the North, in 1998. Though this was a decline from the high of 71.3% that had been clocked by them in 1957; yet its expanse into new territories in the tertiary areas such as in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, North Eastern states and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELECTION Year</th>
<th>Seats secured</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Vote Share</th>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>@</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>@</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
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Note: The BJP was a constituent of the Janta Party in 1977 & 1980.
W. Bengal paid rich dividends by giving it 40.4% of the voter support. This was very low in all earlier elections till 1991.

This Table No.IV.6 shows the inflow of where the BJP's support comes from, i.e., each region as a percentage of the total number of people who voted BJP into power. The table illustrates how the BJP's reliance on the primary states has dwindled over the years. They (S.Corbridge & J.Harriss) are also of the opinion, that "from well before the final decade of the twentieth century the BJP with its often problematic but always significant connections with the cadre based organization of the RSS, and its links with the other organizations of the Sangh parivar, has been-with the exception of the CPI(M), at least in West Bengal - the most coherent and the best organized force in Indian politics."  

However, as Sudipta Kaviraj has pointed out, its unity is indeed partly an illusion which could be maintained only so long as it did not hold office and its leaders have appeared to have a purpose which is higher than that of the pursuit of individual power for private gain, and they held together in a way that has distinguished them both from the old men who led the Janata in the 1970s, who lost the initiative due to their personal squabbles and from the leaders of the national front in the 1990s.'

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**TABLE NO: IV.6**

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<td>7.5</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Inflow Table indicates the percentage of people who voted BJP (regionwise)

Notes: BJP Primary states = Raj, Guj, MP, Delhi, UP & Himachal
Secondary states = Kar, Bih, Goa, Mah, AP, Orissa, Assam, Pun and Haryana.
Tertiary states - Kerala, TN, W Bengal, North Eastern states.

Source: Oliver Heath - "Anatomy of BJP’s Rise to Power: Social, Regional and Political Expansion of in 1990s+

C. Jaffrelot has pointed out that the BJP attracted support by default because the Congress(I) was deeply unpopular. The BJP probably won over former Congress supporters because of their anathema to corruption, inefficiency and rampant factionalism in Congress. BJP also began to win support not only from its traditional base in the trading castes but also from prominent executives, ex-servicemen, and former administrative personnel. The Janata Dal led National Front simultaneously lost its support from amongst the middle classes who are predominantly from the higher and middle ranking castes, because of its advocacy of the policy of reservations for members of the Other Backward Classes and of the handling of the anti Mandal commission student agitators in 1990. The third wave of the BJP's rise is associated with its greatest moment of glory largely because in the salubrious climate of anti Middle class policies the wide base that BJP had lacked since its originating moment got rectified. The extent to which their religious appeal to the middle class mattered is being debated. C. Jaffrelot argues that the Ramjanmabhoomi issue did not exercise the middle classes and they did not play a large part in its mobilisation. He says "For such people religious factors apparently played a minor role compared to their opposition to the reservations issue policy and commitment to a more disciplined (or even authoritarian) form of politics and the Image of the BJP".  

The opposite view has also gained ground that to some extent, the religious fundamentalism helped in assuaging the Hindutva brigade in the party and

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34 Jaffrelot, C. supra p.433.
outside in its quest for power. This group of mostly Hindu followers of BJP, according to Pratap Bhanu Mehta are of a different mindset. These "Hindus seem to be suffering from insecurity (which is) linked to a crisis of self esteem about India. A crisis connected to India's (as also their own) well being and place in the world. There is a feeling that we have been left behind and lost out in the globalised world. So they look for scapegoats and the convenient one is the Muslim." (Additions in brackets are mine) Hence the growth of the BJP is associated with the worst communal conflagrations seen in independent India. 6 December 1992 assault on Babri Masjid was followed by appalling communal violence (in January 1993) of Surat, Bhopal, Bombay. In 1991, the party had got 119 seats and 20 percent of the valid votes cast in its favour, establishing itself as the second party nationally.

Yogendra Yadav in his analysis of State Assembly elections between 1993 and 1995 has posited that they seemed to mark the ensuing of a third phase in the history of India's party system. Starting with the Congress dominance, the second phase starting from the 1970s "saw the emergence of genuine competition to the Congress, both at the state and at the national level, often aided by electoral waves... This phase (he suggests calling it the 'Congress- Opposition System' ) saw the emergence of bipolar consolidation in various states without yielding a bipolarity at the national level " The third phase, initiated by the state elections of 1993-1995 and confirmed emphatically in the general election of 1999, marks "a move towards a

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competitive multi-party system which can no longer be defined with reference to Congress.  

A multi party competitive model of governance meant BJP staking its claim to power soon. It did when the 1996 general elections gave it 161 seats helping the BJP emerge for the first time as the largest single party, though without significantly expanding the basis of its support numerically, socially or geographically, over its 1991 results. The BJP sought power but as it did not command a majority with its 161 MPs in 1996, it formed a government for precisely 13 days. It was only in May 1999 that it could gain real substantive power. The nature of Indian politics and in particular, its party system saw it that it had to explore the route of coalitions. The BJP contrary to its earlier stand of seeking power alone, had to compromise on this count.

It formed pre-poll and post poll alliances because despite its best efforts it could not improve on its tally of 182 seats in 1998 and 1999 general elections.

Hence the BJP’s National Democratic Alliance consisted of 23 partners which consisted of regional parties like Telegu Desam, Shiv Sena, Biju Janata Dal etc. This coalition has been in existence till date and for the sake of record, has clocked the maximum time of four years plus - this is the longest period for any coalition government in independent India.

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An analysis of the BJP, electorally speaking, the predominant political party contemporaneously shows that various factors have assisted in its growth of which, the rampant communalist cultural Nationalism is one which has been its sui generis contribution. However, looking at the conundrum of multiplicities, heterogeneities and complexities in which the polity operates, it is but natural that it could come to power only by virtue of a coalition governance. Even now, despite a massive expansionist out surge, its presence all-India is much to be desired. It could contest only 339 seats in 1999 elections and cornered only 23.8% of the valid votes polled (falling from the all time high of 25.5% in 1998). As Harold Gould put it, the BJP remains more a 'mega-regional party' than a truly national party.\footnote{Quoted in Corbridge, S. & J. Harris supra p.130.}

The incapability of the BJP to retain its lofty heights and its falling image in the post Godhra riots in Gujarat in March 2002 and after; its war hysteria with Pakistan and alienation of the middle and poor classes with the insensitive and lopsided economic policies that are foisting globalisation agendas to the detriment of the Indian people are inter alia, some of the causes for concern for the party. Whether its ultra nationalism can tide over its overtly communal agenda remains to be seen.

However, another worrying factor is the fact that BJP is a divided house today. Due to fierce factional fights and interest group conflicts the Sangh Parivar's unity is disintegrating, as its credibility. The inner party struggle may be seen reflected in the two recent expose of the 'party with a difference': namely, the lease of
prime real estate in Delhi to favoured NGOs close to the Parivar and the petrol pump scam. Both were attributed more to leaks by sources in the Party than by crusading journalistic investigation. It is clear that “the most important factor here is the takeover of the party apparatus by Hindutva hardliners, including RSS nominees and ABVP office-bearers. The party’s organizational wing is increasingly in sharp conflict with its governmental wing over issues such as swadeshi and ‘security’, policies pertaining to labour...”. It is also to be cognized that “The RSS has openly and combatively attacked NDA policies, short of destabilizing the government ... VHP hardliners feel let down by BJP leaders’ reluctance to precipitate the Ram Mandir issue. Thus VHP’s president has openly criticized the BJP for not backing Narendra Modi or the ‘Hindu cause’ strongly enough”.38

It needs to be recognised that coalitional politics and the ending of the era of predominance of One party has come side by side with some very important developments in the last two decades. Political power is drifting from the Centre to the regions as also the empowerment of the subalterns (or what may be called the backward and lower castes) has brought them into power. Entrenched political parties like the BJP have not quite acquiesced this and learnt lessons, nor are they trying, frankly speaking. However, it is disturbing that the crumbling hold of the elite classes and multi party expediencies of coalition government has foisted more populist democracy and less substantive change in the body politique. Unless the BJP accepts this and comes out with alternatives to meet the situation head on, its

ascendancy could be in danger. Fomenting communalist programs in BJP dominated states is not going to take it any closer in its goal, nor ‘Hindu rashtra’ provide the panacea that it searches for.

It also seems plausible that the BJP has not the faintest idea why it is losing elections after the recent reverses in Assembly elections in UP, Uttaranchal and Municipal elections in Delhi (and just managing to scrape through in Goa). With the coming of Assembly elections in many states next year and general elections thereafter, its recent cabinet reshuffle in July 2002 reveals its hardcore knee-jerk response to it. Symbolism of elevation of Advani as Deputy PM indicates return of the BJP to its hardline roots. “The decision to retain Narendra Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat despite the widespread opprobrium he attracted, the appointment of Vinay Katiyar, former Barang Dal chief and Ashok Singhal acolyte, as president of the BJP in UP, or that of Uma Bharti, who too was in the forefront of the Ayodhya movement as party president in MP, together with Advani,s new appointment are all of a piece.”

”What the BJP has perpetrated in Gujarat is the worst form of communal carnage seen in independent India with the implicit and at places direct involvement of the party cadres and administration. That the burning of karsevaks in Sabarmati Express on February 27 which was the catalyst for much of the gory aftermath thereafter, was a pre-planned act of the administration to foist trouble has now surfaced.” All fact finding bodies, the civil society, impartial constitutional bodies like the National


40 Bunsha, Dionne. “The facts from Godhra” Frontline Aug 2, 2002 p.11-12
Human Rights Commission and now the Election Commission have severely indicted the Gujarat administration in no uncertain terms and the BJP government held for fomenting all this to reap rich rewards at the elections which fell due in October 2002 (which rightly were postponed by the Election Commission). The Goa conclave earlier in the year had given a hint of all this. "In Goa we realized that unless we stress Hindutva we cannot enthuse our workers... In 1996 when our government fell after 13 days we realized that our strategy had made us untouchables among political parties. Thus contentious issues were put on the back burner. But now we find that while this brought allies, it has lost us workers. The Goa meeting will be the starting point of another decisive shift towards our old agenda" a senior BJP functionary is quoted to have revealed. Clearly the 's sensitivities of the allies will be kept in mind, but only upto a point. The allies' toothless response, both to the VHP's handling of the Gujarat riots and the VHP's threatened agitation in Ayodhya, has further emboldened the hardliners.  

The allies of BJP today need the BJP more that the BJP needs them largely due to their regional nature of the support. As Amar Singh of the Samajwadi Party stated "Owing to their own political problems, the allies need the BJP more than vice versa. Manita Banerjee and M. Karunanidhi have lost elections, while Chandrababu Naidu fears the Congress in Andhra. They are not going to say anything whatever the BJP does."  

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41 D.Mukherji *ibid.* p.32.
42 D.Mukherji *ibid* p.32 carries quote.
We have deliberately not raised the question whether other parties apart from the BJP in India at this current juncture are following communalism or cultural nationalism as their political credo. That could be the subject of another study by itself. Suffice to say that the sui-generis nature of cultural nationalism that the BJP is following is very alarming to say the least and such danger does not manifest in the same degree from other political parties in existence as of now.

Can BJP emerge from its own convoluted philosophy of ultra nationalism? This is the question to be raised, but one which time alone can answer. But its perspicacious that the BJP hasn’t comprehended the rationale behind its massive achievement of being in power for the maximum period through the contraption of coalition in independent India (an achievement that no other party is credited with, not even the Congress) largely because it showed what Arend Lijphart calls a consociationalist approach to political power. In common man’s language the BJP showed toleration, resilience of viewpoint, accommodation -which is what political power sharing is all about.

Even though it is not within the scope of this work to go into details which would exemplify the BJP’s consociationalism, it’d suffice to give here some leading evidence to this effect. The extent to which the BJP, once a strict doctrinaire party was prepared to accommodate can be gauged from the fact that after the 1998 elections to the Lok Sabha (when the BJP formed its first coalition and formalized

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the alliance which went into the 1999 elections) the party did not prepare its own election manifesto. There was only one manifesto which served for the entire National Democratic Alliance that was fighting the elections, though with separate symbols in 1999. Similarly, on crucial issues such as that of constitutional reservations for the Scheduled castes and tribes the BJP was prepared for a volte face from its own stated position. As Christophe Jaffrelot notes, “... As it was now the pivotal force of a larger coalition whose components were often less elitist than the BJP the party toned down its stand on reservation. In NDA’s election manifesto one finds (the commitment) ‘if required the Constitution will be amended to maintain the system of reservation. We are committed to extending SC/ST reservation for another 10 years’”.

A final point needs to be made regarding the class character of the BJP, the major participant of coalition politics in recent years. An influential survey analysis based on CSDS (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies) data on exit polls during the 1999 elections to the Lok Sabha has found some evidence that has proven path breaking in many respects. Analyzing this data Yogendra Yadav, Sanjay Kumar and Oliver Heath suggest that the 1999 elections marked the emergence of BJP’s “New social bloc” that included traditional upper caste supporters of the party but simultaneously reaching out beyond this elite. They say, BJP still secures the support of 60 percent of the upper caste Hindus and 52 percent of the dominant Hindu

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peasant castes (who are not classified as Other Backward Castes, such as Jats, Patidars, Marathas, Reddys etc). The NDA therefore represents a cross section of Indian urban and rural elite, at least those experiencing some social mobility. This social profile can be identified through the criterion of caste but 'class must also be factored in'. Therefore Yadav, Kumar & Heath have built an index mixing caste-based and class-based criterion which reveals that the BJP draws as much as 69 percent of its votes from the 45 percent voters (representing the upper strata of Indian society according to these criteria). They thus are pointing out that though BJP has traditionally been an elite based party, what is new now is, that its express capacity to reach beyond the upper caste urban elite, to incorporate rural elites from amongst the lower castes in the hinterland, has been proven in the last elections. Thus, the attempt has been to accommodate a new social class composition which is more eclectic in its spread and communitarian in its approach, than has been the case till now.

There are a few problems with this analysis. Firstly, though it is a fact that the BJP has made an effort to go beyond its rigid social outlook, it is doubtful if it has gone the whole hog. It is possible that Yadav et al. are analyzing from quite limited data – one based on exit polls, where the seriousness of respondents is doubtful (there is a tendency to boast, fib or over/under-estimate the voting choices made by the respondents themselves who have been interviewed for a survey). Christophe Jaffrelot for one has contended that the party doesn't attract so many voters from the non-dominant castes. He surmises that "... the BJP and allies receive 52% of their votes, but the BJP alone (accounts for) only 30% which (actually is) less than the
Congress(I) which has 31%. The most important groups for measuring social expansion of BJP should not be the dominant castes but the Dalits and OBCs. In 1999, it attracted only 16% of the SC voters according to the CSDS exit polls. The BJP and its allies won 1/5th of the OBC vote, as against 35% of the Congress and its allies. Thus, social base of BJP remains dominated by elite groups.

Similarly Oliver Heath has suggested by a multivariate analysis (based on figures till the 1998 elections) that "...it is the upper castes that form the most dominant section of the BJP+ (BJP plus means the BJP and its allies) meaning support. This was still the case in 1998 as it was in 1991, so in that respect it would seem that little has changed. However, the degree to which they predominate has undergone major changes...there has been a real and significant shift in the social composition of the BJP+. The proportion of BJP+ voters who are upper caste has fallen by 10 percent since 1991. This shift away from the heavy reliance on upper castes has been matched by gradual growth in representation from all the other communities. Growth has been most pronounced amongst the OBCs, whose presence has increased by 4 percent, although there has also been an increase in the other social groupings of Scheduled Caste (3 per cent), Scheduled Tribe (2 per cent), and Muslim (1 per cent). However, these counter-growths have been relatively small and could merely be the result of standard sampling error. Therefore, too much should not be read into them at this stage." 

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Secondly, it is well known that spatially speaking, the BJP has large social, regional gray areas where it has not politically consolidated itself. It is through riding piggy back on the allies' that the BJP has assisted its regional support. This is a subject that we would concentrate on in the next section in greater details.

The upshot of this review of the BJP and the purpose of its presentation here was to underline the fact that even a rigid doctrinaire party which is associated with right-wing fundamentalism was forced to adopt a consociationalist stance in order to come to power. It did not shed its ideological gravitas but made compromises at many fronts to bring into its fold and the coalition that it headed in 1998 and later in 1999 (which still continues to be in power, at the time of writing) as many as 23 parties widely dispersed in nature, local and region specific in orientation and caste and language driven in characterization. BJP’s rise as a party in recent times, as we have traced here may have been largely due to its Hindutva shibboleth but its ascendancy to power (and it has been in power at the Centre for more than four years, if we take both the tenures of the BJP headed coalition that came into being in 1998 and 1999 subsequently) was primarily because it undertook the basic tenets of power-sharing seriously.
IV

EVOLVING PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA

Some India specialists had cautioned regarding the faith in multi-party democracy as the most effective method of social change. Selig S. Harrison's *India: The Most Dangerous Decades* (1960) had warned the dangers of disintegration in the process and had spelt out a future of communal conflict, disharmony and subsequent Balkanisation in the political process. Samuel P. Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) predicted structural discontinuity in the face of popular mobilization. Others like Gunnar Myrdal in his *Asian Drama* (1968) described India as a 'soft state', based on popular consent, which would be lacking in authority with which to tackle problems of structural change. Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966) predicted a state of peaceful paralysis for India in the years following Independence. Contrary to the voices of doom, as it were, India's record shows that elections have been held regularly and except for a short interregnum of the Emergency (1975-1977) the democratic process and constitutional provisions have not been subverted. The successive governments that have captured power both at the Centre and in the states have taken major policy initiatives and parties have alternated in power as a result of elections. In fact, it is accepted that on all aggregate indicators of participation, India has kept up steady progress. A healthy level of electoral participation has been recorded steadily, reaching the levels of
occidental voting patterns in some parts of the country (though thriving along with some of the most Machiavellian manifestations of political violence, booth capturing, caste based exclusions etc. that goes by in the name of elections). Participation in elections has been widespread across all social strata and in all regional areas, in urban as well as in rural areas. The electoral participation of women, minorities, scheduled castes/tribes, other backward castes does not lag behind that of the national average.

Alongside such important indicators of political change, very significant social movements have grown over the years. These ‘new social movements’ are aggregating around supposedly non-class issues, and occupy such diverse spaces such as civil rights for dispossessed groups, minorities, marginalized etc., consumer rights, electoral reforms, common civil code, gender and ecological issues, education, environmental strategies etc. These are issues that are noticeably often avoided or neglected by mainline political parties (of all hues). These communitarian articulation modes and movements have received varying degrees of mass support and projection by the regional and national Press, intelligentsia, activist judges, forthright civil servants, social and voluntarist NGOs. Though not comparable to the new social movements in advanced capitalist democracies in seventies’ and eighties’ in the West in their extent and reach and are also less influential and powerful in comparison in the civil society.

These new social movements have produced pressures for the search of new patterns and themes of political alignments among political parties and new bases
of social and political constituencies. It has been stated that “the deviation of electoral and party politics from the ideal and constitutional norms and regional disparities and deprivations under a highly centralized but ineffective regime created a fertile ground for a variety of old and new social movements centering around ethnic and civic concerns. Not only communal parties, but even so-called secular parties lacking ideological vigour and credible policies and strategies of development, found in primordial loyalties convenient tools for electoral campaign. The rational choice model of individual electoral behaviour, a developmental prospect even in best of times, came to be menaced by communal and caste political mobilizations. With the growing deflection of the basis of electoral mobilization from the party to the community, the former tended to lose autonomy and become subservient to the ethnicity-based social movements. Party ideologues offered over-extended rationalizations such, for example, as ‘caste’ in India is the depository of centuries of exploitation, and a simple emphasis on human rights rather than minority rights becomes a cloak for silent discrimination against the minorities. Policies of reverse and protective discrimination and special schemes for minorities were hijacked by the ‘creamy layers’ in the OBCs and political entrepreneurs among the minorities. These developments created the anti-reservation reaction and the upper caste Hindu backlash. This has led to a vicious circle of communalization and competitive ethnic-based political mobilization in India. As a result, leaders of community organizations easily offered justifications for their hegemonies over party and parliamentary leaders, thus contributing to the decline of the public sphere, civic
It has led M.P. Singh to state that this marks the end of the parliamentary federal system of government adopted in India. He says so largely because the parliamentary system’s forerunners in Europe have evolved in such a manner that there is an undisputable balance between the civil society and the State. Resultantly we find that the public sphere and the organs of government have a predominance without superceding the partial and multiple autonomies of individual and group identities and interests of particular groups.

The emerging political party scenario is a disquieting one. Parties which should have reflected the socio-political reality of the grassroots are no longer doing so or are even able to do so. Along with this the vitiation of the electoral process by money and lumpenisation, criminal elements etc, has made almost parties to cohabitate with degenerative accommodation of criminality and murky, clandestine sources of party financing. National parties of all colours (including some regional parties such as the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha for example) excepting the leftwing parties have been enmeshed in venal corruption, manipulation and graft as seen exposed in the Jain dairies, hawala money scandal of 1995-96, the Ttechka dot. com. expose, the BJP’s Tboot scandal, Petrol pump / land scandal, to name just a few of them. A host of big lights of the government and opposition are under public and judicial glare and are facing prospects of trial by either the CBI, investigative commissions or the courts for obtaining illegal money for personal gratification and party finances have been subject to Anti-corruption act. Most of the probes are not

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leading anywhere as there is a collusion of vested interests to the effect that they fail to prosecute any of the politicians involved.

Another feature of the party system prevalent today is their non-representative character. Parties no longer have internal organizational elections, barring the Communists and the BJP. The leaders are largely self-styled appointees or are thrust by a leadership which is out of touch with the grassroots reality. They do not even represent their constituencies. A Ghulam Nabi Azad, who aspired to be Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir in the post 2002 J&K elections has no base in the state and has been fighting elections from Maharashtra; a Manmohan Singh who becomes the Finance Minister actually was returned to power from Assam; Sushma Swaraj goes to fight in Karnataka and loses from there; Narasimha Rao a Prime Minister is so unsure of his standing among the electorate that he fields his nomination from two constituencies and is actually returned as a MP from Berhampur, Orissa instead of his home state Andhra. These portent dangerous salients where the strength of Indian party system is challenged and faith in democratic elections is openly questioned as is the legitimacy of the power enjoyed by the ruling elite.

Another aspect of the political spectrum is the growing salience of grassroots movements and the non-party political processes that has captured the imagination of the people. As noted in this chapter earlier, these have two components namely i) the new social movements, and ii) NGO and voluntary socio-political agencies, who are engaged in the implementation of schemes of various non-governmental development projects usually funded by non-State or external
assistance and bi-lateral or multi-lateral grants. They are slowly but surely revitalizing the grassroots and local political initiatives. These are important developments because they are important indicators of federalization rather than centralization, though there are some criticisms of the long term implications of funding from international based agencies.

A. Instability vs. Durability of Coalition / Minority Governments

An impression has gained ground that the evolving party system in India gives birth to coalition or minority governments which are inherently unstable and non-durable in longevity. This is not so, in reality as our studies of the European experience in Chapter 2 and the standing experience of coalition functioning in Canada shows. The Indian experience does indicate that in our context the coaltional arrangement is prone to be unstable and ineffective. We have in Chapter 3 detailed how the various coalitions since the 1967 general elections have had largely the same fate. If there has been a silver lining it the experience in the states' where for example, the Swatantra party -led rightwing coalition government in Orissa in the late sixties' and the Left Front coalitions in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala spread over many decades have exemplified themselves as purposive and stable coalitions.

At the Centre there have been periods when coalitions have performed well. The Narasimha Rao government was the first Congress minority government at the Centre to complete its mandate. Though it commenced as a minority government
and went half-way as such, and was able to muster a majority only through party splits and mergers in the Parliament, it is credited with at least four redeeming factors. It showed firstly, a malleable cohesion for the first time which was better than the Janata Dal. Secondly, the sheer cunning and accommodative qualities of Rao along with the third factor of increasing ennui and electoral fatigue of voters and parties alike following the 1989 and 1991 elections helped the Congress edge out potential competitors. Fourthly the increasing fractious fragmentation in the opposition ranks made the Congress task easy. Hence a different spirit of accommodation, sheer tenacity of leadership and consensus seeking rather than disruption seeking tendency is required in coalitions.

MP Singh feels "Minority governments and coalition governments may at times be more suited to bringing about innovative policy shifts by consensus. Both indeed may be seen as half-way houses to a national government that has the added dimension of a national crisis and a determination to deal with it. ...The idea of minority government instead came to be more widely accepted and indeed practiced by the political class during the Rao premiership since 1991. A stepped up policy of economic liberalization by the Rao Congress government was pursued with an implicit support from the parliamentary floor by the opposition majority, including the BJP, Janata Dal and communists. Consensus on national security and foreign policy too was forged. Stable and credible consensual deals among parties continue, however to be elusive. Authoritarian and neo-feudal mindset of Indian politicians, once in the driving seat makes them impulsive and disinclined to tedious haggling and
bargaining. Besides, frequent electoral fluctuations and flash party formations generally sweep away the need and incentive for long-term common minimum governing programmes among parties in fronts, even though electoral understandings have now shown a greater stability over time. The emergence and persistence of the coalition situations compels politicians to be more accommodative. And the growing regionalization of the party system now promises to lend to India some characteristic consequences of proportional representation even though plurality electoral system in single member constituencies continues. India may thus be now more hospitable to as well as more adept in experimenting with coalition or minority governments. Minority government may indeed be a better option than coalition government. For the former is able to avoid the problem of oversize ministries so frequent that the norm of restricting the number of ministers to 10 per cent of the supporting MLAs has often been emphasized and largely ignored. It is true that if minority or coalitional governments obtain, they do bring into focus issues, demands of groups which are usually brushed under the carpet in contexts where brute majorities operate in democracies, as majoritarianism excludes all agendas that are not of the majority groups, however important or of national importance they might be. For example, regional parties have forced a debate on the arbitrary application of State Emergency (President’s Rule) in the states.

If consensus seeking capability and a political culture of matured accommodation is ingrained in coalitions, then a country of India’s size and plurality

\[49\] M.P. Singh *ibid.* p.166.
would be best served by a coalition. Unfortunately, the coalitions that have come to power after the Rao Congress coalition have not shown the tenacity to stay in office and the willingness to bargain, accommodate and cling to power thereby giving the allegation that coalitions are short-lived and of ephemeral durability in the Indian context.

It is in this context that the completion of three years of unbreakable tenure for the National Democratic Alliance (from 13 Oct 1999 - continuing) at the centre is being projected as a major achievement. BJP has recorded the successful operation of a coalition government for the longest period of time in post-independence period, till date. In some senses it is an achievement because no coalition has lasted this long. This coalition has recorded some significant gains which need to be highlighted. The NDA coalition has outlived all other coalitions in independent India (the Rao coalition was technically not a coalition after JMM and other manipulations on the floor of the Parliament turned Congress into a dominant position). If we see the earlier precedents then the National Front headed by V.P. Singh lasted for barely 11 months (4 Dec 1989 - 10 Nov 1990), the Chandrasekhar Minority government for 7 months (10 Nov 1990 - 21 June 1991); the United Front coalition headed by H.D. Deve Gowda & I.K. Gujral was for 17 months (1 Jun 1996 - 21 Apr 1997 - 28 Nov 1997) and even the BJP’s maiden foray into coalition politics was able to manage for a period of 13 months only. (19 Mar 1998 - 17 Apr 1999) A major achievement has been recorded by the formation of this alliance made possible due to BJP’s concerted management of alliances, coalition formation through
accommodation and effective strategies for perpetuation of this system initially, to successfully retain and later manage power.

The 1999 elections results had thrown up a result that again saw the assertion of regional parties in national politics. The BJP was in for a surprise, because it received exactly the same number of seats that it secured in the last elections in 1998 — namely 182 seats. Further, it also encountered a fall in its share of votes. Whereas it had registered a 25.5% vote share in 1998, in the year 1999, it could manage only 23.8%. The big five National parties registered a decrease. Whereas, they captured between themselves, 370 seats out of the total 543 seats in the Lok Sabha in 1998; they accounted for merely 354 seats in 1999. The regional parties and the smaller outfits were the major gainers.

BJP's electoral federalism of 1999 meant that through skillful bargaining and seat sharing, the BJP managed to penetrate into areas which had hitherto resisted its efforts at expansion. The BJP National Executive had noted with satisfaction that the decision to align with non-Congress regional parties had strengthened the federal character of the national polity by making them important partners in the task of governance at the national level and proclaimed: 'This will enable the union government to address regional aspirations more effectively and thus prepare India for the challenges of the new century'.

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But has the BJP catered to the requirements of regional parties and the constituencies of the allies? No, not any longer. Coalition politics has allowed articulation of regional problems, requirements and even agendas of regional parties to the mainstream. But the ones who succeeded in getting solutions to them were very few. They were largely the ones who had the numbers (like Telegu Desam) or were in a position to manipulate the government to their ends (like the Samata Party, Akali Dal, Shiv Sena, DMK and Trinamool at times). BJP had started distancing itself from the regional parties and the National Agenda of governance increasingly soon after getting itself into a position of dominance. The recrudescence of Hindutva and going back to fundamentalist agenda (with the BJP’s Goa conclave categorically emphasizing that it has a Janus faced split identity – one as a leading member of the NDA and a separate set of fundamentalist priorities as a political party with an eye to its own constituency) have signaled that the BJP is giving up its accommodative avatar, one that brought it to power. The post-Godhra shenanigans, close on the heels of electoral reverses in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhal, Delhi have indicated a going back to its roots. In this scenario, only those regional parties are benefiting who can coerce the BJP into offering concessions like Telugu Desam (whose supremo Chandrababu Naidu has milked off some Rs.20,000 crores as largesse from the centre) or prove its indispensability like Samata party (whose George Fernandes has emerged as Man Friday for Vajpayee’s crises management).

Why are the other allies’ still with the NDA? This is because as things stand today, the allies’ want the BJP to stay in power more than the BJP wants them
with it. They have no alternative, due to a cocktail of reasons, local and national. Even the biggest of the allies, the Telugu Desam fears the Congress in its state. Trinamool has no standing in W.Bengal and Mamata despite her resignations desperately wants to come back into the Cabinet. Samata has gained more importance than it deserves, not commensurate with its regional presence and motley influence, largely due to its presence in the alliance. They have prominence in state and national level politics, because they are partners of the NDA. Almost all the regional groups (barring BJP there is no other national party in the NDA) are scared that they would not secure the same number of seats if a mid term poll takes place.

Hence, what is clear is that the coalition is sticking because there is no other alternative. The alliance is not bothered about governance nor of the demands that the regional outfits make on it. It is involved in purely an exercise in survival. And since BJP has never had power this long and they are enjoying it, they care two hoots if their government looks analogous to the erstwhile Congress governments. The allies had never had it so good – they couldn’t have aspired to get portfolios in the Central government, could they? BJP is losing its touch with the same parties because its vote share isn’t increasing despite catering to modification of its erstwhile fundamentalist agenda to suit the allies'. Hence it has done the predictable – go back to Hindutva, coalition be damned. If coalition stays, okay, if it doesn’t, BJP can always strike the lonely furrow, as it had done for so many years earlier and wait and watch for some other opportune moment to strike at power.
It is apparent from the discussion above that issues such as stability and durability of coalitional governments is very difficult to maintain and sustain. The level of political culture that is required for it has not fully integrated in our body-politique (though some opine that this has not as yet emanated in our political context).

V

ON ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS IN INDIA: AN APPRAISAL

Thus it is clear that the 24 party coalition was an arrangement whose time had come. The BJP had succeeded because of the new alliances that it forged with all sort of regional parties in the states and by the splinter groups that fell out with the decline of the Janata Dal. Experts have opined that the age of alliances and coalitions, the type of which we have dealt with in this work had come into Indian politics much earlier, its current phase is not an enfolding of the pattern that was set as early as in the period of Congress hegemony. Yogendra Yadav has noted that the state Assembly elections between 1993 and 1995 had marked the beginning of a third phase of history of India's party system. As we have noted in this work, the first was the phase of Congress dominance; the second which started from the 1970s, brokered the emergence of genuine competition to the Congress, both at the state and at the national level often helped by electoral waves. This phase
Yadav characterizes as 'Congress – Opposition System' saw the emergence of bipolar consolidation in various states without yielding a bipolarity at the national level. The third phase, according to him initiated with the State elections of 1993-1995, and confirmed emphatically in the general elections of 1999, marks a move towards a competitive multi-party system which can no longer be defined with reference to Congress.’ His analysis is that the ‘democratic upsurge’ which was reflected first in the State assembly elections were driven by the ‘enfranchisement of the backward castes’ and the emergence of the OBCs to political power in the northern part of India. Yadav makes the point that the rise of the downtrodden does not of necessity lead to egalitarianism. The acceleration of the delayed but inevitable rise of the OBCs to political power in northern India does not lead to participatory democracy. The new multi party system included a number of exclusivist formations with partisan (some say communitarian chauvinistic) agendas, for example the BSP in Uttar Pradesh. He notes poignantly that "Ironically, most of these political formations which serve as instruments of the democratization of society in favour of hitherto disenfranchised sections, are themselves completely undemocratic in their organizations set-up as well as style of functioning." These parties which would also include the Samajwadi Party, the Rastriya Janata Dal etc, are being identified almost

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52 See Y.Yadav “Reconfiguration in ...” ibid. p100.
entirely with the elections and the democratic upsurge that they were supposed to
represent and reorder the dialectics of existing politics is largely missing. They are
employing the same tactics, strategies and even the lingua franca of the other parties
whom they sought to replace. The social revolution or something like it that they
promised their constituents is missing.

Like Yadav, E. Sridharan also believes that there was three fold evolution of alliances in the Indian party system. The first phase of broad-front anti
Congressism in the sixties and seventies was characterized by what he calls as 'intra
state alliances' of the SVD type or the Janata party, for example, the Jana Sangh,
BK D / BLD, Socialists, Congress (O), had their state units, strongholds, and
interests while having no ideological glue. The second phase, was again of broad
front anti-Congressism which was that of the Janata party, which according to him
, 'unified ideologically disparate non-Congress parties so as to have one-on-one
contests aggregating votes at the constituency level so as to win, reflecting the
imperative of aggregation to win regardless of ideology. This also consisted of intra-
state alliances of disparate parties within the overall umbrella of unification of those
parties at the national level.' Sridharan opines that "...intra-state alliances cannot
be stable unless there is both an ideological and programmatic compatibility in that
some of the parties have pockets of strength within the state which are not contested
by their allies in the state; this applies in both the classic case of Kerala (for both the
Left and the Congress) and in West Bengal. This spatial alliance was fundamentally
different from that of the Congress and the AIADMK from 1977-96 in that this was
Sridharan believes that the National Front coalition was a new one in some ways. Firstly, it took a leaf from the earlier Janata experience and did not try to unify very different parties but tried to put together a coalition of distinct parties based on a common manifesto. Secondly, it brought in the explicitly regional parties like the DMK, TDP & AGP, and the Left parties, unlike the SVD or the Janata phase experiments. Thirdly, it also marked the beginning of inter-state alliances of parties or spatially compatible alliances where parties do not compete on each other's turf. It is his contention, further, that the spatially compatible loosely-knit alliance of the National Front- BJP- Left parties in 1989-1990 broke down because of ideological incompatibility. This indicated once again the unsustainability of a broad anti-Congress coalition unless its ideological extremes (are) moderated or (they) set aside their position. (as the Jana Sangh did in the post-1967 SVD coalitions and in the post-1977 Janata phase). Another clear case of a spatially compatible alliance was the post-election coalition of the United Front during 1996-98; however, it had a certain secular ideological mooring, ranged as it was against a hardline, perceivedly 'anti-system' BJP.

Further, the post 1991 phase has also seen the recrudescence of the intra-state alliances based on ideology (like the BJP- Shiv Sena) and centred on spatial

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compatibility of two kinds which was different from both the Congress – AIADMK trade-off and the Left Front kind of the 1977-1996 period. "this consists of intra-state alliances which are a reverse of the historical Congress- AIADMK kind in which there is no trade-off of Lok Sabha for state assembly seats between the regional and national parties". On the obverse side of the coalition picture we have the case where regional parties get the majority share of the Lok Sabha and Assembly seats. For eg., the BJP – AIADMK - regional parties ( but miniscule in size) in 1998; the BJP – DMK- regional parties in 1999 later.

Sridharan also notes that there is yet another case where "an alliance between a minor state party and a national party ( takes place ) in which the latter gets the lion’s share of both the Lok Sabha and assembly seats, the key being spatial compatibility in which the national party does not contest in the smaller regional party’s intra-state strongholds". He cites the examples of the BJP-Lok Shakti in Karnataka in 1998 and 1999, the BJP-Samta in Bihar in the period of 1996-99 and the BJP-Himachal Vikas Congress in Himachal Pradesh. These being non-ideological alliances, it is quite difficult to procrastinate how long they would last. It is also possible that the smaller regional party may be subsumed in a larger party, like the case of Janata Dal in Rajasthan and Gujarat from 1989 to 1991. "The clear emphasis of alliances in the nineties’ has been on spatial compatibility at the expense of ideological compatibility, particularly the BJP’s alliances of 1998 and 1999, but even the UF coalition. This is an improvement on the SVD and Janata Party alliances which were neither programmatic nor spatially compatible. However, the most
important point to be noted is that in the whole history of alliances since the 1960s, with the exception of the Left Front limited to three states, alliances have been driven by the imperative to aggregate votes to win and not by ideology, programme or social cleavages."

VI

Upshot

This goes in tune with the theoretical premises that we had stated in Chapter on theory of coalitions. The upshot of the discussion of coalitions shows that quite in agreement with the Riker–Dodd theory of coalition formation the nature of coalition formation in India is quite in line with the theoretical assumptions underlined by us earlier. Further, the premises of Luebbert, Alesina, power maximization and policy based theories are found applicable too. Most importantly, one also finds the application of Lijphart's theory of consociationalism or power-sharing to some extent. Lijphart has advocated the theory of consociationalism which states that coalitions in the West were basically an attempt to distribute power among its partner-political groups that were in the la-politique when unclear mandate occurs after parliamentary elections. He says that

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India was not considered as an applicable case for this theory for quite a long time. We would concentrate on his view in greater details in the next chapter.

In this chapter we have shown how there has been an increase, over the years, in the number of parties in the central Parliament (there has been a similar increase in Indian state legislatures). Partially, this can be attributed to the growth of regional parties. It has also been discussed at length that there were various reasons for their emergence such the breakdown of the ‘Congress system’, the crises in governance of the brute majoritarian governments that were in power, the empowering of the subalterns and the marginalized segments of the society, among others. At the regional level initially the regional parties prevented the expansion of national party alternatives to the Congress party. Later, at the national level we have posited that regional parties have also affected the composition and duration of national governing coalitions. There have been some apprehensions regarding the role of regional parties at the Centre. On the contrary, they have been critical participants in the operation of national governing coalitions after successive elections have been visited by hung assemblies and Parliaments. Indeed it would not be wrong to say as Saez says that the case of India’s regional parties illustrates that their participation forms part of a gradual mode of transition within democracy. Morris –Jones characterizes this complex transformation as the ‘Indianisation of India which as a process tends towards complex patterns, ill-defined positions and movements through shades and compromise.’

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We have also highlighted herein that the impact of regional parties has been both positive and negative in Indian politics. Whereas they have highlighted issues, demands usually neglected by governments at the Centre that enjoy brute majorities' as in the past for example initiating a discussion on President's rule, the institution of the Inter-State Council following Sarkaria Commission's recommendation (under V P Singh's National Front coalition) there also have been some less than positive achievements. The negative dimension may be exemplified by AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha who using her leverage within the short lived first BJP coalition succeeded in stalling a series of criminal investigations against her or by the manipulative leverage that ChandraBabu Naidu of the Telegu Desam has appropriated to himself (much to the chagrin of other regional parties) as he corners the cream from the Centre and the others are left watching.

However, one thing is very clear. The regional upsurge has led to the emergence of consociationalism. Coalitions especially, minority coalitions have emanated the culture of power sharing. In this climate, it is the regional allied parties have been given power as never before.