CHAPTER I

RISE AND DECLINE OF MODERATE ETHNIC PARTIES:
A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
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The purpose of this theoretical exercise is to understand the decline of moderate ethnic parties in a conflict situation. It needs to be mentioned at the very outset that in a conflict situation, the decline of an ethnic political party is closely related to its emergence. The factors related to the rise of the party are interlinked with its decline. Hence, it would be imperative to understand the rise of moderate ethnic parties.

From the understanding of the above, this chapter seeks to conceptualise the impacts of the attitude of the State, organisational aspects such as structure, ideology, policy, working programme, leadership, and mobilisation strategy of the party, approach of the militants towards moderate parties and the impact of the external intervention on the decline of moderate ethnic parties. This chapter attempts to define key concepts such as: 'moderate', 'party' and 'moderate ethnic party'. An attempt would also be made to define the concept of "decline" and the limitations of its application in this study would be analysed here.

CHARACTERS AND FEATURES OF ETHNIC CONFLICT

'Conflict' is a broad term used in social sciences, used to explain a wide variety of situations pertaining to group antagonism. It could vary from mere competition between communities, to open conflict and violence.¹ In the present framework, the following characteristic features help in defining a conflict situation.

In a State where two different ethnic groups with separate identities based on historical antecedents and heritage, language, religion, and culture living either in clearly demarcated ethnic boundaries or dispersed all over the State—added with

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the exclusive nature of the majority/dominant group in the rule—lead to asymmetrical power relations that creates conflict between the two. Therefore, ethnic conflict is a hostile relationship between two unequal ethnic communities in a State where the majority/dominant community virtually controls power and authority.² Lucian P. Pye notes, ‘The fundamental framework of non-Western politics is a communal one. And, all political behaviour is strongly coloured by considerations of communal identity.’³ Tendency of a majority community to establish its hegemony over a minority community or communities with the communal motive causes hostile relations between two communities.

Majoritarian regimes⁴ with communal mind-set not only ignore or reject the minority interests but also tend to assimilate their identity into the majority by using the means such as Constitutional, legal methods, discriminative practices and even by terrorising the minority. These oppressive trends necessitate the minority to take measures to protect their interests and identity and prompt them to form a political party/organisation to address their issues. In such scenario, clearly demarcated geographical territories for the conflicting ethnic communities would be an added advantage to the minority for quick mobilisation along ethnic lines. The party/organisation sets its political goals to share in power and separate identity, in order to ensure its political, social and economic rights. Formulation of such goals range from parity in power, autonomy for its ethnic region to nationhood and at the most to secession from its adversary, i.e., the State. To


The proposition of ‘communal politics as a feature of non-Western governments’, limits to only non-Western countries seems only a partial understanding. Most of the Western countries are practising communal politics in different degrees and different forms. It may be true that many non-Western countries used communalism rather nakedly than the West. I have used this proposition to emphasise the fact that strong communal considerations in political behaviour are still prevalent in many developed and developing states.

⁴ The essence of Westminster model is majority rule...the government by the majority and in accordance with the wishes of the majority come closer to the democratic ideals than by and large responsive to a minority. For detailed discussion, see Arend Lijphart, Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Governments in Twenty-one Countries (London: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 3–4.
achieve this goal, minority parties may seek various measures, ranging from non-violent to ‘military means’.5

The changes in the attitude of the states towards the interests of the minority communities and the corresponding demands of the representative parties of the minorities impact on the magnitude of the conflict. Changing magnitude of conflict requires the minority to alter their responses in order to exert enough pressure on the State. In order to match the requirement of varying attitude of the State, minorities demand for reformation or replacement of effective party or organisation that are dynamic enough to address their issues efficiently. The tenacity of the ‘primordial loyalties’6 of the minority community, in the face of the intensity of the communal character of the State, infuriates the minority community as it endangers their identity.7 The tenacity of the primordial loyalties and the intensity of the communalism of the State determines the space for the type of the party/organisation (i.e., moderate parties or militant organisations or both function as parallels) that could address their issues efficiently.

One of the major factors for the emergence of ethnic parties is ethnic conflict. As Jean Blondel observed:

Parties might emerge, for example, if there is conflict between tribes or between ethnic groups within the same country ... for parties to develop there must be broad social conflict. Parties organise large sections of society for major battles; if conflict involves only a few individuals, parties will not be formed. For parties to emerge conflicts must run deeply into the fabric of society and sharply divide its members.8

5 For detailed discussion, see P. Sahadevan, n. 2, pp. 10–12.
7 Nordlinger, “Conflict Regulation”, in Arend Lijphart (ed.), Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration (London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 17. He notes that, although the replacement of segmental loyalties by a common national allegiance appears to be a logical answer to the problems posed by a plural society, it is extremely dangerous to attempt it. Because of the tenacity of primordial loyalties, any effort to eradicate them not only is quite unlikely to succeed especially in the short run, but also may well be counterproductive and may stimulate segmental cohesion and inter-segmental violence rather than national cohesion.
Significance of moderate ethnic party and the trust of the ethnic minority on Parliamentary means may be possible as long as the system of government and the attitude of the government provide the space to ensure the identity or accommodate the interests of the minority. On the contrary, if the State pursues a growing exclusivist tendency towards the interests of the minorities, the faith on Parliamentary means by the minorities and the space for the functioning of moderate ethnic parties shrinks. This may handicap the moderate parties in achieving their goals and gradually diminish the importance of the party among its support base.

In such circumstances, these parties drive to seek 'populist' means to increase the support base to maintain their strength and voice that is necessary to match their adversary and to achieve the goal. Adopting populist measures to maintain or increase their support in a scenario of ethnic conflict may temporarily fetch help for mobilisation. Depending on the political climate, employing suitable populist slogans would attract the people en masse towards the party/organisation. If the party is strong and dynamic enough to increase its political participation with the mobilised mass, and could absorb them into the ranks of the party, it would increase the strength and would help to continue to be in the leadership. Conversely, if the political participation is high and the party organisation is weak to absorb the inflow, it may lead to depletion of party ranks including leadership. It may lead even to anomie politics and violence.10

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9 According to the *Penguin Dictionary of Politics*, the essence of the populism is that it mobilises masses of the poorer sectors of society against the existing institutions of the State, but under the very firm psychological control of a charismatic leader. Populism tends to have no precise or logically consistent ideology, but to be a rag-bag of attitudes and values chosen, perhaps cynically, to appeal to alienated and deprived members of mass society and to direct their fury and energy against existing rulers, without actually committing the populist leaders to any very concrete promises about the likely reforms... in a social system where multiple ties to class, family, ethnicity and ordinary organised political groups can give a sense of identity and meaning to the individual, thus making him immune to the often irrational and emotive forces that populism both uses and inspires. David Robertson, *The Penguin Dictionary of Politics* (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 268.

One possible consequence is that the populist mobilisation and the increase of mass participation of the minority parties may annoy the communal states on the one hand; the weak party organisation and disillusionment of the mobilised mass at the other may adversely affect the functions of such parties. Hence, the last two situations may gradually alienate such parties—both from the people and from the State. New political forces may occupy the political vacuum created by these parties. In a conflict situation, forces of violence/militancy tend to occupy these spaces of the erstwhile moderates.

Two major factors may attribute to the emergence of militancy: first, the use of State violence against the minority, and second, the inability of the moderate ethnic party to address the issues of the minority. Sometimes, the cause and the goal of the moderates and the militants may be the same, but each one addresses it differently. Militants tend to take up the cause and use violence as a means towards reaching the goal. Moderates may adopt means of non-violence. Often, the relationship between the moderates and the militants may begin from parallel and non-interventionist or tacit relationship but in views both of them openly differ. One or more of these variables may be adopted at different point of times in one particular case. Considering the varying approach of the two, interplay of these variables over period makes different impacts over the development of the moderate parties and vice versa in different political climates. Negative impact of the one over the other may result actual enmity relations between the two.

In many cases, violent conflicts even provoke external intervention. External intervention may occur, either to protect the State (i.e., in support of the majority people), or to protect the minority (that is in vulnerable to the State). In case of the latter, external interventions may occur due to one or a combination of the following variables: (a) Ethnic affiliation\(^\text{11}\); (b) influx of refugees to the intervening States\(^\text{12}\); and (c) using the conflict to meet its strategic ends with the conflict State. In the modern international political scenario, even the ethnic affiliated interventions overtly or covertly carry the interests of the intervening


\(^{12}\) Indian intervention in Bangladesh in 1971 and in Sri Lanka in 1983.
State too. In these cases, the external forces deal with these issues collectively with the moderate ethnic parties and/ or the militant organisations that were against the State. Hence, the external intervention too makes impacts on the developments of the moderate ethnic parties.

CONCEPTUALISING 'MODERATE' IN POLITICS

One of the concepts of wide usage but hardly defined in politics is 'moderate'. Scholars broadly use the concept of moderate to define political parties and political leaders in order to explain the political character of particular political formation or set of formations (i.e. parties/ organisations/ movements) and leaders. Therefore, the concept of moderate in politics denotes the 'approach' of a party or a leader to realise the declared policy of the party or leader.

Studies of political parties show that all 'registered political parties' are generally designated as ‘moderate parties’ and their leaders as moderates. This system (i.e., registered political parties) is one of the major features of liberal democracies. Most of the liberal democratic states give space for free function of political parties presumed that they would operate within the stipulated constitutional-legal system of those states. States, under the rule of totalitarian regimes, theocratic regimes, dictatorial regimes, absolute monarchs and most of the military regimes, do not allow political plurality or free functions of parties. Hence, the analysis of this concept is limited within the territory of liberal democracies.

Registered political parties could be divided into two major categories: (a) Parties that function within a system and their programmes and goals too confines within the same. These types of parties are indisputably recognised as moderates.

(b) Parties that originate and operate within a system but with the ideology of opposing the same system, accordingly set their policies, programmes and goals to change the system. Such parties emerge out of class, religious, regional or/ and

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
ethnic conflicts. These conflicts may require systemic changes. Political parties used to engage in mobilisation towards such goals. Despite the ideologies and policies of such parties, as long as the mobilisation proceeds within the constitutional-legal system, these parties may be characterised as moderates. This implies that law abiding parties would be moderate. In other words, any recognised political party or organisation that negates violence, as means to their end is moderate. Conversely, if these parties adopt unconstitutional and unlawful means to achieve their goal they are perceived to be violating the system. Violation of the system advocates both violent and non-violent means. Here the 'registered' 'non-violent' party fall into the category of moderate party.

On the contrary, in some of the liberal democracies, if the character of the State is majoritarian and its approach is exclusivist, relationship between the State and the ethnic parties would be antagonistic. These ethnic parties may address conflicts by confronting the State for the change of the system with the non-violent means of mobilisations. This mobilisation scares the State as it may be a threat to the system and may instigate violence. Fear of the State tends to doubt the moderateness of the ethnic parties. As a consequence, recognition and legitimacy of these parties may befall into dispute in such scenarios. This may result in States taking measures aiming at containing the party to withdraw such policies and its activities. The State may go even to the extent of proscribing the party. In such cases, non-violent means may not be the criteria to explain the concept of moderate, as anti-systemic policy is seen by these States as extreme or radical. Hence, ‘registered’, non-violent party only partially explains the concept of moderate.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, moderate means, ‘Avoiding extremes, temperate, tolerable, mediocre, make or become less violent or excessive’. The last explanation given is ‘become less violent’. This reflects that a person or party reduces the intensity of his/ her or its violent behaviour than it had before. This connects the term moderate with violence. All the political theories identify

violence with the concept of radicalism. As there are no parameters to define 'less violent', logically, moderate also means less extreme/radical and thus assumes relative meaning.

It is also in practice that a particular leader or set of leaders are singled out as moderate among those who belong to radical/extreme parties with some ideology. While the policies of such parties are radical and generally the leaders are stubborn in policies and achieving their goals by any means without bothering about the interest or wellbeing of other sections of the people of the State. Some leaders may restrain and they may be willing to adopt compromise formula by accommodating the interests of the other sections to some extent without affecting the interests of those sections to avoid any possible violent confrontation. Here, the leaders who show little flexibility in their policies, who are tractable, or who are sensitive to other opinions or the interests of common people are designated as moderates among radicals. Here also, moderates assume rather relative definition than independent one.

From the above discussion, we can derive following characteristics that constitute the concept of moderate.

(i) It practices flexibility in policy, programme and goal;
(ii) It negates violence as a means;
(iii) It takes a compromising or middle path in a conflict situation between two extreme parties; and
(iv) It functions within the system.

DEFINING ‘POLITICAL PARTY’

Definitions of ‘party’ vary as different scholars give significance to different dimensions of a party. Max Weber defines parties as organisations, which attempt to gain power for their members, regardless of constituent wishes or policy considerations. According to him, ‘parties reside in the sphere of power. Their action is oriented towards the acquisition of social power...no matter what its

content may be."¹⁸ Schumpeter and Sartori also reflect Max Weber, focussing on the activities in which parties actually engage. According to Schumpeter 'parties are organisations of elites who compete in elections for the right to rule for a period.'¹⁹ To Sartori, 'a party is any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or not free), candidates for public office.'²⁰ Arend Lijphart gives a different dimension. He notes, 'Political parties are the principal institutional means for translating segmental cleavages into the political realm.'²¹ Jean Blondel combines Arend Lijphart's concept to bring out the segmental interest and the function of mobilisation through educating the mass towards the goal. He States, 'A mobilising party'²² aims at converting the population. It does so by exposing the social and economic conditions under which this population lives, it aims to increase awareness about social conflicts.²³ Lawson (1980) defines parties in terms of their role in linking levels of government to levels of society. He views that, ‘Parties are seen, both by their members and by others as agencies for forging links between citizens and policy-makers.'²⁴ Von Beyme lists four basic ‘functions’ that political parties generally fulfil: ‘Identification of goals, aggregation and articulation of social interests, mobilisation and socialisation of the general public within the system particularly at elections, and elite recruitment and government formation.'²⁵

Here Weber, Schumpeter and Sartori explain the 'party' from its power-seeking and elite leadership dimension. Arend Lijphart and Jean Blondel explain the politicisation/mobilisation dimension of the different segments of the society, especially, the minorities or deprived sections. Lawson views the party from its representative dimension. Finally, Von Beyme combines almost all the said functions/dimensions, emphasising that these functions are interlinked and have to be performed by parties.

All the above explanations from Weber to Von Beyme concern on mobilising the people at elections and elite recruitment for the formation of government are mainly based on major parties, which are able to capture power. Here, Weber and Schumpeter's notion of power implies the ruling power. The functions of party as aggregation and articulation of social interests stipulated by Von Beyme indicates Lawson's explanation of party's representative function by linking citizens and policy makers. Here, aggregation and articulation means addressing the issues of different segments such as caste, class, region, religion and ethnicity collectively. Summation of social interests too is one of the features of major parties and hence, this explanation of the party also fell from the perspective of the functions of major parties. The definitions of Lijphart and Blondel bring different dimensions from the rest by giving more weightage to the more democratic functions of the parties necessary for the proper functioning of the plural societies. They emphasise the politicisation of various segments or cleavages of the society for effective participation and representation in the political discourse of those States. Deriving different dimensions of political parties from various analyses, a party could be defined as follows:

Parties are the organisations that politicise and mobilise different segments of the societies towards their social, political and economic issues through which they win the elections and either form the government or sit in the opposition by which they empower their elite members and take up the issues of the people to the policy-making bodies.

This general definition of the party does not adequately explain the special features to understand the minor or minority parties that address the issues of
specific interests of particular segment of the society such as caste, religious, regional and ethnic communities.

FORMATION AND GROWTH OF MODERATE ETHNIC PARTIES

Origin and development of political parties are generally associated with the Parliament or legislative councils and the introduction of universal franchise. But parties do not appear suddenly. Rather, they emerge through certain evolutionary stages. These stages may be broadly categorised as aristocratic cliques, small groups of notables and plebiscitarian democracy. Weber and Maurice Duverger contribute to this notion that 'the cliques and the elite political clubs frequently were the precursors of modern parties.'

Development of political party system is determined by the social, political and economic changes of each country. These changes produce various types of parties such as 'major parties' or 'national parties', minor parties such as 'ethnic and/or regional parties, as also parties based on caste, class and religion. In this process, various types of parties in different countries perish or achieve a lower status of smaller parties that forge alliance with other bigger parties for their survival. Origin and growth of party system in the European and Anglo-American states have considerable differences with the party system of developing states.

In the era of colonialism, rulers introduced State Councils or Legislative Councils or the Parliament system of governance and the universal suffrage to the colonised princely states and tribal territories. There were various movements against colonial rules all over the Asian, African and Latin American countries. Most of these movements united the diverse communities that cut across

28 Palombara and Weiner, n. 27, pp. 7–4.
linguistic, religious, cultural, tribal or regional differences. These movements were under one organised body or non-contradictory parallel bodies or in some cases anti-colonialism overshadowed the conflicts among domestic social cleavages. There are also instances where independence movements were fragmented. In some cases, the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural social groups of the territory unite against common enemy or in some cases some polarisations also took place resulting in the parallel functioning of many parties. There have been instances of ethnic, religious and cultural revival movements parallel to the national movement, but as long as the national organisation or movement accommodates and addresses the interest of the diverse groups, these organisations aim their programmes only against colonial rule.

During the colonial rule, the movement for independence created ‘nationalist parties’. Such nationalism overshadows ethnic or regional differences as nationalist forces either accommodate the inter-ethnic aspirations in their programme or bring about unity of ethnic/ regional groups against a common enemy (the colonial power). In many countries, the ethnic groups belonging to different regions had self-rule in the pre-colonial era and might have had the programme to regain it at the disposal of colonial rule. Such forces kept their respective agenda aside till the time they achieve the greater goal of independence. Immanuel Wallerstein notes that, ‘most of the nationalist movements were mass formations with inter-ethnic base or at least mass inter-ethnic aspirations.’

Conversely, if the nationalist movement manifests the majoritarian tendency, it would be perceived as detrimental to the interests of the ethnic groups. In such a situation, once the colonial power leaves, they may be left under the mercy of the rule of the majority community. Since they were the rulers in the pre-colonial period and had their own territory, they would not compromise their historical pride and identity with the majority group. Under these circumstances, ethnic groups evolve their own party to represent their demands to the colonial rulers.

In most of the cases, the transfer of power results in empowering the leadership of the majority community. It gains power through exploiting the trust

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of the minority ethnic groups by delivering mere verbal promises. These forces of ‘nationalism’ take up the role of political parties during independence. In the states where the Westminster model of political system is in practice, major national or majority\(^{30}\) parties virtually win majority seats to the legislative bodies and form the government.\(^{31}\) The majority ethnic communities practically dominate the major parties in any plural society\(^{32}\) especially, in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This domination reflects in all spheres of the major parties such as leadership, memberships, its supportive organisations, trade unions etc. In short, the representation of the interests of the majority community dominates in the major parties and thus virtually majority dominates in the policy formulations and setting of goals of those parties. The intention of this majority is to impose its hegemony on the minority, which manifests itself in the ignorance of minority interests by enacting discriminatory laws and practices with the intention of assimilating them into the majority community.\(^{33}\)

On the contrary, minorities aspire to preserve their distinct linguistic, religious, cultural and regional traditions and identities. This conflict of interests impels the minority to form its own party to protect their identity and to achieve their due place in the social, political and economic spheres of the State. As Immanuel Wallerstein observes:

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\(^{30}\) In the states with multiethnic or plural societies, majority ethnic community dominates in the ‘major political parties’. In this sense, major party also used to refer as ‘majority parties’. Likewise, major parties used to have their support base cut across ethnic boundaries and regions. In this sense, ‘major party’ is also referred as ‘national party’ by scholars and election commissions in many states. Here, used all these three terms to denote ‘National Party’.

\(^{31}\) In multi-ethnic societies, where unequal ethnic relations prevail the majority or dominant community virtually controls the authority and power. See P. Sahadevan, n. 2, pp. 10–12.

\(^{32}\) According to J.S. Furnivall, plural society means different sections of the community live side by side, but separately, within the same political unit, where each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma, Netherlands and India* (Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 304.

\(^{33}\) The role of the national party in the post-independence era was not the same as that of the nationalist movement in the pre-independence era. See for the detail discussion, ibid, pp. 201–14.
The remnants of or decedents of earlier nationalist movements, whose present base tend to be inter-ethnic but not mass; and tribal (ethnic)-regional parties that often had mass support in their region but whose appeal was largely to one ethnic group.34

In a scenario of growing ethnic conflict, the character of the major parties tends to shrink further and becomes rather majority ethnic parties. Here, the policies of such parties are not only prone to reflect mere interests of the majority community but they are also liable to defy the minority interests and/or rights. The formation of governments by such parties results in ‘majoritarian rule’.35

Majoritarian rule in plural societies coupled with communal insignia may always be potential procreation grounds for minority parties including ethnic parties. The existing studies on parties place the ethnic parties under different broad categories or names according to the political perspectives of the scholars and complex or interchangeable features of these party systems. They are named as ‘communal parties’36, ‘communal groupings’37, ‘minor/ smaller parties’38, ‘minor/ minority parties’39, ‘regional parties’40 and mobilising parties.41

35 The government by the majority and in accordance with the majority wishes comes closer to the democratic ideals than by and responsive to a minority. See for detailed discussion, Arend Lijphart, n. 4, pp. 3–9.
37 Blondel, n. 8, p. 64.
39 Duverger, n. 27, pp. 290–99.
40 Regional parties restrict their area of action to a single region. They articulate and seek to defend a region based ethnic or religio-cultural identity. They are primarily concerned with exploiting local sources of discontent or pressing a variety of primordial demands based on language, caste, community or region. See for detailed discussion, S. Bhatnagar and Pradeep Kumar (eds.), Regional Political Parties in India (New Delhi, ESS Publication, 1988), pp. 3–6. Tamil parties such as TULF, EPRLF, TETO, PLOTE, ACTC and EPDP in Sri Lanka and DMK, AIADMK, TMC, TDP, AD, AGP were generally mentioned by many authors as regional parties in India.
41 The characteristics and the analysis given to mobilising parties by the author are suitable for smaller parties. I attribute this to ethnic parties in this study. See for details, Jean Blondel, n. 8, pp. 21–22.
In conflict situations, parties are often formed to represent the specific interest of the conflicting communities or segments. Ethnic parties emerge to address their community interests. A minority party may represent an ethnic group or a region or both. Therefore, an ‘ethnic party’ may represent a particular ethnic group of a state as a whole or an ethnic group of a region. As a result, an ethnic party may also be a regional party. Explaining the character and goal of such parties, Maurice Duverger observes:

These (ethnic minority) parties will not accept complete fusion with the majority community. Some are separatist, others autonomist, others again federalist and some simply regionalist so many descending stages within the same general tendency. Though minor parties in Parliament, they are very strong locally, frequently occupying the position of dominant party or even of single party. 42

Here, Maurice Duverger’s observation of descending stages (i.e., demand begins with separation and ends with federalism) may not necessarily be the only order; it could be an ascending order too in different political circumstances (i.e., demand may begin with federalism and develop to separation. It may end up with separation or then may descend back to federal).

A party that represents the interest of the majority of the people forms the government and exercises power to fulfil the interests of the people it represents. Among rest of the parties, some are permanently in a minority position representing different segments of the minority groups. These minority groups function at national or regional level. Naturally, they cannot form the government, but may play decisive role in the formation of coalition governments in case major parties fail to get requisite majority.

The intensity of the conflict determines the approaches of the minority party whether to adopt cooperative or confrontational relations with the State. If the intensity of the conflict is low, minority may offer conditional cooperation to form the governments at times or even may take part to realise the interests of their

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42 Duverger, n. 27, p. 292.
segments. Instead, if the intensity of the conflict is high, the relationship between the two may be antagonistic and would lead to an anti-State politics to exert pressure on the government to achieve the interests of the community they represent.

Ethnic parties indulge in constant mobilisation and seek to enlarge their support base. They use various strategies for effective mobilisation according to the changing political climate and the intensity of conflict. One major strategy may politicise or educate the people to make them aware of the problems they are living with and the ways to find a solution. Ruling party or the government always takes necessary measures to contain the mobilisation of the ethnic party against the State. This trend of competition and conflict makes the ethnic party more rigid further and further determined to ensure that its mobilisation is not hindered.

In this stature of development leadership of mobilising parties would be:

More active and more ruthless with their opponents... A mobilising party appears, in the first instance, less democratic than the 'representative party', which takes the views of the population into account... Taken to extremes, this posture is used to justify the excess of righteous minorities convinced of the justness of their cause. The tougher opposition, the more such minorities believe they need to silence 'enemies'; otherwise the educational process cannot take place.44

Ethnic political party is an organisation that emerges out of conflict to protect the identities and represents the interests of their respective communities. They operate at regional or national level for which they mobilise the people through political education, ethnic and populist appeals to face the battles with the State and resists any form of opposition ruthlessly even by radical means that would threaten its mobilisation and dominance.

Deriving from the characters and functions noted above, moderate ethnic party could also be defined as a group functioning within the constitutional and legal framework of the states. Therefore, characteristically these parties are moderate. A ‘moderate party’ believes and practices democracy in its structure and

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43 If the majority parties need the support of the ethnic parties to form the government, then the ethnic parties get an opportunity to bargain with the probable ruling parties to achieve their goals at least partially.

44 Blondel, n. 8, pp. 21–22.
functioning. It appreciates plurality of party system and negates violent means. Hence, a moderate ethnic party is a non-violent, non-extreme and pluralistic political party representing a minority ethnic group aiming to achieve power.

In multi-ethnic states, interests of diverse ethnic groups vary. There may be caste, class, or religious parties in these states. These parties may cut across ethnic barriers. Therefore, their programmes would not be confined to one ethnic group but would explicitly reflect any particular caste or class or religious interests of various ethnic groups. In an ethnic conflict situation, this caste, class or religious interest would be submerged by the common interests of the ethnic groups based on language, culture or/ and region that would cause the emergence of ethnic parties. Their rise and decline poses impacts on the political, economical and social fabric of the people in different degrees according to their programme, policies, practices and mobilisation skills.

Various factors and political environments determine the growth and nurture of moderate ethnic parties. Some of them are: (a) history; (b) the strength of the community it represents in terms of men, material and conviction; (c) attitude of the State towards the ethnic aspirations; (d) attitude of other parties towards the same ethnic aspirations; (e) commitment of the party in terms of its organisation, programme and mobilisation strategies; and (f) the ability of leadership of the ethnic party.

Firstly, one of the important factors of the emergence of moderate ethnic parties is the community’s protest against the majority rule and consequently its demand for some kind of self-rule. In the context of post-colonial era, these groups might demand to ensure separate State, or autonomy, or equal status. The colonial response varies from one state to another according to their post-colonial interest in that particular state or region. In some states, ethnic groups achieved their goal at the end of colonial regime. In some other states, demands of such groups were ignored and left them under the mercy of majority rule. Here again, some independent states accommodate such aspirations to the satisfaction of the groups. While other states used various means to suppress such demands. Ethnic parties educate the people to keep aware of their glorious historical past and their right to
self-determination that maintain the people against the State and strengthen it to achieve self-rule. 45

Secondly, the influence of an ethnic party stems from the strength of the community it represents in terms of intellectuality, number, infrastructure, wealth and conviction. If the community is weak in these aspects, the party representing its interests will be unable to succeed in fulfilling the aspirations against the State, which is repressive. In the process, the ethnic party, lacking adequate support from its community will fail to articulate the interests, leading to its decline. On the contrary, if the community is powerful in all the above-mentioned aspects, the party representing its interests would be able to match the State and would launch sustained struggle against the State, howsoever repressive it may be.

Thirdly, the demands of ethnic parties are against the State—to obtain or to protect the socio-cultural, political and economic rights of the ethnic group. If the State defies such demands that represented all cleavages of the ethnic group and shows discrimination against the ethnic group, it would provoke the group as a whole and unite them against the State to protect their rights. If an ethnic party addresses a particular group interest within the ethnic group, that would lead to group antagonism based on caste, class, religion or region. This would weaken the overall cause of the community. This also helps the growth of the ethnic party.

Fourthly, the ethnic party addresses the specific interests of its community, which other parties fail to consider. As long as such party addresses the issues of all the segments of that ethnic community, there would be less chance for competitive party. Thus, a skilful ethnic party enjoys monopoly of support within the community it represents. Since an ethnic party being the only party to address the specific issues of the ethnic community, people had no option but to support it and this support further led to its growth.

Fifthly, the structure of the party organisation helps an ethnic party to withstand the crisis vis-à-vis the repressive State. The majoritarian State tries to suppress the leaders of the ethnic party by using means such as arrests and

detentions so as to subvert the autonomist movement. If that party is structured from bottom democratically, it would produce leaders consistently. Hence, the suppression of the movement by the State would be rather difficult and the issue would gain bigger political mileage. Its continuous emphasis to achieve the goal by using different strategies including mass movements would help the ethnic party to mobilise further. The representative nature of the party and a coherent structure enables a party to withstand the crisis, especially, when fighting a repressive State. Commitment of the party manifests in ensuring its steady growth.

Finally, effective and charismatic leadership play a vital role in the growth of an ethnic party. The commitment of the leaders to the community's interests, their ability to respect intra-party dissension, their willingness to sacrifice personal interests for the sake of community and their proximity to the people tend to increase the popularity of the party, which ultimately results in its growth.

In a conflict environment, a moderate ethnic party may aim to change the existing political system. The conflict, which is virtually between the ethnic party and the State, may operate in two forms—democratic and violent. The conflict may decline where the State is democratic and accommodating of the ethnic interests. If the State is repressive and un-accommodative, the conflict takes a violent form. Violent conflicts may operate in two stages. In the first stage, democratic means of the demands of the ethnic party may be violently suppressed by the State, which may lead the party either to limit its activities or to proceed with more vigour. When the party opts for the latter, the State may respond further violently leading to the second stage—violent response from the ethnic minority. When this cycle dominates the political space, 'violent conflict' becomes the trend.

**DECLINE OF MODERATE ETHNIC PARTIES**

The creation of parties has been a continuous process. 'The historical graveyards are cluttered with parties which dominated the political scene but which subsequently adapted to new circumstances and therefore died, were absorbed by
new more active movements or withered into small marginal parties.\textsuperscript{46} Causes for the decline of parties vary according to the changes of political climate. Existing studies often use terms, such as ‘decay’, ‘fall’ and ‘failure’ of party, alternatively. However, these terms do not mean the same. Failure may be a temporary phenomenon. A failed party either could re-emerge in a suitable political climate or may decline over a period. Decline means the process of downfall. It may lead to its wither or it may recover from its setback and re-emerge. But, for the purpose of this study, Howard L. Reiter’s definition for the decline of a party has been adopted. He observes:

Party decline is the phenomenon in which political parties in general are less determinative of the attitudes and behaviour of political actors on both the mass and elite levels, less highly regard, and less likely to inspire the electoral act than they once were.\textsuperscript{47}

Scholars have identified the following factors and situations where parties face decline:

(i) Earnest Haas attributes ‘declining partnership as a response to affluence.’\textsuperscript{48}

(ii) Samuel Huntington identifies ‘decline due to social turmoil’.\textsuperscript{49}

However, in a constant conflict situation, where a blend of majoritarian and communal rule under which an ethnic party that represents the people who had equally glorious history and self-rule like the majority community, there are some unique causes for its decline.

The Response of the State

If the State is not democratically accommodative, a moderate ethnic party is compelled to adopt radical measures against the State. This creates a violent cycle,

\textsuperscript{46} Palombara and Weiner, n. 27, p. 7.


in which the State may adopt repressive measures against the moderate party. Failure to withstand State repression due to various factors subsequently results in the decline of an ethnic party.

If the party is powerful enough to match the force of the State with its own support base, the nature of the moderate party undergoes a dramatic change and becomes a militant party. If a section of the moderate party becomes assertive and violent, then this wing of the moderate party becomes powerful, overtaking the parent party. Or, the aggressive elements lose faith in the moderate politics abandoning the peaceful means and leave the moderate party to find a different path. This affects the moderate party, and may lead to its decline.

Party Policy, Programme and Goal

A party is formed to achieve a goal or set of goals. In order to achieve its goal, the party formulates its working programme. When an ethnic party takes up the issues of the particular ethnic community, it has to adopt an ideology that would ensure the betterment of the entire people of that community. Further, the ideology should be adopted with the understanding of its real meaning and suitable to the interests of the community. That should reflect in every aspect and activities of the party. If an ethnic party adopts an ideology with the populist motive of mobilising the masses and does not faithfully adhere to it or distorts, it that would damage the party and its support base.

Likewise, the working programme should be effective enough to make the State consider the demands of the ethnic party. Implementation of such programmes under guiding principles would rarely fail. Conversely, if the party formulated attractive working programme that the party is unable to implement would create dissention in the party and depletion of the support base. In this regard, it would be apt to note first the observations of Jean Blondel on the policies, programmes and goals of parties that seriously affect the development of party systems:

It does seem true that parties fail to follow the stipulations of their own ideologies in preparing programs; it is perhaps curious, although the point is often made, that the implications of an ideology are not examined
systematically. ... Yet parties rarely concern themselves actively with the implementation of these goals. In most cases, programs are drafted quickly, in the context of elections, rather than carefully prepared; their implementation is spasmodic and half-hearted. party leaders often claim, for their defence ... some reasons.50

If the party changes its programmes to the extreme side without being successful in achieving its moderate goals, the policies of the party are seen as populist but not practical. If a populist policy adopted by a particular party is unrealistic, it eventually results in making that party unpopular not only among the community it represents, but even among its own followers. Considering the limitations of a moderate party and the task it takes to achieve should be within its limits. If they take a goal, they have to evaluate their strength and the power and character of the State. If a goal necessitates the support of violent means, or violation of the laws of the land extensively, the moderates alone cannot achieve it. In such cases, moderates have to get into alliance with some radical organisations. This provides a space for the growth of other radical groups representing the same community interests. If an ethnic party adopts goals beyond its limits, it might weaken the goal itself. Jean Blondel observes:

There are clear limits beyond which parties cannot go without simply being disobeyed, or resisted. It follows neither that parties cannot achieve results nor that they are unable to convince the population to accept some changes or make some sacrifices.... Criticism concerning the failings of party programmes seems ostensibly justified. In the great majority of cases programs are unclear, often limited in scope, and not closely connected to the goals, which the party proclaims.51

However, the difficulties involved in the practical politics, where parties have to address various issues of contradictory nature, are numerous. The parties also have to take account of different actors and not ignore them or brush them aside quickly.

If the moderate ethnic parties fail to adopt their programmes to the changing needs and aspirations of the ethnic community, especially, the newer forces and provide a space for them, the party is seen as bankrupt that results in its decline.

50 Blondel, n. 8, p. 132.
51 Ibid.
They become unpopular among the community it represents if they adopt shifting programmes and opportunistic policies.

More importantly, the leadership of the moderate ethnic parties has to be strong, charismatic, articulate, industrious, and acceptable to all members of its community. The leaders should be in a position to meet the crises of the community despite all odds. While being rigid enough to withstand the pressures from the State, the leaders should be flexible enough to bargain their community’s interest with the regime. If the leaders fail, the decline of a moderate ethnic party is imminent.

Emergence of Militants

The failure of a moderate ethnic party to achieve its demands over a period of time results in the community getting dissatisfied with the party. The presence of militant organisations representing their interests shifts the focus of the community from a moderate party towards militant organisations. The growth of militant politics always shifts the balance against the moderate party, which will result in the latter’s decline.

When militant groups compete with the moderate party in expressing the interests of the community and when the community’s loyalty towards them increases, it cuts their loyalty and support towards the moderate ethnic party. The repressive nature of the State and the inability of the moderate party to withstand the pressure from the State often results in the decline of the moderate party.

External Intervention

External intervention is the involvement of an external power (a country or group of countries) in an internal struggle or conflict. This intervention can be military or non-military. Among the non-military options are positive or negative sanctions (rewards or punishments for certain behaviours), mediation, and peacekeeping.52

Ethnic movements seek external support—both material and moral—for their sustenance and survival. In such cases, the ethnic conflict in a society is not only determined by the factors within the country, but also by the amount of external support. It refers to the entire range of active and passive support that ethnic groups receive. Ethnic groups may receive support from neighbouring countries with whom they share ethnic ties or from the international community.

The external factors also determine the level and intensity of the conflict, though the nature and intensity of such involvement vary. It may also patronise the militants for its own strategic reasons, which gives them recognition resulting in the influence of militants in the conflict State. According to Cooper and Berdal, motivations on the part of the intervener range from hegemonic ambitions, concerns about regional stability, ethnic sympathy for oppressed groups, a sense of international responsibility allied to some notion of world order or regional order, to humanitarian considerations. The status of the moderate ethnic parties would depend on the overarching reason for the external intervention.

If the external intervener is impartial or neutral then there is a possibility of negotiated settlement with more room for moderate ethnic parties to operate. However, the external intervention in favour of the militants may have the effect of reducing the cost of sustaining a rebellion by a small ethnic group, which otherwise might not materialise or may be quickly crushed by the government. However, if the militants, taking advantage of the intervention, go against the interest of the interveners, then the latter would turn around in favour of the State or the moderates. If the external actor pinpoints the cause of the conflict to 'governance deficit', then it would push for a major share for the moderate ethnic parties in governance of the areas dominated by the ethnic community. At the

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same time, this aspect of moderates gaining external support might infuriate militants. The latter would go to the extent of decimating the moderates.56

CONCLUSION

Decline of moderate ethnic political parties can therefore be seen as interplay of the four factors cited above. A moderate party has its own limitations in addressing issues in a situation of acute violent conflict. In such a situation, it becomes imperative at times to take more militant and radical measures to counter the State. A moderate party functioning within the constitutional framework cannot openly challenge the State system. Militant groups who are able to openly oppose the State and its policies fill this vacuum or political space. The issue gets divided between the State on one side and militant groups on the other, which begins to represent the cause of the ethnic group. If there is contradiction between the programme of the party and the ways of achieving it, the party is unable to stand the test of time. The internal schisms in the society as well as the political scenario are further aggravated by the involvement of external forces. The outside support often provides fillip to militant groups. This adversely affects moderate political party as bearer of the interest of the cause. Against this background, the issue of emergence and decline of the TULF as a Tamil ethnic moderate political party in Sri Lanka can be studied.