CHAPTER III

INSTRUMENTS OF PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OF FOREIGN POLICY

QUESTION-HOUR

Question-hour is the first hour of every sitting in the Parliament. It is one of the most widespread procedures in parliamentary practice and the most interesting part of parliamentary proceedings.

The procedure of asking questions is British in origin and character. It attracts the galleries and gives to the Parliament the great significance it possesses. The ratio of questions on a particular field shows the interest of members in the administration of foreign policy problems. Raising questions is a modern method for supervising the general policy pursued by the Government.

Asking questions is one of the "surest ways of bringing administration to book." It is a regular feature of the Parliamentary life in India which facilitates to put the Government on parliamentary trial.

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1. Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Capetown, Cassell, Unwin Brothers, 1962, p.271. Also see, Ibid., p. 267.
4. Sankdher, op. cit., p. 367
ORIGIN OF PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS:

The British Parliament's procedural committee described question-hour as, the readiest and the most effective method of parliamentary control over the actions of the Executive. In Great Britain, the first question in Parliament was asked in connection with foreign affairs. However, in India, it was not so. In the first session of Parliament on 28th January 1950, no question was raised and the first part of the Proceedings with regard to questions was never published.

This mode of direct "catechising" is not followed in all the countries. In India the present procedure of questioning was adopted as a result of several modifications. The present Rules of Procedure in Lok Sabha contain the raison d'être of the experience gained over the years. Under the Indian Council Acts of 1861, the function of the Legislative Council was limited to legislation. The members could not enter into grievances, call for information or examine the conduct of the Executive through questions. There was no such questioning procedure. After 1885 when the A.I.C.C. came into existence, it insisted on responsible government. Lord Dufferin, the then Viceroy, in his 1888 Despatch recommended inter alia,

1. Tiwari, op. cit., p. 38
the right of asking questions by members of the Legislative Council. The next stage came during the Minto-Morley Reforms by the Indian Council Act of 1909. Under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the Legislature became bicameral and its powers increased. Under these Rules, not more than five questions, asked by the same member could be called for answers. The landmark in this regard was reached in 1947-50, the most significant of all changes, occurred when the Rules with regard to questions on foreign affairs were abrogated yet the number of questions kept on increasing.

After 1950, several alterations are made such as with regard to limitations of number of questions for oral answers and half-an-hour discussion etc.

PROCEDURAL CHANGES DURING THE THIRD LOK SABHA:

During the Chinese aggression, when the country was facing grave emergency, the Third Lok Sabha came into existence. The President proclaimed it on 26th October 1962. The Speaker, in a meeting on November 7, 1962, with the leaders, representatives of all Opposition groups in the House and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, decided upon the three procedural changes which are specially about the three types of Questions which are as follows:

1. Starred
2. Unstarred
3. Short Notice Questions

The latter being the questions which relate to a matter of urgent public importance and can be asked with

1. Ibid., pp. 38-40.
shorter notice than the period of notice prescribed for an ordinary question.

RULES RELATING TO QUESTIONS:

A minimum of ten clear days notice is necessary for a question to be answered. The Ministers are however, entitled only to five days notice before question is put on the Order Paper.

ALLOTMENT OF DAYS FOR QUESTIONS:

After the fixation of the dates of sitting of a session of Lok Sabha, allotment of the time available for answering of questions with regard to various ministries on different days in rotation is made. If on the allotted day, holiday falls, the question will not be asked during the whole week. And the Minister to whom the question is addressed, shall forthwith lay on the Table a written reply to the question and no oral reply will be required for such a question and consequently, no supplementary questions shall be raised thereof.

After the date is announced for the session, list of questions called "Subject List" is given to the Ministers concerned. Questions are an informative device hence their scope is reasonably limited. On the list of questions not more than thirty questions can be laid for Oral answers in one day.

1. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
2. Ibid., p. 47.
The Ministers are supplied with questions at least five days before the date is fixed for asking questions. After the question is raised by a Minister, it is open to any member of the House to ask supplementary questions; and in India they are alarmingly raised. A Member can withdraw a question by Notice before the sitting for which his question has been placed on the list. Answers to questions proposed to be given in the House by the Ministers are not open for publication until they have been actually given on the floor of the House or laid on the table. They are purposefully not open for public perusal.

**SHORT NOTICE QUESTIONS:**

In a day not more than two such questions are put up. The average number of short notice Questions in the session of six weeks duration is about 12. Even this question can be followed by subsidiary short-notice Questions.

**HALF AN HOUR DISCUSSION:**

As a matter of sufficient public importance this discussion is provided as an offshot of the Question Hour.

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1. Ibid., pp. 43, 45, 47, and 49
2. Ibid., p. 50.
3. Tiwari, *op. cit.*, p. 50
Thus the question-hour pinpoints the administrative errors and puts, "a search light on its failures". 1

**QUESTION-HOUR IN PRACTICE:**

The Questions can be raised individually as well as in collaboration. For example, the Oral question No. 40, with regard to the Colombo Powers' fresh move to settle Sino-Indian border Dispute was raised by 7 members in collaboration namely, P.K. Kumacan, R.K. Bhuwalka, S.C. Deb, Krishna Chundra, M.P. Bhagawa, A. Subba Rao, and A.M. Tariq. 2

In the first Session of the II Lok Sabha, the number of questions, Oral and written was as follows:

(1) Oral answers to Questions- 743 3
(2) Written answers to Questions - 559 4

Only 4 questions were about the Sino-India border dispute, in which none was of any serious nature.

And in the II Session of the Parliament, only one question was raised with regard to Indo-Pakistan Canal Water Dispute (Q. No. 81) 19 Members raised it, 5 and every Minister,

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1. Ibid.
4. Ibid., Col. 3202.
may have been, was there to bear his responsibility for his acts of omission and commission. It is during the Question-Hour that, "the Government is able to quickly feel the pulse of the nation and adopt its policies and actions accordingly". 1

Questions raised by Members help to efface misconceptions from the minds of the members of Parliament. They are meant to gather information on a certain specific issue, for instance Bansilal enquired from the Prime Minister whether the Chinese military contingent has withdrawn from the demilitarised zone in Ladakh and what steps the Government took to meet the situation. Dinesh Singh informed the House that a Protest Note against its establishment had been lodged with the Chinese Government. 2

Through Questions in Parliament, the Members get an opportunity to maintain their day to day contact with their constituencies and the public in general, whose grievances of executive or administrative character are brought to the notice of the Government. Questions also enable the ministers to gauge the popular reaction to their policy and administration. This also keeps the civil servant on his toes. It also compels the Ministers to be alert, thus preventing those petty injustices which are commonly

1. Tewari, op. cit., p. 37
associated with bureaucracy and parliamentary democracy. \(^1\)

Similarly in 1959, when Jaswant Singh saw a report about the Chinese crossing the Indian border at Barahoti, he enquired of Madam Laxmi Menon if the report was correct and the latter replied in the negative satisfying the particular Member as well as the House. \(^2\) Questioning is a device to keep the House informed of the latest developments in any field. Question-hour is the liveliest time in Parliament. It appears to be an engrossing period for the Cabinet and the Members of Parliament. If it is desirable, the question can lead to further questions. The purpose of supplementary questions is to extract information not to enter into an argument with the Minister concerned. \(^3\)

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3. See, Parliamentary Debates, Rajya Sabha, Official Report Vol. LIX, No.2, 8.9.64. Oral answer to Question No.38, Cols. 228-229- raised in collaboration by Raini Reddy, S. Rama, Mahabir Dass to furnish information about the fact of Chinese infiltration into North East of Bhutan, their claim line in Tashi Yatse etc., the construction of the Chinese air fields. Mrs. Laxmi Menon replied that about the former, there is no information, the middle one, in the negative and confirmed the last one about the newly constructed net work of roads and publication of wrong maps. Also see the written answer to question No.44, col. 238.

Also see, Parliamentary Debates, Rajya Sabha, Official Report, Vol. XLIV, No. 3, 16.8.63, oral answer to question No.75, cols. 353-4. When the Deputy Minister Shri D.R. Chavan gave a positive information to the question"how many times China has violated the Indian air space since she declared unilateral cease-fire?"
While answers may be long or short according to the mood of the Minister, questions should be short and to the point. The Members of the Rajya Sabha are more prone to argumentation: as compared to Members of the Lok Sabha.¹

(Continued from the previous page)

raised by R.S. Khander, Shri Ram Sahay, Chavan said, "Twelve times since 21st November 1962 on the basis of information available to date to Government".

Also see, for information Q. 1966. "Chinese intrusion into Indian territory".

Question No. 9 raised by Shri Ram Singh and K.C.Baghel asked the Minister of Defence to State:

(a) the details of intrusions of the Chinese troops into Indian territory during the last three months;

(b) what is the number of casualties suffered by both sides in clashes that the intrusions due to the Indian Defence forces?

Minister of Defence, Y.B. Chavan:

(a) "During the period from November 1965 to Jan. 1966, the Chinese committed 40 intrusions into Indian territory and Sikkim, sector wise details is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEFA</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladakh</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 40

¹ Editorially, "Questionable", Indian Express, (New Delhi), 16.5.68. The Rajya Sabha member is compared to Oliver Goldsmith's, village school master, who, though vanquished, keeps on arguing.
Question-Hour brings to light the principle of ministerial responsibility and therefore, the Question-Hour and the interpellation does not happen to be a mere device for obtaining information, but a very direct form of control, which is linked up with the history of the parliamentary system itself.\(^1\)

Undoubtedly, raising question is a valuable right of a Member of Parliament.\(^2\) Like the 19th century Great Britain, the questions are raised and answered in India with appalling frankness.\(^3\) The Supplementary Questions put the Ministers to acid tests. It may often expose the failures of the policy decisions. The answers by the Ministers should convince the Parliament of the Minister's answers of their departmental activities. It subsequently builds the image of success on the general public.

Question-Hour is not only a device to elicit facts but also to provide an opportunity for the display of parliamentary reactions. A supplementary question involves subtle care, as it can not only sidetrack Oppositional comments but also confuse

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1. Parliaments, op.cit., p.265. Also see, Tiwari, op. cit., p. 52, "The Question Hour is the very life of parliamentary democracy. It gives tone and vitality to the institution and on the manner in which the Question Hour is utilized depends the degree of success which democracy can achieve. And in India this is democratically utilized".


the whole matter. It can be a suitable device to further elucidate any issue if pertinent question and pinpointed answer is given.

Sometimes very relevant and pertinent questions are raised and answered on the floor of the House. Regarding the Sino-India border dispute, Ram Subhaq Singh asked the length and breadth of the road constructed by the Chinese Government in the Indian territory in Ladakh. In 1954, the Government got the information for the first time that this road is being constructed. The Government was doing its best to stop this construction. Nehru furnished this information in details, that the Sinkiang Gartok High-way ran approximately 100 miles through the Indian territory in Eastern extremity of Aksai-Chin in Ladakh. The first doubts arose in 1957 and the following summer, the Indian Government decided to send two reconnaissance parties. Having confirmed this news, a Protest Note was lodged by Delhi on 18.10.1958. Many supplementary questions followed this information.¹ Thus the Parliament was furnished with

1. Parliamentary Debates, Rajya Sabha, Official Report, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Oral question No.15, Cols. 22-25. Also see Parliamentary Debates, Parliament of India, Official Report, Vol. I, No.1, 6.2.52 Part I, cols. 1-2. Oral answer to question No. 2, where the question was asked by Shri Raj Kanwar about the "U.N. military observers in Kashmir", their strength the contingent which met their expenditure, the country of origin and the number of observers.
relevant information by the answers. A question, in fact, is primarily asked for the purpose of obtaining information on a matter of public importance. Questions which contain arguments, inferences or defamatory statements or otherwise refer to the character or conduct of any person except in his official or public capacity are not admitted by the Speaker. Moreover, if the subject matter of a question is sub judice, it is not permitted to be raised. The most significant point about a question being that questions directly involving policy matters are not allowed, for it is not possible to enunciate completely policies within the compass of an answer to a question. Furthermore it is not desirable to disclose the secret intricacies involved in a policy decision. Sometimes such questions are raised which act as the gambit for a challenge to government policy in the form of a brief interrogation through supplementary questions.

The volley of questions keeps the Government vigilant and alert. Asked by B.D. Khobargade, about the publication

1. Tiwari, op. cit., pp. 43-44. Also see the Annexure attached therewith between pages 53 and 55 under the caption, "condition of admissibility of questions." Where such Rules occur (XI), "it shall not raise questions of policy too large to be dealt with within the limits of an answer to a question.

2. Richards, op. cit., p. 87.
of a wrong map in the Chinese magazine, 'China Encounter', Mrs. Laxmi Menon replied that the Government endeavoured to efface the misconception from the minds of other states through its information services to correct the erroneous impression created by the Chinese false publicity.¹

Often, very silly questions are raised. As, in the wake of Chinese threat on NEFA, Ram Subhag Singh, in collaboration with Shri Radha Raman, Smt. Mafida Ahmad and Bhagwati, asked Nehru, if the press report about the village Aka being washed away was correct as mentioned in the Statesman (New Delhi), October 26, 1957. Nehru confirmed that the report was "fictitious" and basically without "foundation"²

Both the members of the Party in power and Opposition utilise their right in this respect. Sometimes the questions are directed to either the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister, or the Deputy Minister or the Minister of State. Often, difficult and embarrassing questions are raised, anyway the Minister of External Affairs cannot dodge the barrage of questions encountering him. Like debates, the Question-Hour

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procedure remains under the control of the Speaker, and if the Speaker ever fails to exert his proper control, the Question-Hour and the supplementaries may degenerate into a frivolous debate.  

Sometimes the question are not answered on the ground of public interest. Its notable example was the refusal by Y.B. Chavan on the ground that it was not in the public interest when P.L. Kureel asked him to disclose the Government's ascertainment with regard to the new roads and border posts constructed by the Chinese government to increase road building in NEFA. However, due to the fear of questions, the Government keeps its accounts in an apple pie order.

The Ministry of External Affairs is often questioned about its publicity function. On the floor of the House, raising the bogey of questions is not monopolised by a particular

1. Tiwari, op. cit., p.48. Also see, Ramesh Narayan Mathur, "Parliamentary Procedure in India", Parliamentary Studies, Vol. 2, No. 5, October, 1958, p. 29. Where he writes, "The Speaker as the guardian of the rights and privileges of the House is bound to admit question which bring to light abuses and injustices of the administration."

2. Parliamentary Debates, Rajya Sabha, Official Report Vol.XLIX, No. 7, 15th September 1964, written answer to question No.200 cols. 1332-3. Also see, col. 1342, in the same debate written answer to question No.37, raised by Ram Sahay in connection with aerodromes built by China near the Indian border. Mostly after 1957 the questions on foreign affairs were asked on China hence the frequent reference to these questions.
Ministry or Minister. With regard to the Ministry of External Affairs various members were obliged to answer on the floor extending the area of information of the Members of Parliament.

An unguarded and spontaneous reply on a matter of foreign policy can produce an awkward situation for the Government. The Minister has to be careful and cautious in his answers and, moreover, has to keep himself well aware of facts and developments so as to avoid any embarrassment.

There has been a steep rise in the number of questions raised against the Ministry of External Affairs.

The following Table shows the rise in questions, raised against the Ministry of External Affairs between 1957 and 1961.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total Questions</th>
<th>Questions under EA</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>8,310</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>3.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>13,806</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>4.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>13,992</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>4.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>12,212</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>4.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>14,480</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>4.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of Starred Questions answered during the Question-Hour has been on the decrease from Lok Sabha to Lok Sabha. In the First Lok Sabha, 1952-57, the average number of questions orally answered was 15 to 20 but in the Third Lok Sabha of 1962-67, the number of questions orally answered came down to 5 and 10. The average of orally questions in the House of Commons is 22 to 25.¹

In fact, a question acts as a catalyst which forces Government to frame policy after prolonged period of hesitation and doubt.² Sometimes questions may lead to the appointment of a commission, a court of enquiry or even legislation when matters raised have been grave enough to agitate the public mind.³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Ministry</th>
<th>Number of questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>2,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atomic Energy (Dept. of)</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Affairs and P.M. Sectt.</td>
<td>2,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Affairs</td>
<td>5,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (of questions in all Ministries)</strong></td>
<td><strong>62,800</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. *Second Lok Sabha, Activities and Achievements, 1957-62*, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi (62), Table No.XII.
The method of questions and parliamentary interrogation is important in a variety of ways. It enables to obtain the Governments' views on a changing situation or a new problem. It keeps the Minister in touch with public opinion and provides an opportunity for critics to challenge any aspect of foreign policy. It is a "safety valve and swift method of calling attention to wrongs otherwise overlooked".

1. Also see, Kenneth Young, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy", *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1955, Vol. VI, pp. 172-73, in which the values of question time is stressed.

2. Tiwari, *op. cit.*, Tiwari cites Alfred C. Bossom to have explained it as a vehicle for both Governments and members to dispell illusions, explain uncertainties, remedy injustices and reassure the public."
The following table reveals the trend of the number of questions asked under various Ministries. The Ministries which have been the subject of major attention are Food, Agriculture, Commerce, Development and Cooperation, Home Affairs, Education and Railways and each recording more than 7% of the total followed by Ministries of Commerce, Defence, External Affairs, Finance, Health, Family Planning, Irrigation, Food etc., recording more than 3% of the total. The rest in general have recorded less than 3% of the total number of questions.

**STATEMENT SHOWING THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED BY MEMBERS IN THE THIRD LOK SABHA DURING THE YEARS 1962-66 UNDER VARIOUS MINISTRIES.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Ministries</th>
<th>1962</th>
<th>1963</th>
<th>1964</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1966</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defence including erstwhile Department of Defence Coordination 4th &amp; 5th session</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Atomic Energy</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Affairs</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Affairs</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activities of Third Lok Sabha 1962-67 (Statistics & Charts), Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, October, 1967.
A total of 1,62,334 notices of questions were received from Members during the sixteen sessions of the Third Lok Sabha from 1962-1966. Out of this 58,440 questions representing about 35% of the total receipts were admitted.

Starred questions are those for which oral answers are required. Unstarred questions are those for which only written answers are to be furnished and short Notice Questions require oral answers within short notice. The table below shows the proportions of the Notices received and "admitted".

**STATEMENT SHOWING THE DISPOSAL OF QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS DURING THE SESSIONS OF THE THIRD LOK SABHA.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starred</td>
<td>1,45,580</td>
<td>89.68</td>
<td>Starred</td>
<td>14,312</td>
<td>24.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstarred</td>
<td>12,021</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>Unstarred</td>
<td>6,133</td>
<td>10.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Notice</td>
<td>4,733</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>Short Notice</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Starred qs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>admitted as</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unstarred</td>
<td>26,916</td>
<td>63.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Short Notice</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>admitted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>as Starred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and Unstarred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,62,334</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>58,440</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Activities of Third Lok Sabha, 1962-67 (Statistic & Charts), Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, October 1967.*
MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Motions regarding India's foreign policy and Resolutions regarding significant situations provide another opportunity to the Parliament to control foreign policy. These motions lead to lengthy discussions on the floor of the House resulting in policy shifts. When the Parliament is in session, these Motions and Resolutions enable it to be kept informed of the latest international developments. They provide publicity for explanations of ministerial policy and enable the Cabinet to discern trends of the opinion of the Opposition. They create a focus of scrutiny for ministerial actions and enable the Ministers to present their clarifications to some of the confusions arising in the minds of the Members of Parliament which may amount to parliamentary support for the policies of the Government. The Motions regarding International situations provide ample opportunity for an elongated debate on the main tenets and specific trends in foreign policy. In India such Motions and Resolutions are moved by the Minister of External Affairs at a given time. The focal point of criticism during such discussions is the failure of the Government of India, either in the policy itself or in its implementation in a given situation.

Almost during every session Nehru used to move this motion, followed by his broad interpretation of the international happenings vis-à-vis the policy followed by the Government of India. The motion proceeds by speeches of eminent parliamentarians. The
Opposition members who weigh the policy of the Government, with applaud or jaundiced eye, level criticism against it or praise it. They freely move amendments and try to add things to the original motion by a substitute motion. After one or two days or even a week long debate, the motions are either entered and stand passed or are rejected. On no occasion during the Nehru regime, an important motion was rejected. Despite criticisms by the Opposition parties, they fully endorsed the policy of the Government from time to time. The longest debates were held on the Sino-India Border Dispute during 1957, when for the first time, the fact of Chinese road building was disclosed to Parliament, most of the time was devoted to the discussion of Sino-Indian Border Dispute and the policy followed by the Government of India.

Between May 10, 1957 and May 31, 1957, during the 1st Session of the II Lok Sabha, 106.36 hours in sittings were given, no discussion was held under the Ministry of External Affairs, no significant foreign policy issue was raised. In the President's address which spells out the broad policy lines of his Government, no reference was made to foreign policy. What gained primacy was railway budget and general discussions. This reflects the non-seriousness of the Members in foreign affairs vis-a-vis the economic issues of the nation. Even a cursory glance at the motions reveals that the Members were preoccupied with the domestic issues, hence the absence of any foreign policy issue as a matter of urgent public importance.¹

¹ Lok Sabha Debates II Series, Vol. II, No. 17, 31.5.57 (Resume) col. 3363.
Since 1957 onwards, China became the pivot of debates. Nehru realised that China was something more than a mere neighbour and the question of Sino-India border needed attention. While moving the motion regarding international situation Nehru applauded the increasing amount of interest that the House started taking in international affairs. He felt that it was important that not only the parliament but also the whole country should increase their interest in international affairs, without, however at the expense of the domestic problems, which always call for primary consideration. The domestic problems are affected so much by international events that it helps to have this larger perspective. Ultimately Nehru left this discussion, to the House to have as much time as possible to express their own opinions and tender suggestions to the Government for further action. The debate was concluded in ascertaining the approval of the policy of the Government. As compared to Lok Sabha debates, the Rajya Sabha debates are less heated, less passionate and less sentimental. Since the Upper House consists of more sophisticated personnel, the debates are more calculated and cool.

2. Ibid., col. 724
3. Ibid., col. 865.
In the last session of 1957 Parliament, the Lok Sabha discussed the motion on international situation taking about 8 hours time, which centered around the looming problems in Goa, Indonesia, Pakistan and Ceylon. After a long play-way with it in which members of Parliament spoke, it again ended with the adoption of the motion approving the Government's policy. All the other Amendment Motions were withdrawn. 1

In every session such motions are moved, and if the situation is taxing and demanding, more Amendment Motions are moved and debated. Sometimes the House praises the manner in which the Government carries on its business with the wisdom and advice of the Parliament in the handling of foreign affairs. 2 Nihar Ranjan Ray, while emphatically supporting the policy of the Government, expressed his appreciation for the way the Government had been thoroughly performing its duty in terms of the policy that the people of this country have laid down through their two Houses of Parliament. 3

In 1956, the highest recorded number of sittings of the Lok Sabha took place. It was 151 times, consuming 1026 hours in one and a half decade from 1950-66. The next grade was in 1951,

1. Lok Sabha Debate II Series, Vol. X, No. 28, 17th December 1957, col. 6018
3. Ibid., Cols. 171-72
when in 150 sittings 987 hours were employed.  

**STATEMENT SHOWING THE NUMBER OF DURATION OF ANNUAL SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE (UPTO THIRD LOK SABHA).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of sittings</th>
<th>Duration of sittings in Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NO-CONFIDENCE MOTIONS:**

Sometimes Motions of Non-Confidence in the Council of Ministers are adopted. The maximum were adopted during 1962-67. 102-13 hours were consumed in such discussions, which threw

1. Activities of Third Lok Sabha, (Statistics & Charts) October 1967, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, p. 8
ample light on the foreign policy of the nation, consuming 2.8% of the total 3742.40 hours. 

**TABLE NO. XXI**

**RESOLUTIONS DISCUSSED IN THE THIRD LOK SABHA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Day on which the Resolution was discussed</th>
<th>Subject matter</th>
<th>Name of the member in-charge</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Action taken by the House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.11.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.11.62</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shri J.L.Nehru</td>
<td>37/47</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.11.62</td>
<td>Chinese Aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.11.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.11.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(A) Government Resolution

Third Session

8.11.62
9.11.62
10.11.62
12.11.62
13.11.62
14.11.62

Third Session

8.11.62
9.11.62
10.11.62
12.11.62
13.11.62
14.11.62

Fourth Session

19.3.63

Administrative policy

Shri Hem Barua

1.15

Withdrawn by leave of the House

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Day on which the Resolution was discussed</th>
<th>Subject matter</th>
<th>Name of the member in-charge</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Action taken by the House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.2.64</td>
<td>Proclamation of Emergency</td>
<td>Shri Tridib Chaudhuri</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelfth Session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.64</td>
<td>Quitting of Commonwealth</td>
<td>Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>Not concluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.9.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.11.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>A substitute motion by Shri S.N. Das</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.11.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.11.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the adjournment of the Debate on this was adopted by the House on 12.11. 1965.
### STATEMENT SHOWING THE TIME TAKEN BY THIRD LOK SABHA ON VARIOUS KINDS OF BUSINESS DURING FIRST TO SIXTEENTH SESSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Business</th>
<th>Time taken on each item</th>
<th>Percentage to total time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjournment motions</td>
<td>Hours Minutes</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Govt. Bills</td>
<td>548.24</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Private Members Bill</td>
<td>119.34</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling Attention Notices (Rule 197)</td>
<td>111.00</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Half-an-hour Discussion (Rule 55)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Short Duration Discussion (Rule 193)</td>
<td>59/13</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Motions (Rules 191 &amp; 342)</td>
<td>378/43</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Motions of No-Confidence in the Council of Ministers.</td>
<td>102.13</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Motions for modification of statutory Rules, Rule(235).</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidents' Address</td>
<td>105.01</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>564.41</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement by Ministers (Rules 372)</td>
<td>68.40</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>222.27</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total | 3732.40 | 100.00 |

*Activities of Third Lok Sabha 1962-67 (Statistics & Charts)*  
Lok Sabha Secretariat - New Delhi, October 1967.*
MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT:

The Indian Parliament often utilizes these motions to carry another debate to which it can lead. It happens to be highly convenient for it allows speeches to range widely unrestricted by the terms of a reasoned motion for debate. The Adjournment motion can also be used to permit debates initiated by the back-benchers. It also includes half-an-hour-discussions.

In the Third Lok Sabha, 41.25 hours were taken by various adjournment motions, which comes to 1.1% of the total time consumed by other kinds of business. During the III Session of the II Lok Sabha from 11.9.57-21.12.57, 23 such motions were received, none was admitted and all the motions were withheld by the consent of the speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS:

Statements of ministerial policy are often made to the Parliament after the question-Hour. This device of parliamentary process is useful, for it enables the Government to give the House its views of the latest developments and many international issues affecting India's national interest abroad.

3. See, A.M. Thomas, the Minister of Defence Production, the statement relating to situation on the India-China Border, Parliamentary Debates, Rajya Sabha, Official Report, Vol. IX, No.3, 16.2.66 cols. 312-317. He stated "since a

Contd....
These statements can be made in reply to private notice questions that are pre-arranged with the Ministers. The Ministerial pronouncement is generally followed by questions and if the matter is of great importance, the leaders of the Opposition parties can make statements and it can assume the status of miniature debate. It is probable that this statement may be made and debated on the motion of adjournment.

Some procedural modifications are necessary if the Parliament wants to remain fully informed in moments of grave crisis and tension. During the III Session of the Lok Sabha between 11.9.57 and 21.12.57, 59 notices on matters of urgent public importance were received and 10 statements were made.¹

(Continued from the previous page)

large number of questions have been asked by members of Parliament about the happenings since then, I am making this statement to indicate the up-to-date position. After November 30, 1965, it is the first statement to be made. He adds that during the months of December 1965 to January 1966, the Chinese committed 27 violations 19 of them were in Ladakh, 4 in NEFA, 3 in Sikkim and one in U.P. The Chinese have increased their military potential and since then, there has been no change of policy of the Government of India.

Very often the Ministers make personal statements to the Parliament when some misreporting takes place. A minister who resigns due to policy misunderstanding may also make clarification-statements. Although such occasions are uncommon, they can be debated and commented upon in later debates. Most important statements made by Nehru are as follows:

1. Indo-West Pakistan Border Conference on 9.2.62 and 2. on 23.3.59 and 8.5.58 on the situation in Tibet and 3. on 24.3.61 on the Commonwealth Prime Ministers conference.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES:

The other miscellaneous items in the time table of the Parliament, specially the Lok Sabha, give enhanced flexibility to its proceedings providing additional opportunities of discussing the foreign affairs. For instance, on the publication of an important report, the Government obliges the House to discuss its conclusions. Often such a discussion is disallowed owing to the time factor as well as to avoid detailed commitments in relation to the conclusions. In the same way, the private members' time hardly make any major contribution to parliamentary discussion of foreign policy but, however, it can be of value if used to examine a specialized or secondary topic that is generally overlooked. Although discussions may also result while

1. Lok Sabha: Activities and Achievements, 1957-62 Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1962, New Delhi, pp. 108, 109 and 110 Table No. XXXVI.
2. Richards, op. cit., p. 95
considering the reports of financial committees, Public
Accounts Committee or any other Committee but these Committees
are not the proper forum for broad discussion on international
problems. The financial committees do not challenge Government
policy, on the contrary they ensure legality and economy in
the use of public funds.¹

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES:

The Parliament, "the forum of debate"² is not allowed
to tie its hand in negotiations and the course of discussion
with foreign powers is not revealed to it before-hand, it is
privileged to hold frequent debates to have a know-how of
international problems and participation in those discussions.
Hence in both the Houses, a wide-range of topics pertaining to
foreign affairs and policy are debated and discussed at large
ranging from the main principles, their relevance to present
day international situation, disarmament, commonwealth ties
to foreign aid and its advisibility.

Most of the time in Parliament is spent on general
debates, questions and ministerial statements. The question
period and the general debates, exemplify the usefulness of
Parliament's role with respect to policy-making.³ Since

¹. Ibid., pp. 95-6. The statement is originally attributed
to the British Committees.
². K.C. Wheare, op.cit., p. 185
³. Leon D. Epstein, "British Foreign Policy", Roy C. Macridis
   (ed.), op. cit., p. 38. The statement, though with regard
to British system is equally applicable to Indian Parliament.
Parliament is understood to be a "platform on which views are to be expressed and exchanged" freely, "a wide range of views finds expression in the Parliament".  

Parliament debates foreign policy issues vigorously and significantly. It is free from independent decision-making. The popularly elected Lok Sabha is the main forum but occasionally it is also discussed in the Rajya Sabha. Debate is an important instrument of influence and control. Though both the Houses debate international situation, the Government principally defends its policy in the Lok Sabha. In each parliamentary debate, a wide spectrum of views finds a forceful expression by members of Parliament, the main centre of attention is on the give and take between the party leaders i.e. the Prime Minister and expectant leader of the shadow Cabinet. The debate takes place between those who are literally responsible for policy and those who would like to become responsible. In fact it is "a discussion between a government and its alternative". 

In a debate for Motion regarding international situation in the Lok Sabha, the language of which is always the same is read out by the External Affairs Minister, as

2. Leon D. Epstein, *op. cit.*, p.37
follows: "That the present international situation and the policy of the Government of India in relation thereto be taken into consideration". Then the interested members participate and beg to move a couple of Substitute Motions but generally after a long discussion the debate ends by a solemn proclamation of approval by the Speaker.

"This House having considered the present international situation and the government of India in relation thereto approves the said policy". On a particular day, i.e., December 17, 1957, 6 hours were taken by the above mentioned debate and later on the motion was adopted.¹

In India, the session of Parliament starts with a formal speech by the President, delivered by him in a joint session. In this speech, the policy of the Government or Cabinet is stated. This Address is followed by a Motion of thanks, allowing a wide-ranging examination of government policy that lasts usually 5 days. Subsequently the debate on international situation takes place. Very often, in a debate on President's address, foreign policy becomes the major point of attack. Such as in the first session in 1960, foreign policy was the major point of controversy during the debate on President's Address, in which a "bit of acrimonious exchange took place".

To some Members of Opposition, the Note to Chau-En-lai by Nehru seemed a fundamental reversal of policy as stated in the President's address. Some Members called it a betrayal of "faith". Never before, Nehru has to save his stand more and justify his policy. ¹

Frequency of major foreign policy debate varies very considerably. If the international scene is tense and causes a deep division of opinion between the parties, arguments thereon shall be more animated and heated, "..... if the international scene is relatively peaceful and the parties are in general agreement in their attitudes towards foreign policy, debates are infrequent and when they do take place are normally calm". ² When in 1963, the world was having a peaceful atmosphere showing prospects of thaw in the cold-war, the nature of debate was quiet. The debate in the early 63, affirmed its "fresh" faith in non-alignment as a fruitful policy. Even in the serious conflict with China and in the hour of danger to India's security, it proved to be an intelligent and sound policy. This was the feeling among the members, only the Swatantra Party wanted alignment with the West. ³

The tone of debate is greatly affected by whether it is expected to end with a challenge to the Government in the division lobbies. When the speech is by the Prime Minister, the Chamber remains crammed up. Since the major parties in India generally agreed on basic principles of foreign policy, these debates generally ended without a vote being challenged. Critics of Parliament often comment unfavourably about the scarcity of attention the Members pay in the Chamber. One of the really hot debates in Indian Parliament on a foreign policy issue was, on the attitude adopted by the Government of India on Russian intervention in Hungary.¹

There is a democratic element in debating and holding public discussions on vital problems. The implication is that, it is a matter for the experts, yet it is less majestic to suggest, however hesitantly, that some aspects of defence are legitimately the concern of the entire country and therefore should be fully debated,² but there is a tendency in the Government to take resort to the contention that certain matters cannot be discussed for security reasons. Efforts in Parliament and elsewhere to obtain material data on defence matters generally flounder against

² "Swings of the Pendulum", article by Surveyor, Times of India (New Delhi), 11.4. 1960.
the dead wall of security requirements. Except for a few notable contribution in debate by persons who take an intelligent and keen interest in defence matters and apparently have their own sources of information, the debates in Parliament reveal the handicaps caused by lack of adequate information.¹

In Britain and other Commonwealth countries, there are frequent debates in the legislatures, some directly upon questions of policy, others arising out of debates themselves.² Very often the nature of debate reflects the amount of interest the country shows in foreign affairs. For the Lok Sabha session in mid-December 1962, it is said, "the temper in the Lok Sabha Debate .... reflected the new mood of the country. The present crisis has spotlighted the fact that the nation stands solidly behind Mr. Nehru in Emergency".³

Thus, the best opportunity available to the individual Members of Parliament to participate in foreign policy matters is the debate which is held at intervals in the whole House. They support the policy, if they are satisfied and criticise it vehemently, if they are dissatisfied. The foreign policy debate in the Lok Sabha on September 29, 1964 was "a spirited

² Wheare, op. cit., p. 194.
³ The Indian Express, (New Delhi), 12.12. 1962.
debate throughout", when L.M. Singhvi did not give his support to the non-alignment policy. He felt that, "there was no need to extol" the non-alignment policy, "and adopted it for ever" as it may, "sap the vitality of the country" and that, "the time had come when the policy of exemplifying non-alignment should be reviewed realistically with a view to giving it a forward looking content". On the contrary Menon favoured it whole heartedly. 1

Debates in Parliament are a wilful obstruction to Executive despotism. It provides an opportunity for issues to be discussed but it is only an *expostfacto* scrutiny of issues. It is ironical that the debates take place after the issue is over. They are mere formalities but still they affect the Government decisions as the government is sensitive to Parliamentary opinion. During debates, Members are to express as to what constitute good for the country and what modification of the existing policy is required. During the debates, the Members have full liberty to criticise the administration for their past performance and suggest how they should behave in future or how a particular measure should be carried out or implemented. Actually, administrative accountability arises out of administrative responsibility. The parliamentary debates serve to remind the administration of their duties and obligations. They affect

the administrative thinking and action in a variety of ways. That subtle influence, which cannot be measured in terms of visible units, pervades every influence, within all the ranks of administration. Through parliamentary discussions, the Parliament approves the policy. While implementing it, the Government is guided by various viewpoints expressed on the floor of the House. Whatever may be the issue, the tone of the discussions and the motions had always ended in the approval of the policy of the Government of India thereto.

The rank and file in India is less concerned about foreign affairs and foreign policy dilemmas. The account of the proceedings in the Lok Sabha is comprehensively followed up by the leading newspapers, to keep the sizable educated minority informed of parliamentary debates.

In India, the debates in the Houses present uproarious scenes. An emphatic example was the last day of the Monsoon Session of Lok Sabha in September 1970, when the Speaker, Dhillon, commented with resentment that if the Members could settle "every issue with the show of fists, there is no need for Parliament. If you sit in Parliament you have to argue and tolerate each other. If you think this is a forum just

for shouting and showing fists then it is a 'wrong forum'.
On the contrary, on less important issues at times the Debates take place in peace and calm, as the Winter Session in 1970, started in a subdued note without any angry debates or uproarious scenes.

Since one of the most important functions of the Members of Parliament is to criticise the executive, they debate great issues of public concern. They constitute 'a grand inquest of the nation', and act as what John Stuart Mill called "a committee of grievances" and "a congress of opinions"; but it is also not the function of the Parliament to be the sole forum of debate or the sole committee of grievances in its country's political system, these functions must and should be shared with other bodies. These other such forums of discussions include, special sessions of Committees, Seminars and Symposia in Universities and commentaries in the Newspapers.

It is hard to comment about the standard of debates in Parliament. Sometimes they are high-flown and detailed when the mighty orators like Kriplani, Menon, Minoo Masani, Ashoka Mehta are there and sometimes low when the lot is less experienced and less interested in foreign affairs. A Parliamentary Correspondent writes about the December 1967 (Winter Session) debate that it was insipid and that the Prime

1. Wheare, op. cit., p. 1
2. Ibid., pp. 233-34
Minister's speech contained little evidence of any fresh thinking and further suggested that it was high time when the foreign affairs need whole time attention. Parliamentary debates would have been richer had real political organisation preceded the speech-making.¹ Often their performance is extempore and thus there was every likelihood for its having a low standard. The problem is how to ameliorate and improvise the standard of Parliamentary debates. Out of the volley of suggestions, the most notable being given by a Parliamentary correspondent having listened to Debates of the second half of November in IV Lok Sabha, 1967. He put forth two administrative suggestions that the Government should use the forum of Parliament to inform and to explain its major policies and to seek the advice of the members on them. It may be argued that the latter aspect is looked after in the committees of Parliament, but that is not entirely the case and secondly the Opposition parties should expedite the process of polarisation among themselves and should not cancel each other as Opposition groups.² The eminent parliamentarian like H.N. Mukerjee realises the need to make the parliamentary debates more parliamentary. While speaking in Parliament over the motion


regarding international situation and the policy of the Government of India in relation thereto, he said that if the members of Parliament wanted to push him out of Parliament, ways and means are open to them to do something about it. But he failed to understand why this kind of deviation into an unmannerly exhibition of anti-parliamentarianism existed in the Indian Parliament.

A question may be raised how much a debate really matters. Although a bad governmental showing does not modify majority approval in the immediate circumstances, it weakens the position of the Cabinet leaders within their own party, leading to future changes in personnel or policy. It can also brighten the election prospects of the Opposition. A minister would find it difficult to survive if his own supporters find him a poor spokesman for the government and party. ¹ A successful Minister has to be a fluent debater.

A. D. Dhar poetically laments for the 1970-Lok Sabha Session, "Ah, for the last Lok Sabha! for those angry interludes, those heated debates, that "zero-hour" which was always pregnant with crisis, for the perpetual possibility of the Government losing a vote, which kept the reporters..... to their seats". ² However, successful use of the above mentioned instruments and organised Opposition would increase executive servitude and its failure would lead to executive despotism.

¹ Leon D. Epstein, op. cit., p.37.
² The Indian Express (New Delhi), 9.4. 1971.