Chapter I

Electoral Process in the USA, Germany and India
&
An Overview of Their Elections Held in Early 1990s

The nature of democracy and its interface with the political system with which it is associated has always been a subject matter of much concern and research. Elections and the processes that govern them in fact hold the key to the success of democratic institutions or their downfall. In the famous words of James Bryce, “the excellence of popular government lies not so much in its wisdom - for it is apt to err as other kinds of government - as its strength.”

Democracy reflects the voice of a nation. To what extent elections fulfill their assigned role i.e. do voters decide the agenda or some one else does (political parties, interest groups, mass media), there are no easy answers to this.

“To talk, today, about democracy, is to talk about a system of competing political parties”, opined D. Robertson in the nineteen seventies.¹ What Robertson meant was that it was the competition among the party elite that allowed them to govern with public consent.

J. Schumpeter, regarded as the “founding father” of the theory of democratic elitism, opined thus: “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”.²

According to Sabine Lessmann, the emphasis on importance of elections can also be found in the so-called ‘traditional’ theories of democracy which had been formulated in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Political scientist, B. Holden in the 1970s divided the traditional democratic theory into two types - the liberal democratic theory and radical democratic theory.³

According to Holden, John Locke, is seen as the "founding father" of the traditional democratic theory. In Liberal democratic theory, people are given a negative role. This involves the people in passively choosing between options presented to them while in the radical democratic theory, the people are given a positive role. The people actually initiate the policies. This involves the belief that the representatives are closely controlled by their electors. Some important representatives of the Liberal theory are Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill. J J. Rousseau, Jeremy Bentham and James Mill represent the radical theory.

Some political scientists speak of the pluralist theory. In strict pluralist theory, the importance of elections is downgraded and not seen as embodying the democratic process. Although elections may still be regarded as a necessary condition for the existence of the democratic process, the will of the people is manifested in the inter-election pressure-group process.4

While various critics of the different models of democracy stress on lack of democracy, pointing to limited possibilities of citizens participation in the elections, the role of mass media therein has come to acquire the center stage only recently.

In this chapter we, shall take a view of the electoral process in the three democracies under study viz. the USA, Germany and India for a general understanding of the political institutions and electoral processes. This may serve as a backgrounder to, when we look at the elections in these democracies held in the early 1990s and the increasing role of mass media which over the years have become an important part of the electoral process.

As far as the USA is concerned, its presidential election of 1992 has been studied. For Germany, the Federal Election of 1994 and for India, the mid-term poll held in 1991 have been examined.

The Presidential Election Process in the United States of America:

Americans elect a President and a Vice President every four years. Election process in the USA is one of the most complex, cumbersome and time consuming phenomena. The whole process of electing the President can be divided into four

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phases:

1. The pre-nomination phase - in which candidates compete in State, Primary elections and caucuses for delegates to the national party conventions.

2. The national conventions - held in the summer of the election year - in which the two major parties viz. The Republicans and the Democrats nominate candidates for President and Vice President and approve a platform of the parties' policy position and goals.

3. The general election campaign, in which the major party nominees as well as any minor party or independent contenders compete for votes from the entire electorate, resulting in the popular vote on election day in November; and

4. The electoral college phase, in which the President and Vice President are officially elected by the electors.5

Presidential elections have come a long way and are very different from the ones envisaged by the founding fathers in the Constitution. According to analysts, there are four major areas which have undergone changes over the period of time.

• Today, there is far wider participation of voters in determining who the party nominees will be;

• the increasing role of electronic media, both in conveying information to the voters, and shaping the course of the campaign;

• the financing of Presidential campaigns which is now substantially governed by a system of public funding, enacted in the 1970s, in the pre nomination, convention, and general election phases; and finally

• in the 1990s the voters "showed signs of increased dissatisfaction with the major parties in their Presidential nominees and greater willingness than in the past to support independent or new party candidates.6

The Electorate

A qualified voter in the US is a citizen at least of 18 years of age and is a resident of a State who has fulfilled the appropriate registration requirement (if any) in

6 Ibid.
his or her county or city of residence. A potential voter must first register with the

country or city election board in all States except North Dakota, and some counties of

Wisconsin. Most states do not allow the convicted and mentally incompetent citizens
to register.

Four landmark amendments spanning more than 100 years have helped in

making the right to franchise, a broad based one.

The 15th Amendment to the Constitution in 1870 removed the racial
discrimination. The Amendment reads “The right of citizens of the United States to
to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any States on account
of race, colour, or previous condition of servitude”.

The 19th Amendment in 1920 removed the barrier based on sex. It read, “The
right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the
United States or by any state on account of sex”.

The 24th Amendment to the Constitution in 1964 eliminated poll taxes as
“condition to voting in federal elections. The amendment read, “The right of citizens of
the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President, or Vice
President, for elections for President or Vice President, for Senator or Representative
in Congress shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason
of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax”.

The 26th Amendment to the Constitution prohibits States from establishing any
age over 18 as the minimum age for voting (although they may, if they choose, adopt a
lower age). It reads in part “The right of citizens of the United States, who are
eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United
States or by any State on account of age”.

According to US Census Bureau, the voting age population of the US (those
eligible to vote) in 1990 was approximately 18,638,200, which increased to
19,267,000 in 1994.

The removal of restrictions on voting based on age, sex, and race were


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accomplished through Federal action, but the responsibility for establishing the requirements and procedures for voting, remains with the States. 9

The Political Parties

The United States has a two-party system. Several factors have contributed to the rise and continuance of the two-party system in the United States, despite efforts of the Founding Fathers to discourage development of partisan politics.

Factors influencing two-party system include:

• Political tradition; American politics has been strongly influenced by the British model.

• Winner-take all Elections and Single Member Constituencies; the necessity of securing an absolute majority of electoral votes discouraged, with rare exceptions, a multiplicity of Presidential candidacies and promoted coalition building in broadly inclusive parties.

• Broad appeal and flexibility of the two parties; there is a general belief in the US that both the Republican and Democratic parties by and large incorporate a wide range of political beliefs, socially and geographically diverse elements. Hence an acceptability of the two-party system.

• Institutionalisation of the two-party system; the gradual institutionalisation of the two-party system, especially on the state and local level, has tended to discourage successful development of new political parties. 10

Political parties live and die by numbers - numbers of supporters, candidates, contributors and specially voters. A study of party identification and the Presidential vote during the last four decades make interesting analysis.

Against a question: "Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" If Republican or Democrat,


"would you consider yourself a strong (R/D) or a not very strong (R/D)?" If Independent or other, "do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?", the responses were as follows:

**Strength Of Party Identification in the USA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Indpn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Stevenson</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goldwater</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Election Studies Data

**Third-party campaigns in the Presidential Elections:**

Only a few third party candidates have had a significant impact in the 20th century. In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt of the Progressive party received 27.4 per cent of the popular vote and 88 electoral votes. In 1968, George C. Wallace, American independent received 13.5 per cent popular vote and 46 electoral votes. In 1992 Ross Perot, an Independent received 18.9 per cent popular vote but could not get any electoral vote. Though Perot gained more popular votes than any other third-party contestant in the 20th century but his support was not geographically concentrated.

Third party efforts which have substantial popular support have the potential to influence the election outcomes by drawing support from one or both of the major party nominees. If their support is sufficiently geographically concentrated to win States, and hence electoral votes, they could deprive either major party candidate from winning a majority of the electoral vote, thus requiring contingent election of the

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President by the House of Representatives and the Vice President by the Senate.\textsuperscript{12}

**Presidential Candidates:**

The Constitution specifies that, in order to serve as President, a person must be a natural-born citizen of the United States, at least thirty-five years of age, and who has resided at least 14 years in the United States (50 States and the District of Columbia). Under the 22nd Amendment, none may serve more than two full terms; however a Vice President who succeeds to the Presidency and serves less than two full years may seek election to two additional terms.

It is the candidates themselves who determine the presidential field. the self-selected candidate, compete in the States for the delegates needed to secure the nomination.

According to the Federal Election Commission 217 candidates had filed for the Presidency in 1992.\textsuperscript{13}

The candidates do a lot of spade work to know their popularity before announcing their candidature. Under the FECA, a person who expressly campaigns for office automatically becomes a candidate when the campaign’s contributions or expenditures exceed $5,000.

An independent must file a statement of candidacy with the FEC within 15 days of becoming a candidate, and must name a principal campaign committee to receive contributions and incur expenditure. This committee must submit a statement of organization to the FEC within ten days after it has been designated; this statement must identify the committee’s title (which includes the candidates name), the treasurer, bank depositories, and any other committees the candidate has authorized to raise or spend on his behalf.\textsuperscript{14}

**Qualifying for the Primaries and Caucuses**

The guidelines that candidates follow to qualify for primaries and caucuses differ from State to State. A primary is a state-run election for the purpose of nominating party candidates to run in the general election. A caucus is a meeting of

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. n. 1, pp. 17-18.

\textsuperscript{13} Data collected from the FEC while on a field visit to Washington on November 26, 1996.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. n. 1, pp. 20-21.
party members or leaders to select nominees for public offices. In the presidential nominating process, it is often used in combination with the State convention to elect delegates to the national nominating convention.

Candidates generally file a statement of candidacy with the Secretary of State or the Party Chair at the State level.

The campaigns of most of the Presidential candidates do not attract wide news coverage until the first caucus and primaries which now begin in January (Iowa Caucus) and February (New Hampshire primary) of an election year. More than half of the 50 States (29 in 1976) plus the Distt. of Columbia hold the primaries from the middle of winter through the late spring of a presidential election year. The remaining states choose delegates to the Democratic and Republican national party conventions in caucuses in which voters at the local and district level elect delegates to state-wise conventions, who in turn elect delegates to the national party convention. These successive election of delegates may be carried through two or more stages when national party convention delegates are chosen. The "bewildering" variety of the rules governing delegate selection, opines Stevens J. Brams make it impossible to model a "typical" caucus state. 15

State Primaries are the crucial first phase in a candidate's quest for the Presidency. If a candidate, by winning a large proportion of pledged delegates in the primaries effectively wraps up his party's nomination in this phase then the party convention provides merely a rubber stamp for the nomination game he has already won. But to win the nomination game is not to win the election game. It is followed by the third and the final phase - the general election. 16

The primary season gradually reduces the field of major party candidates. According to Congress research, the accelerated pace of the present system "winnows out those who fall short of expectations and therefore find it difficult to raise the money needed to sustain their candidacies". Furthermore, the reforms of the past 20 years have changed the dynamics of the nominating process by closely tying the allocation of delegates to electoral performance. Party conventions have largely

16 Ibid.
become ratifying bodies that confer the nomination on the candidate who won it in State contests.

**The General Election Ballot:**

The names of the major party nominees for the President and Vice President are automatically placed on the general election ballot in the States. Some states also list the names of Presidential electors adjacent to the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates whom they support. Minor party candidates are also listed on the ballot, provided they qualify according to the provisions of the State codes.\(^{17}\)

Congress passed legislation for the first time, two days after the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy in 1968 (while he was seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination), authorizing Secret Service protection of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. While the law provides protection for major party presidential and vice presidential nominees in the general election, it does not specify the criteria or standards for determining major candidates in the primary season.

The guidelines issued by the advisory committee have specified a public declaration of candidacy and active national campaign, qualifications for public matching funds (even if the candidate declines such funding) and additional campaign receipts of at least $1,500,000, or the garnering of at least ten per cent of a major party.\(^{18}\)

**Public Financing of Presidential Elections:**

Since 1976, Presidential campaigns have been financed in large measure through a public finance system, covering all three stages of the election; the primaries, the nominating conventions, and the general election.

The public money comes from the Presidential Election Campaign Fund, a special account in the US Treasury which is funded through an optional dollar check off on Federal income tax returns. The public funds are available to candidates and

\(^{17}\) Ibid. n.1, p.22.

political parties for their conventions on an “optional basis” once the limits and other restrictions imposed by the law. The Federal Election Commission administered the system, certifying the eligibility of candidates to receive funds, authorizing Treasury payments to them and conducting audits to ensure that funds are spent in compliance with the law.\textsuperscript{19}

The issue has been dealt with in detail in Chapter V.

\textbf{Assignment and categorization of Delegates by the National Parties:}

Each party has its own method for assigning delegates and alternates to different States and jurisdictions.

\textit{Democrats:} The Democratic Party allocates delegates and alternates according to a formula based on population, as measured by electoral college strength and past levels of voting for Democratic Presidential candidates in the general election.

\textit{Republicans:} The Republican allocation system assigns three delegates per congressional district and six delegates based on the state’s Republican vote in the previous election for President, US Senate, US House of Representatives, and Governor. Delegates to the convention for other Jurisdiction are assigned by the Republican National Committee.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Delegation Selection Structure:}

Under the present system for choosing presidential nominees, state parties use two main electoral devices: the primary and the caucus/convention system. State parties combine the two in a variety of ways to choose delegates to the national conventions and the resulting mix of methods accounts for the complexity that characterizes the presidential nominating process. The timing of delegate selection events is determined by either the State Legislature or the State Parties, depending on

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. n. 1, p.25.
which electoral method is used. Primary dates are usually determined by the legislatures, while caucus events are scheduled by the state’s political parties. In large part, this divided authority concerning the choice of method and the timing of delegate selection events explains and perpetuates the inherent complexity of the nominating system.

**Method of Selecting Delegates:**

The major difference between the parties in choosing delegates is the Democratic Party's requirement that delegate candidates selected in primaries and caucuses state their Presidential or uncommitted preference as a condition for election. The Republican Party does not require a declaration of preference and, consequently, Republican delegate selection is less uniform and more dependent upon the different approaches of the state parties.\(^{21}\)

**The Nominating Conventions:**

The election of 1824 brought an end to both the Democratic and Republican use of a congressional caucus as a nominating device. Although the Democratic-Republican caucus nominated William Crawford of Georgia as its candidate, three other candidates (John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson) were also nominated by rival factions within the party. After a bitter contest which led to deadlock in the electoral college, Adams was elected President by the House of Representatives.

A brief period of transition followed, in which State Legislative caucuses and conventions and various other methods were used to nominate presidential candidates. In 1832, the three parties contesting the election - Anti-Masonic, Democratic, and National Republican - used national conventions as vehicles for nominating their presidential ticket for the first time. The use of nominating conventions reflected the

growing trend towards greater democratic participation which characterized the "Jackson Era". 22

Under the system that spanned roughly 1850 to 1950, party leaders from the largest states could bargain over presidential nominations. Most influential candidates were those who controlled large blocks of delegates and would throw their support behind a candidate for the "right price. These power brokers according to Norman C. Thomas et al, seek a programme commitment in the platform, a place in the President’s Cabinet, or other forms of federal patronage in return for support. To be successful the candidates had to carry favour with party and elected officials, before and during the National Convention. 23

The pace of change has accelerated when the Democratic Party adopted a set of internal reforms, following their loss in 1968. The guidelines reduced the influence of party leaders, encouraged participation by rank and file Democrats and expanded convention representation of previously under-represented group, particularly women and African Americans. 24

Despite a large number of candidates entering the fray, the increasing length of the primary and caucus season has tended to eliminate the weaker candidates, leading to a field of one or two major contenders. In almost every session since 1956, one candidate in each party has gone to the convention with a clear, strong lead in delegate totals. 25

Mass media since the last four decades or so have changed the entire fabric of elections. The candidates, while contesting in the primaries / Caucus, concentrate on the local press-making themselves available to reporters and editors, participating in televised debates with party rivals, giving speeches and announcements to receive maximum press coverage, and buying advertisement for broadcast on radio and television. "All of these factors," according to James T. McDonough, a freelance writer and a political reporter - timing, finance organization and communication-

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid. n. 6, pp. 43 - 45.
24 Ibid. n. 6.
25 Ibid. n. 17, p. 48.
Planning the Convention:

The official announcement about the convention, customarily issued by the national committees of the two parties about 18 months in advance, stipulates the dates and site of the national convention. The announcement also includes information on delegate allocation and rules for deciding disputed delegate credentials. The Democrats' announcement also includes activities of convention committees and procedures and scheduling for various committees and events at the convention.

Since 1952, all conventions have been held in July or August. As a tradition since 1932, the party out of power has convened first, usually a month prior to the party holding the Presidency.

Selection of sites for national party conventions is a lengthy process in which facilities, security arrangements and level of assistance offered by local governments are all considered by a special committee of the parties' national committees.

Day one: The first day of a national convention is generally devoted to routine business. The Democrat convention's keynote address is also delivered on the first day of convention proceedings. The Republicans tend to schedule keynote speeches for later in the convention, usually at the second session.

Keynote speakers are generally front rank office bearers or party officials, chosen because of their national appeal and speaking ability, or because they may be viewed as "rising stars". In the party the keynote address is highly partisan in tone and content. It attacks the opposition candidates, policies and record. 27

Platform: Adoption of the party platform is another task usually completed on the second day of a convention. The party platform, a statement of principles and policy proposals, is prepared in advance by the Platform Committee, but is sometimes amended on the floor through ministry reports. The process of platform approval has

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26 James T McDonough, primaries and caucuses - the Struggle For Delegates, an special essay written by him for the United States Election, 1996, collected from Foreign Press Office, Manhattan, New York, during a field trip in November 1996.

27 For details of addresses by various leaders in the current century, refer to Congressional Researcher, Ibid.n.5, pp.57-58.
also at times led to spirited struggles between contending convention factions, often allied to opposing candidates. Platforms are intended to maintain the loyalty of committed party activists, while at the same time attracting the support and votes of political independents.

The day third is generally reserved for the nomination of the presidential candidates.

Prominent or promising party figures are usually given the task of placing the names of candidates in nomination, followed by a series of seconding speeches. The name of the candidate is generally announced at the end of the speech.

**Balloting:** Following completion of the nominating and seconding speeches, the role of States is called by the Clerk of the convention, a position usually filled by the permanent secretary of the party’s national committee. The tally of delegate votes in each State is announced by the chair of the delegation, often the party’s highest ranking elected official in the State. Following the completion of balloting, the chair usually entertains a motion to demonstrate party unity by making the nomination unanimously by acclamation.

Day four is generally dominated by the nomination of the vice presidential running mate. 28

**The General Election:**

Adjournment of the national nominating conventions makes the beginning of the next phase of the presidential election process - the general election campaign.

In the months following conventions, the candidates, parties and campaign organizations seek to build a winning popular and electoral vote coalition.

Media advertising begins in full gusto around September in the Election year.

Immediately following conventions, the nominees are faced with several tasks, foremost among these being, uniting the party behind the candidates, establishing a general election campaign organisation, and preparing a campaign plan.

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28 Ibid.
Candidate Activity:

Through out the 19th century, and also till the middle of the current century, campaigns were conducted largely on the State and Local levels by "surrogates" (party leaders and office holders) who engaged in a limited number of appearances. In contemporary times, presidential candidates go around the country on campaign tours, participating in a wide variety of political gatherings. Known as "whistle stop" campaigns, the candidates deliver dozens of speeches from the rear platforms of special trains touring the country.  

Survey Research:

Early opinion polling is an integral part of electioneering in the US. These surveys besides covering the "horse race" (who is leading and who is losing" are also designed to identify issues of concern to potential voters.

Election Day:

On the election day, voters in the 50 States, and the District of Columbia cast their ballots for electors pledged to their favoured presidential and vice presidential nominees. The day established by law for the choice of all Federal elective officers falls on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. In the interest of economy and convenience, most States also hold their election on Federal election day, as do many thousands of counties and municipalities.

Polling hours in the 50 states and the District of Columbia are decided on the basis of time-zone.

Strictly speaking the President is not elected on the election day. It is the Presidential electors, popularly known as the Electoral College who are elected then.

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29 Ibid.
30 F. Christopher Arterton, The use of public opinion polls in Election Campaign, a special article written for United States Election '96, refer chapter 3 for a detailed critique on early opinion polling. Referred at the USIS, New Delhi.
31 For scheduling details of various states, refer Congressional Researcher. Ibid. n.5, pp.75-77.
When the voters go to the polls on Election Day, they vote not only for president, but for electors as well, and these later meet to elect the President and Vice President. In some states, names of electors are listed with the presidential and vice presidential nominees. But most ballots carry only names of the presidential and vice presidential nominees. Each state gets a number of electors equal to its full delegation in Congress - the total of its House of Representatives members plus its two senators. California, the most populous state, has 47 electoral votes. Six states, each with a single House member, have only three electors. The District of Columbia is a special case and, while it has no vote in Congress, gets three electors.

In allocation of votes, it is a winner-take-all proposition. In general, a state's whole lot of victorious electors votes for the presidential nominee who gets the most popular votes in that state. The one exception is Maine's four electoral votes which must be divided this way: Two to the state wise winner, the other two to whoever wins in each of the state's two congressional districts.

Could a candidate win more popular votes in November than an opponent and still lose the election? Yet it can happen. That is because the electors vote by states. In a hypothetical situation if one of the presidential candidate of a party carries some of the heavily populated states overwhelmingly, but loses other populous states by narrow margins, it then could be possible for that candidate to have more popular votes than the Republican nominee and yet not get enough electoral votes to win. In 1824 Andrew Jackson got 37,000 more popular votes than John Quincey Adams, but not enough electoral votes to capture the White House. Conversely some other Presidents have been elected even though they did not get a majority of the popular votes. In those cases, there were more than two "nominees". Some of the "Ministry" winners included Abraham Lincoln (1860), Woodrow Wilson in 1912 and 1916, Harry Truman in 1948, John Kennedy in 1960, Richard Nixon in 1968. All got a majority of the electoral votes. Bill Clinton, both in the 1992 and 1996 elections also could not get a majority of the popular vote but became the President on the strength of more electoral votes.

Electoral Contingencies:

The Constitution in the 12th Amendment provides for cases in which no state of candidates receives the required majority in the electoral college, a process referred to as Contingent Election. Under such circumstances, the House of Representative elects the President, choosing from among the three candidates receiving the most electoral votes. In this process each state casts a single vote for President. 33

GERMAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM

From the very complex American electoral system, Germany has a relatively simple process. With unification, the democratic political institutions, and democratic organizations, have now largely been extended to the territory of the former East Germany.

Quoting Swiss Literary critic Adolf Muschg, Hans Klein, journalist and author hints that what worried Germany’s neighbours was its lack of inbred political instincts, “it is not only imperialism that knows no borders, it is also the lack of patriotism” said Muschg. Many of Germany’s neighbours according to Klein, found German self alienation, prompted by the memory of the Nazi horrors, to be quite profitable, “something to be encouraged both politically and in the media”. 34

Can a nation be prisoner of its own history? questions Klein, “for half a century the world has been a divided self, and Germany has been the world in microcosm. But if racial thinking brought the Germans to the brink of national damnation, it must not be invoked in passing judgment on them today. “Nations are made up of individuals. All history is biography,” reasons the author. 35

The Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany was adopted in 1949. Its authors intended it to be a “temporary” arrangement, and not a definitive constitution. Its requirement of national reunification was fulfilled in 1990. The preamble and concluding article of the Basic Law have been amended in accordance with the

33 For details refer to Congressional Researcher. Ibid. n.5, pp. 85-88.
35 Ibid.
Unification Treaty, which formed the basis for the accession of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to the Federal Republic. By virtue of the GDR’s accession the German people have achieved their national unity. On 3 October 1990, the Basic Law became valid for the whole nation.\textsuperscript{36}

According to the Basic Law, all public authority emanates from the people. The authors of the Basic Law opted for an “adversarial” type of democracy. Having experienced the Weimar Republic undermined by radical parties, which were hostile to the constitution. In this context “adversarial” meant that “the free play of political forces must stop where any party or faction attempts to do away with democracy with democratic means”. This explains why the Basic Law makes it possible for the Federal Constitutional Court to ban political parties which seek to damage or destroy the country’s democratic system.\textsuperscript{37}

The constitutional bodies with primarily legislative functions in Germany are the Bundestag and Bundesrat. Executive responsibilities lie principally with the Federal Government headed by the Federal Chancellor, and the Federal President.

The German Bundestag is the parliamentary assembly representing the people of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is elected by the people every four years. It may only be dissolved prematurely under exceptional circumstances, the final decision lying with the Federal President. The Bundestag’s main functions are to pass laws, to elect the Federal Chancellor and to keep a check on the government.

Article 38 Clause 1 of the Basic Law relates to the Federal Election. It entails: “the deputies to the German Bundestag shall be elected in general direct, free equal and secret elections. They shall be representatives of the whole people, not bound by orders and instructions and shall be subject only to their conscience.”

Clause 2 defines the eligibility for franchise thus “Any one who has attained the age of eighteen years shall be entitled to vote; any one who has attained full legal age shall be eligible for election”.

The Federal Electoral Law was amended in 1985 to allow Germans living abroad to participate in Bundestag election. A German resident in a member state of

\textsuperscript{36} Facts about Germany (Frankfurt: Societats, 1993), p.132.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 136.
the Council of Europe has a right to vote irrespective of the length of time he has lived abroad. Germans living abroad have a right to vote during the first 10 years after leaving the Federal Republic. In both cases they must have lived at least for three months continuously in Germany before leaving the country.\textsuperscript{38}

Article 39 of the Basic Law specified the term of the Bundestag to four years “Its (Bundestag’s) legislative term shall end four years after its first meeting or on its dissolution. The new election be held during the last three months of the term or within sixty days after dissolution”.\textsuperscript{39}

Members of the Bundestag are returned in general elections, which are direct, free, equal, and secret. They represent the people as a whole in line with their party allegiance for parliamentary groups. The Bundesrat represents the sixteen federal states and participates in the drafting and implementation of federal legislation. In contrast to the senatorial system in the US, the Bundesrat does not consist of elected representatives of the people but of members of the state governments or their representatives. Depending on the size of the population, the states have three, four, five or six votes which may only be cast as a block.

\textbf{Evolution of Party System in Germany:}

The development of party systems, according to Klaus von Beyme of University, Heidelberg, is usually dependent on the development of various cleavages which break as nations develop. These cleavage lines continue to have effect the structure of participation even if they seem to be no longer as salient as they were when they arose. In Germany, according to Beyme they include:

- Protestantism versus Catholicism
- Liberalism versus the conservative defenders of the divine right of the princes
- Nationalism versus legitimistic groups which refused to merge the German sovereign states into an Empire under the auspices of a nation state. When this conflict


\textsuperscript{39} From the Basic Law - for the Federal Republic of Germany, taken from D.N. Asopa, Political System of West Germany (New Delhi: Meenakshi Prakashan. 1976).
was settled by the unification of Germany in 1871, the issue survived as regionalist groups insisted on as much autonomy as possible, particularly in Bavaria, Wurtenberg and the former kingdom of Hanover, and among the ethnic minorities of the Empire (Poles, Alsatians and Danes).\(^{40}\)

The German multi-party system had already developed before the revolution in 1848, at a time when there were no elections in most of the German states. They in fact were loose groups, sans organisational infra structure. It was only after the foundation of the German Empire in 1871 that organised party system developed in Germany.

According to Beyme, the three constitutional break downs over the last one century have further created cleavages for which, he writes “there is no equivalent in other West European countries”.

(a) The adherents of the Empire founded in 1871 versus those groups who were anti establishment, known as Reichsfeinde. They broadly comprised Social Democrats, early political Catholics and some ultra conservative legitimist groups and the ethnic minorities.

(b) The cleavage between the Republicans, nick named System partein by their opponents (left wing liberal party) versus the anti-system parties (all shades of nationalist and monarchists, later the Nazis and the Communists).

(c) A last Cleavage was caused by a change in the constitutional system arose between those parties which accepted the provisional arrangement of the Federal Republic after 1945 and the adversaries. This was however of minor importance because support for the “anti-system parties remained far below 10 per cent of the electorate”.\(^{41}\)

The Basic Law which devotes a separate article (Article 21) of the parties denies the task of the political parties as “helping to form the political will of the people. The parties are required to be democratically structural and are also required to disclose their source of income and their assets.

Of the 36 political parties during the first federal election in 1949, only six

\(^{41}\) Ibid. n.35, p. 48.
(with four parliamentary groups) remained in the parliament elected in 1994. The CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, the Greens/Alliance 90 and the PDS, a Socialist-Communist party from the former GDR region. This is possible due to the “five per cent debarring clause”, which was introduced in 1953 and made stiffer in 1957. It stipulates that only five per cent of the votes or at least three constituency seats can be represented in parliament. The arrangement was accepted by the Federal Constitutional Court as its purpose was to prevent small splinter parties from entering parliament (as it happened in the day of the Weimar Republic). The five per cent hurdle is condoned in the case of national minorities. Thus the South-Schleswig voters’ Association, which represents the Danish minority, has a member in the state parliament of Schleswig-Holstein. The Federal Constitutional Court also ruled that small parties from the new states too should be given a chance of representation in the first General Election on 2 December, 1990. To this end the 5 per cent clause was applied to the two former states in Germany separately. As a result PDS (party of Democratic Socialism) and Alliance 90 won seats in *Bundestag*.\(^{42}\)

**Voting Procedure and Allocation of Seats:**

Elections for all parliaments in Germany are general, direct, free, equal and secret. There are no primary elections. Candidates are nominated by their parties. Elections for the *Bundestag* are based on a system of “personalized” proportional representation.

The Electoral System in the Federal Republic of Germany is governed by the Federal Electoral Law enacted on 7 May 1956 and subsequently amended. The members - who since the country’s unification total to 656 - are elected to the *Bundestag* by a dual procedure with one half of them being directly elected in the constituencies and the other half indirectly by a proportional method via the State Lists (i.e. lists of candidates put forward by the political parties in each land) Election takes place in 328 constituencies.

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Each voter has two votes, the first for one of the candidates in his constituency, the second for one of the state Lists. Each constituency elects one deputy on a straight or relative majority. If two or more candidates poll the same number of votes, the returning officer draws lots to decide the winner. The second votes cast for the state lists are counted and the seats distributed among the parties in proportion to the number of voters given for the List in accordance with the Niemyer method of calculation. The number of constituency seats obtained by the parties is then deducted from the number of list seats established by the Niemeyer method and the remainder given to the candidates in the order in which they appear on their respective lists. Candidates returned to Bundestag on a constituency vote are no longer considered as List candidates. A party may find itself with what are known as “overhand” seats if it has obtained more seats in the constituencies of a particular state on the basis of first votes than it is entitled to according to the result of calculation based on the second votes in that state.43

Professor Niemyer’s method of calculating the number of seats to be allocated to the parties is based on the formula:

\[
\text{Number of second votes multiplied by} \\
\text{the number of seats distributed} \\
\frac{\text{Total number of second votes of parties who}}{\text{have polled more than 5% of all second votes.}}
\]

First, each party receives one seat for each whole number resulting from his calculation. The remaining seats are then allocated in the descending order of decimal fractions.

Example:

No. of Seats to be distributed : 31

No. of Second votes of all parties;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Second votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>18,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>12,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 Ibid. n. 37, p. 6.
The distribution seats on the above formula will thus be:

Party A 18,500 x 31: 36,900 = 15,542 = 15 seats
Party B 12,900 x 31: 36,900 = 10,837 = 10 + 1 seats
Party C 1,900 x 31: 36,900 = 1,569 = 1 + 1 seats
Party D 3,600 x 31 : 36,900 = 3,024 = 3 seats

In the above example Party A has an absolute majority of votes but would not have an absolute majority of seats. As this would be incompatible with electoral principles in the Federal Republic, the law makes provision for a modification of the Niemyer calculation in such borderline cases to the effect that if one party polls more than half of the total number of second votes in the state concerned it received an extra seat. The remaining seats are then again distributed according to the Niemyer method. Hence in the above instance the final distribution of seats would be as follows:

Party A 15 + 1 = 16 seats
Party B 10 + 1 = 11 seats
Party C 1 = 1 seat
Party D 3 = 3 seats

31 seats

When the state lists seats are distributed only those parties that have polled at least five percent of the total number of second votes cast, or have won a seat in three constituencies, are taken into consideration. List combinations of parties which are not competing with each other directly in one state are also possible. Several different state Lists of one party can be linked together to count as one list for distribution purposes. 44

Financing the Elections:

All political parties in Germany charge membership fees from their members. The membership of the parties represented in the Bundestag (as on February 1993) was: SPD- 905,000; CDU - 714,000; CSU - 181,700; FDP - 100,000; PDS - 165,000;

Alliance 90/The Greens - 39,800. The 1967 Act concerning political parties stipulates that donations of more than DM 40,000 must be made public and Federal Constitutional Court, considered the amount too high and has reduced it to DM. 20,000. In addition to their own funds, the parties receive public grants towards their election campaign costs. All parties which poll at least 0.5 per cent of the votes "receive five DM per head on the basis of second votes in the electoral area. The Federal Constitutional Court has banned any public financial support for the parties over and above campaign costs.\footnote{ibid. n.36 p. 160.} The issue has been dealt with in detail in Chapter 5.

**ELECTORAL PROCESS IN INDIA**

India, world's largest democracy has been successfully conducting elections all through the last 50 years of its attaining independence from the British yoke. Generally referred to as the fledgling democracy, Indian political system has reflected rare resilience despite a plethora of problems compounded by poverty, illiteracy and deprivation of a large mass of its populace.

According to Norman D. Palmer, since most of the people in India not only did not have any experience in the electoral process but were also illiterate (at the time of independence) and in other respects seemingly unprepared to play a responsible role as free citizens in a democratic society, the decision of the Constituent Assembly and the Government of India to give every adult Indian male and female the privilege of the franchise, under the system of universal and direct suffrage, was, as has been noted, a truly momentous one. The Election Commission in its "Report on the First General Election in India - 1951-52 (New Delhi 1955) characterized it as an act of faith - faith in the common man of India and in his practical common sense.\footnote{Norman D. Palmer, Election and Political Development - the South Asian Experience (New Delhi: Vikas. 1976).}

Part XV - articles 324-329 of the Constitution of India deals with the subject of elections. It provided for adult suffrage, giving the vote to every citizens of India who was not less than 21 years of age, (since reduced to 18 years as the Constitution sixty-
The first amendment Act, 1988, which amended Article 326 by substituting the words “eighteen years” for “twenty one years”. This came into effect on 28 March, 1989)\textsuperscript{47} except those who were mentally unsound or who had been found guilty of criminal or corrupt practices, it decreed that there should be “one general electoral roll for every territorial constituency for election to either House of Parliament or to the House or either House of the Legislature of a State. The Constitution called for the creation of an Election Commission charged with “the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls” and with the conduct of all elections to Parliament, to the State Legislatures and to the office of President and Vice President of the Indian Union; and it empowered the Central Parliament and the State Legislatures within their respective spheres to make provision “with respect to all matters relating to...elections to either House of Parliament or to the House of the Legislature of a State including preparation of the electoral rolls, the delimitation of constituencies and all other matters, necessary for securing the due constitution of such Houses or Houses.

Under the Government of India Act of 1935, which was effective until it was superseded by the Constitution in 1950, separate electorates or reserved seats were provided for the fewer than fifteen different categories of voters. The question of separate electorate had been a highly volatile one for many years in the pre-independence era when the British granted the Muslim request for a separate status in elections, as early as 1909. Gandhi and other leaders of the Indian National Congress by and large were opposed to separate electorate both in principle and practice. The framers of the Indian Constitution, conscious of the problem were careful in drafting Article 325 which states “...no person shall be eligible for inclusion...in any special electoral roll...on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or any of them”. Article 330 and 332, however, provided for reserved seats in the House of the People and in every State Assembly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These seats were to be contested by representatives of these groups, but not by a system of separate electorate. Instead all voters in such “reserved” constituencies are to vote for these

representatives. The other exception is of the Anglo-Indian community. Article 1331 empowered the President of the Union of India if he decided that this community was not adequately represented in the House of the People, he could nominate not more than two members to the House.

According to the Constitution, both the provisions were to "cease to have effect" after ten years. After five decades however, the status-quo continues. 48

Like citizenship and public services, the subject of elections, according to JC. Johri, an academic in Political Science, could have been regulated by the process of ordinary legislation or administrative action or both as in some of other democracies. But to accord it a special section in the Constitution is not without reason. The founding fathers thought in terms of fair and free elections hence, they entrusted this important task to a high powered Election Commission, autonomous in character and free from executive influence and political interference. 49

The Election Commission has the following functions:

a) to prepare electoral rolls for the elections and suitably revise them after every decennial census and before every general election to the Union and state legislatures;

b) to supervise the machinery of elections throughout the country so that elections are held in a free and fair manner;

c) to notify the dates and schedules of elections so that nomination papers are filed and properly scrutinized before elections take place;

d) to appoint officers for inquiring into disputes relating to electoral arrangements;

e) to request the President of India or the Governor of the State for requisitioning the staff necessary for conducting elections;

f) to cancel polls in the event of mass scale rigging or other irregularities;

g) to act like a court for settling matters as giving recognition to a political party or allotting a symbol for electoral purposes, including de-recognition of a party or withdrawal of its symbol;

h) to advise the President on a matter relating to disqualification of a Member of Parliament and to the Governor about the disqualification of a member of the State Legislature; and

i) to advise the President whether elections can be held in State under President’s rule in order to extend the duration of emergency thereafter a year.\(^{50}\)

Article 79 of Chapter II contained in Part V of the Constitution entitled “The Union” provides for the Union Legislature called Parliament (\textit{Sansad}) comprising the President and two Houses, viz. the Council of States (\textit{Rajya Sabha}) and the House of People (\textit{Lok Sabha}). The President is an integral part of the Parliament, although he is not a member of either House. He is empowered to summon, prorogue and dissolve the House of People. He delivers inaugural addresses, sends messages, and finally places his signatures to authenticate the bills passed by the Parliament. While the general pattern of the Indian Parliament is on the British model, it is a non-sovereign law-making body like the American Congress. Its legislative authority is “circumscribed by the written provisions of the Constitution that establishes a federal system of government with power of judicial review vested in the Supreme Court and High Courts. It blends the English principle of Parliamentary sovereignty and the American system of judicial supremacy.

Article 83 describes the duration of the two Houses. The \textit{Rajya Sabha} is a permanent chamber and can not be dissolved. But, as nearly as possible, its 1/3 members retire after every two years and the vacant seats are filled in a manner prescribed by a law of parliament. A person may be re-elected any number of times. The \textit{Lok Sabha} has a term of five years, the time is to be computed from the date appointed for its first sitting. Provided that this duration may be extended by Parliament by its law for a period not exceeding one year at a time and not extending in any case beyond a period of six months after the revocation of the proclamation of Emergency.\(^{51}\)

Article 84 prescribes qualifications of the Members of Parliament. It lays down that a person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in Parliament unless he

\(^{50}\) Ibid. n. 41, p. 312.

\(^{51}\) This happened in 1976 and 1977 when Emergency was promulgated by the Congress headed government.
a) is a citizen of India and makes and subscribes before some persons authorized in that behalf by the Election Commission, an oath of affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the III Schedule;

b) is of at least 30 years of age for the Rajya Sabha and of 25 years of age for the Lok Sabha; and

c) possesses such other qualifications as may be prescribed in that behalf by any law made by the Parliament.\(^{52}\)

**The Nomination Process:**

The electoral process is formally set into motion by the Presidential announcement calling upon electors in all parliamentary constituencies to elect their representatives to the Lok Sabha. Similarly, the Governors of the States issue notifications called upon electors to elect their representatives for the Legislative Assemblies. At the same time, the Election Commission issues notifications specifying the time table for nominations, scrutiny, withdrawals, and polling. Candidates must meet the requirements laid down in the Constitution and the Representation of the People’s Acts of 1950-1951. They are usually selected by the recognized political parties. They also contest as Independents.

Before a candidate files his/her nomination papers, he must pay a deposit, which gets forfeited, if he/she fails to poll more than one-sixth of the total number of valid votes cast in his/her constituency.

The deposit is a paltry sum. The exact amount of the deposit required of candidates to Legislative Assemblies varies from state to state. There is also no bar on a person to contest from more than one constituency.\(^{53}\)

**Registration of Political Parties:**

A new part has been added to the Representation of the Peoples (Amendment) Act, 1988 (Part IV A) on the registration of the political parties. Section 29A, now inserted, provides for registration with the Commission of associations and bodies of individuals, citizens of India as political parties for the purpose of the Act. This

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\(^{52}\) For details about disqualification, please refer Article 102 of the Constitution of India and The Representation of the People’s Act, 1951.

\(^{53}\) Ibid. n.46, p.106.
provision came into effect from 15 June, 1989. A recognised political party has been classified either as a national party or a state party under the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968.  

According to a Press Information Bureau publication, 119 parties were registered at the time of the 1991 elections. Nine parties were recognised as National Parties which included the following:

1. Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)
2. Communist Party of India (CPI)
3. Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)]
4. Indian Congress (Socialist Sarat Chandra Sinha)
5. Indian National Congress
6. Janata Dal
7. Janata Party (JD)
8. Lok Dal (LKD)
9. Janata Dal (Samajvadi) [JD(S)]

Thirty five party were designated as state parties. Prominent among them included, the Telugu Desam, Assam Gana Parishad, People’s Party of Arunachal, Nutan Assam Gana Parishad, Jharkand Mukti Morcha, Muslim League, Shiv sena, All Party Hill Leader’s Conference, Mizo National Front, Shiromani Akali Dal, Shiromani Akali Dal (Simranjit Singh Mann), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and Bahujan Samaj Party.

The selection of candidates is obviously of central importance for political parties. It is also a major aspect of the electoral process, and it serves key functions in the political system, as a whole. According to political scientist, Ram Ashray Roy, among all the procedures that make up the final electoral process, the selection of candidates is by far the most important.

Despite the central importance at various levels of the polity, the nomination and selection of candidates, according to Palmer, has received little detailed study in

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54 Ibid. n.47, p.422.
most democratic systems.\textsuperscript{57}

Elections have been the “main motor of social and political change in India,” opines economist and media writer Bhabani Sen Gupta. Planned development, he writes has played its role but it has not empowered the power section as the electoral participation.\textsuperscript{58}

No uniform policies or pattern of candidate selection have been followed by the dominant parties in India. There has been increasing anxiety about criminalisation of politics in India. Many history sheeters have not only been contesting but getting elected with thumping majorities. The media has focused the issue time and again. Dr. MS Gill, the Chief Election Commissioner hinted in one of his interviews in television that the Commission was seized of the matter, but could not have done much till now, because allegation, trial and final convictions were different matters. If at the time of contesting, there were merely allegations, or the issue was sub-judiced, in a democracy, benefit of doubt must go to the citizen. Nonetheless, this issue was a part of the agenda of discussion in a meeting with representatives and electoral officers on 14 January, 1996, said Mr. Gill.\textsuperscript{59}

The Prime Minister is generally the leader of the majority party who is invited by the President for formation of the Government. He does not represent the whole of the country but one constituency, as any other member of parliament.

\textbf{Financing of Elections:}

As of now, there is no public funding of elections. Candidates and parties raise money through their own sources. This has become one of the major malaise of the electoral system in India. Different political parties, the government and the Election Commission have been deliberating on this aspect. There is no final outcome as yet. For details, please refer Chapter 5.

Media have come to acquire a dominant role in elections. Radio and television are controlled by the Government. There have been allegation of their misuse by the party in power especially around election times.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. n.41, p.115
\textsuperscript{59} Dr. M.S Gill in an interview with Mr. Rajiv Shukla, in programme \textit{Ru-ba ru (face to face)} on \textit{Zee TV}, 9.30 p.m., Sunday, 12 January. 1997.
No electoral system can be cent per cent perfect and ideal for all times to come. Circumstances change, peoples' expectations change.

H J. Laski in his classic work “A Grammar of Politics” delineates four general considerations which hold good for any system in liberal democracies.

1. The system should so constitute the legislature that on the vital issue of public policy, the legislature must reflect the opinions of the majority and the minority.

2. The areas which return representatives to the legislature must be small enough to develop personal relation between the elected representatives and the electorate.

3. The election system must have a means, between the election, of checking the result of a general election by revealing the drift of opinion among the voters.

4. The system must develop a direct and close relationship between the government and the electorate.\(^{60}\)

**A Study of the General Elections in the USA, Germany and India in the early 1990's:**

Three democracies in three different parts of the world, the respective election processes provide some very interesting insights.

It is generally said that the election process does not cease in the USA. As soon as the President takes over, strategies are planned for the next hustings. The election campaigning period is the longest in the US when compared with other liberal democracies. In the new uni-polar world, American elections evince far greater interest than ever before. The two elections in the unified Germany left the skeptics guessing whether everything was all right between the old and the new States. The economic progress, despite the teething troubles, (which were a normal thing to have happened)

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has established faith in the democratic process and coalition system (which has been the bane of the system) has been taken in their stride by the people. On the other hand, Indian Republic, with more than 900 million people and the world’s largest electorate at 520 million has always been a cause of surprise and intrigue to the observers. Despite poverty, deprivation, illiteracy, caste-ism, religious fanaticism, parochialism, the Indian political system has shown rare resilience - a faith in the electoral process and - the power of public opinion.

In the following paragraphs, an overview of general elections in the USA, Germany and India is provided. The overview is based on secondary data analysis, content analysis of the primary data, observations wherever possible, in-depth interviews and discussions with a cross section of academics, researchers, political strategists, government officials, media writers and common men and women.

The 1992 Presidential Election in the USA:

Analysts, media columnists, general public and even incumbent President Bush, at the time of 1992 hustings said strange things about the election. Bush called it a "weird year". Some reckoned it to "Voodoo Politics", because to them, it defied all ordinary efforts at explanation.

Why did so many people say so many strange things for the election? Let us analyse.

"The key to understanding the topsy-turvy 1992 national elections, " according to political scientists James Caesar and Andrew Busch, "lies in the emergence of a new dimension in American politics that combined and interacted with the traditional dimensions". The traditional dimensions according to authors, is made up of the familiar axis of partnership viz. Democratic, Independent and Republican and issue of "Positioning" or ideology viz. Liberal, moderate and conservative. These two axes bend to coincide and reinforce each other, with Republicans traditionally being on the conservative side and the Democrats on the liberal side. Due to cross pressures, conflicted voter groups termed as hybrid, emerged such as "Reagan Democrats" and
“pro-choice Republicans”. In 1992 there was no clear left or right alignments.61

George Bush, despite his high popularity ratings following the Persian Gulf War, found to his consternation, the going very tough. He had to face six aspiring Democrats, two Conservative Republicans and an Independent billionaire businessman Ross Perot.

Most of the Democrats had opposed use of force in the Persian Gulf War. Bush received a 90 per cent approval rating for his stand on the War. In less than a year however, he received intra-party challenge from David Duke and conservative commentator Patrick J. Buchanan, who ran as an outsider.

Bush’s critics ascribe four major reasons which went against him: viz. a pattern of indecision and policy reversals, inadequacy in coping with economic troubles, challenge from within his party and anxieties and major organisational mess in the election campaign.62

Tennessee Senator All Gore, a presidential candidate in 1988, still nurtured presidential ambition and was expected to run in 1992. But Gore supported Bush’s stand on the Gulf War. He also admired the diplomatic skills of the President during an attempted coup in August 1991 against President Mikhail Gorbachev. Gore went to the extent of announcing publicly that he would not contest for presidentship. The Democrat candidates who emerged in the fall and winter of 1991 - 92 were not from the front ranks of the party’s national leadership. Prominent Democrats such as Senate majority leader George Mitchell, House majority leader Dick Gephardt, New York Governor Hario Cuomo or Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia abstained from contesting. Instead leaders from the second tier such as Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas, Governor Douglas Wilder of Virginia, Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa and Bob Kerry of Nebraska, former Senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts and former Californian Governor Jerry Brown. At this point of time, the White House regarded Kerry as the strongest candidate. His being a decorated war hero, his intellectual style, his entrepreneurial qualities and above all good looks seemed to have caught the attention


of people.\textsuperscript{63}

Bush unfortunately failed to cash on his popularity to push a domestic agenda. His speech to the joint session of Congress was expected not only to celebrate victory in War but also to focus nation's enthusiasm on a domestic programme. Covering little new ground his speech after paying a warm tribute to the American forces, more on to domestic proposals for energy, education, transportation and crime control, which many commentators criticised as a "hodgepodge" held together only by the fact that Bush had proposed them all before.\textsuperscript{64}

Economic scenario worsened in late 1991 aggravated by an announcement of 73,000 upcoming lay off by the General Motors. In fact Bush did everything to divert people's attention from economy.\textsuperscript{65}

The Democrat aspirants waiting in the wings, struck while the iron was hot. They attacked the President, his seemingly lack of attention to domestic concerns and offered solutions ranging from Tsongas's pro-business economic plan to Karry's call for national health insurance. In October, President's job approval rating plummeted to nearby 50 per cent.

Among the various activities, the Democrats set about raising funds. Governor Clinton superseded everyone else, amassing an incredible 3.3 million dollars (not including federal matching funds) by the end of 1991. Most of the funds came from Arkansas, his home state.\textsuperscript{66}

In addition, the candidates sharpened their weaponry, "positioned" their stand on various issues, each attempting to portray himself as centrist enough for general election voters but liberal enough for Democratic primary participants.

In a debate on television in January 1992, all the six democrat aspirants viz. Clinton, Hoskin, Kerry, Tsongas, Wilder and Bram met in a forum moderated by NBC news anchor Torn Brokaw. All the six challengers to Bush were by and large unknown to the nation. Media reports were critical about their views on handling issues. They seemed to have impressed a few members from the audience.


\textsuperscript{64} F. Christopher Arterton, \textit{Campaign '92: Strategies and Tactics of the Candidates}. Ibid., p.78.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} Rayan J. Barilleux and Randall E. Atkins, Ibid n.63 ,p.39.
Soon after the shaky start, things did look up for Democrats. Governor Wilder apparently irked by the amount of time and energy required for the campaign dropped out of the race.\(^{67}\)

No aspect of the 1992 Presidential campaign received more media attention or generated more commentary than what came to be known as a "Perot phenomenon". To political scientists "the large-scale radicalisation of the political mainstream, a phenomenon unprecedented in this century". Historian Alan Brinkly dubbed it as a "passage to a new political order, a beginning of a fundamental realignment of American politics". George Will, political columnist thought, Perot's candidacy offered the first glimpse into the "Watery Ceasarism (that) the 21st century has up its nasty sleeve".\(^{68}\)

Perot went in for two campaigns in 1992, a spring campaign which began with Perot's indication of availability in February and lasted until his decision to withdraw in July and fall campaign which dated from Perot's last moment re-entry into the race on 1 October, 1992. Both the campaigns seemed at variance with each other. In the first campaign, Perot emerged as a serious threat, who could even win Presidency. Most political communicators spoke of the three cornered contest. The campaign spokesperson for both Bush and Clinton considered Perot a direct threat hence attacked him directly. A Senate Committee commenced hearing in June to prepare a constitutional amendment for the electoral college in the hope of making a change before the election, thus averting a political crisis. The Perot vote, according to Gerald Pomper was a generalised protest and not a specific programme. "Indeed, it was in some ways a protest against politics itself", comments Pomper. While Perot evinced the vulnerabilities of un-mediated politics in his unregulated spending, authoritarian conduct, and disregard for representative institutions. At the same time, he helped make the election a more serious discussion of national problems, particularly jobs and federal deficit.\(^{69}\)

By contrast, in the fall campaign, analysts dismissed him as a third party

\(^{67}\) Ibid. n. 63 p.38


candidate no matter how impressive his 19 per cent final showing proved to be. Few thought that Perot had any chance to win the Presidency. The only consideration probably was as which of the two major candidates would be hurt more by the Perot Campaign.

A glimpse of the poll ratings of the three candidates indicate their fluctuating fortunes.  

Table 1.2: 

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<th>Time</th>
<th>% Perot</th>
<th>% Bush</th>
<th>% Clinton</th>
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</table>

Source: Ibid. n. 70

Few candidates complained more about the media than Ross Perot, yet perhaps no candidate according to James Ceaser and others have benefited more from the media. At the end of the campaign, he chided reporters, "you guys hate that I am in the race; you are acting like Jerks".  

Ross Perot, the observers felt had no definite stance on any issues, except perhaps his hard line insistence that the budget deficit be rapidly reduced. He had no particular social or geographic constituency. Most important, he had no party

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71 Ibid. n. 61.
affiliations.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.} n. 69, p. 142.}

The basis of Perot's support according to analysts was a combination of public's wide spread frustration with the status quo, the attraction of his plain speaking manner and an acceptance by many voters of his simple prescription for complex problems of governance. He spoke bluntly, used folksy metaphors and analogies and spoke what people best understood. A lot of money was pumped in his media messages. He innovated half-hour "infomercials" which featured him discussing the problems of the American economy. Perot did not participate in the daily campaign grind of touring the country to attract local interest and media coverage.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.} n. 69, p.143.}

Bush suffered due to circumstances and an apathetic response from most of the media. "The idiocy of the reporting on the election night in New Hampshire was staggering" according to Marry Matalin, Director of Campaign for Bush. While Bush won by 16 points (53.37) the press had already written their leads and done their analysis and according to Matalin, they were not about to change them "just to conform to a little thing like the facts".\footnote{Mary Matalin, James Carville with Peter Khobler, \textit{All is Fair - Love, War and Running for President} (New York: Random House, 1994). p 142.}

"Every Tuesday, Bush won a primary against Buchanan, and every Tuesday the press would say we lost", observed Matalin with remorse.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.} p. 142.}

"The media, especially the Pencil press, tend to put drama back in stories by making them horse races", lamented Matalin, commenting that it was no story for the media that Bush was doing better than Buchanan, but it was that an incumbent, had to use up a lot of energy in a primary.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.} p. 144.}

There was this feeling also among the press in general that Bush was not media savvy "like many American Presidents of his era." His grievance, as he once told crowds of his faithful supporters was, that televised news, newspapers, and news magazines in varying degree were not properly covering the news of his campaign. "Annoy the media. Reelect Bush" were the bumper stickers and painted signs in his campaign.\footnote{John Honenberg, \textit{The Bill Clinton Story, Winning the Presidency} (Syracuse : Uni. Press, 1994) p 37.}
Bush, feel the critics also responded un-persuasively to intense public concerns about health care, his going back from his promise of 1988 not to raise taxes which he did and a prolonged economic slump. The critics as well as the media considered Bush as “inconsistent”, “Seemingly ambivalent” performer in his own campaign, “Listless and unfocussed”. Feeling uncomfortable with the new media formats, he criticized Clinton and Perot for appearing on talk shows, he called “Weird”, although he too later appeared on the “Larry King Live” and MTV, the music channel. He, to his misfortune gave a feeling to the audience that he “simply did not like to campaign”. 78

Clinton was an unknown contestant for the August office at the time of his Democratic nomination. Governing one of the nation’s poorest states, Arkansas, his tenure was marked by significant achievements specially in the field of education, welfare reform and economic growth, elected at the age of 32, being the youngest governor in the nation, at the age of 45, he had an enviable record of public service and his part in the National Democratic Party.

Clinton, the analysts felt was ideologically suited to Presidency because of his clear cut stand on certain issues which worried the people. To complement it, he was able to gather a highly competent campaign organisation. He depended to a great extent on professional consultants and national party organisations. 79

His strategist James Carrville has documented that when Bill Clinton met him for the first time for briefing about the campaign, he and his partner Bagela were convinced about not only that Clinton had the best of economic plans, he was enthusiastic, sincere and had the conviction to undertake the work, if he won. 80

This is a very important consideration. If your people believe in you, half the battle is won and Clinton proved them right.

Promising to do better, the Democrats adopted the theme of change and emphasized the two issues that were upper-most in the minds of the voters viz. the status of economy and health care. Clinton offered a relatively specific economic programme with plans to tax the wealthy, increase public investment in job training and

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid. n. 74.
infrastructure and reforms in the educational system.\(^{81}\)

In contrast with Bush, the observers felt Clinton proved a tireless, skilled and enthusiastic campaigner. He worked long hours. His rapport with audience, well prepared speeches and thorough command of the issues enabled him to perform well at all events. He also proved charming to the media persons. This helped him get a lot more positive copy. As a matter of strategy, the Democrats refrained from negative campaigning except when replying against a Republican tirade.\(^{82}\)

The only weakness of Clinton's candidacy probably related to his character. His alleged extra-marital affair with Gennifer Flower years ago and Republican attempts to make an issue of a trip, Clinton made to Moscow and his participation in organising anti Vietnam War protests in London during the early 1970s. To his good fortune, for Clinton his period of troubles happened at just the right time, late enough that he had already had a fairly secure lead in the nomination contest and early enough that by the time of the general election, the allegation seemed stale. Above all Hillary Clinton, his wife stood by him vowing her trust in her husband.

In a talk show, both Clinton and Hillary appeared when the issue of Flower came in. The whole programme was pre-conceived and strategised by the Clinton team. A long chat with Hillary Clinton and her approach to the issue which could have made or marred the chances, were discussed in detail. Hillary was not to appear as a victim who was continuing with Clinton for the sake of her daughter or to save her marriage, but as some one who trusted her husband because she had reasons to. The Programme Director was allowed interview on the condition that no editing would be done. Millions of people watched the programme and hailed Hillary's stand.\(^{83}\)

Many may have believed Clinton's version or not, but he came out as an honest person, who could be fallible like any other common man. The strategy worked.\(^{84}\)

Commenting on the programme S. Sreenath of Columbia University

\(^{81}\) Ibid. n. 74.
\(^{82}\) Ibid. n. 64 , p. 78.
\(^{83}\) Ibid. n. 74.
\(^{84}\) Ibid. n.74. All is Fair - Love, War and Running for President, a voluminous book of about 400 pages, probably is a pioneering work which details almost day to day strategisation of the 1992 Presidential campaign by both Democrats and Republicans. Authors Mary Matalin and James Carville, both key figures in the campaigns for President Bush and Bill Clinton respectively have jointly authored the work with Peter Knobler. A must for researchers, strategists, media persons covering election campaigns.
commented thus: "Clintons must have had the last laugh, after recording the programme, befooling the voters in believing what probably was not the truth." 85

Rita Beamish commenting on the allegations of moral turpitude on Clinton said, "In America we are used to politicians not living upto our expectations. Clinton, we found a regular guy with moral follies. He may be fallible but is not a Liar" said Beamish. Clinton according to her, did not arouse people's anger on real issues and that was the major cause of his victory. 86

The voters chose Bill Clinton to be the forty second President of the United States. Clinton received 43.0 per cent of the popular vote to Bush's 37.4 per cent and Perot's 18.9 per cent. Clinton carried thirty two states and the district of Columbia for a total of 376 electoral votes, 100 more than he needed to win. Despite Perot's impressive showing in the popular vote, he did not come close to winning in any state.

The Congress election in 1992 did not follow the historical pattern. This time they were unusually competitive. The election produced the largest turnover of membership in the House of Representatives in more than 40 years, 110 new members sharply changed the House's demographic characteristics. The number of women representatives rose from 28 to 47, the African Americans improved their tally from 25 to 38 and the Latinos from 11 to 17. Twelve new senators took office, four of them women including an African American, Carol Moseley Brown of Illinois. The election tripled the number of women senators from two to six. Republicans although lost presidency, picked up ten seats in the House, leaving the Democrats with a reduced (though comfortable) 258-176 majority. 87

The 1996 election results were almost foretold by analysts, pundits and media writers. It was a clean sweep. Despite a number of allegations like the White Water, FBI files and foreign funding, there was no doubt in the minds of a majority of US people that it was the year of Democrats. Clinton won the re-election after 65 years of

85 Based on in-depth interview with S. Sreenath on 14 November, 1996. Sreenath is an Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Journalism of the Columbia University, New York, and also leader of the South Asian Journalists in the USA.
86 Based on discussions and personal interview with Rita Beamish on 12 November, 1996. She is a Special Correspondent with Wire Agency, Associated Press.
gap when the Democrats occupied White House consistently for two terms. 88

"In '92, we elected him for eight years" was the general feeling of committed voters. A vibrant economy, low unemployment rate, low crime rate and a reasonably good foreign policy were considered some of the reasons for Clinton's re-election. 89

The Democrats however could not get a majority in the Congress. Republicans continue to have their hold over the Congress. Dole, felt observers, the last representative of World War II was rejected by the baby boomers and young generation. 90

Role of Mass Media in US elections:

The role of media in the electoral process always controversial was widely deliberated and discussed during and after the 1992 Presidential election. According to Michael Nelson, the discussion had less to do with issues like "Are the media biased? than with more empirical and analytic questions concerning the new ways in which the candidates were using the media to reach out to the voters and the corresponding new ways that the media were covering the candidates. 91

According to Philip Meyer, during the 1992 election, sometimes the candidates were bold and sometimes they were merely desperate. At times they bypassed the mainstream media by using innovative media management. 92

Professor Thomas Patterson has researched into how the decline of the political parties and the growing power of the news media undermine the American way of electing presidents. 93

The United States, is the only democracy, observes Patterson that organizes its national election campaign around the news media. "Even if the media did not want the

88 Based on data collected from Charla Hatton, Press Officer at the Foreign Press Office, Manhattan, New York during field visit to the USA in November/December, 1996.
89 Reaction of voters taken on random by CNN News team, glimpses of which were shown after the election day on 5 November, 1996 in news bulletins.
90 Based on personal interview with Prof. James Carry, heading the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University on 12 November, 1996.
92 Philip Meyer, Giving the Agenda Back to the People, in Michael Nelson, ed., Ibid.
responsibility for organizing the campaign, it is theirs by virtue of an election system built upon entrepreneurial candidates, floating voters, free-wheeling interest groups and weak political parties, writes Patterson.

The campaign turned chaotic largely because press was not a political institution. Patterson puts across three arguments:

1. Journalistic values are at odd with one another which results in a news agenda that misrepresents what is at stake in the choice among the candidates.

2. Journalist values, though supposedly neutral, introduce an element of random partisanship into the campaign, which coincidentally works to the advantage of one side or another.

3. Election news, rather than serving to bring candidates and voters together, drives a wedge between them.

Press, opines the author was not a substitute for political institutions. "A press based electoral system is not a suitable basis for that most pivotal of all decisions, the choice of a President."

In 1992, the redeeming feature around the election was that many members of media joined the politicians and public in criticising themselves and their colleagues.

Is there a middle ground where journalists can write about any question that seems important, but in a balanced and fair way? asks academic Herbert Alteschull. He answers saying it was a matter of using news judgment and recognizing one's own biases.

No one understands the power of the media in this country writes James Carville, chief Strategists for Bill Clinton campaign in 1992. Carville feels the power the media wields is "staggering" and "the (media) really do guard it". The following observation is interesting.

"They (media) like to think of themselves as learned and insightful and thoughtful and considered. They claim the mantle of truth Hell, truth is they make instant sharp judgment and after that all of their time, all of their energy, all of their creativity is spent on nothing but validating their original judgment. Something

94 Ibid. n. 74, p. 92.
happens and three minutes after the event they talk to each other and decide ‘this is the story’, and the story must remain thus in perpetuity. They claim the moral high ground, their job is to report facts and tell people the truth. But information is secondary for them, justification is primary. Once the collective media mind is made up, it will not change.”

Here Carville makes a very important point. The media writers have a certain perception about themselves and they believe they can’t be fallible (It may be argued that the feeling may be at a subconscious level about the potential power of their pen). Carville understanding the minds of the scribes observes that as a political strategist, it is imperative to “get out there right away and make sure your side of the story is the one they see and hear and write and say”. He recommends to be in the “first in news cycle” and “not in the follow up”.

There are a lot of discussion about media manipulation by smart campaigners in hoodwinking the media. Rita Beamish, Senior Journalist felt that the politicians needed media for their sustenance and survival but when the media was critical they bashed it, which indeed was unfortunate.

Abraham Lincoln once reckoned politics to the “Last best hope on earth”. To Jean Bethke Elstan, Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Vanderbilt University, America seem to embody more and more the worst of what a liberal democratic regime could become. Growing cynicism about politics and personalities in her view has promoted a spiral of delegitimisation. Over a period of time, she opines, a culture of mistrust, aided and abetted by scandals (Watergate and the like), a “press that feeds on the scandals and a public that seems insatiable in its appetite for scandal (even as it berates scandal mongering by the media), by an even more litigious society by declining levels of public trust and a determination to “get mine” no matter what may happen to the other guy,...by salacious snooping into the private lives of public figures, which further delight in their downfall. In such circumstances, she believes, politics becomes beholden not to a party institution before which they can be called to account but to the contribution to their particular campaign coffers and, most

96 Ibid. n. 74.
97 Based on personal interview with Rita Beamish, Special Correspondent with Associated Press in New York, on 12 November, 1996.
important, to their own entrepreneurial skills at retailing themselves to the voters from one election to the next. The spiral of delegitimisation, according to Elstain is powerfully manifest and will not disappear anytime soon.98

1988 elections was dubbed as the watershed. The election was driven by images and symbols and not real issues “the three national networks, the commercial television, major newspapers, wire services - all joined together in the riot”, according to Prof. Carry. In 1992, the revolt, he reasoned was against the media. The non-traditional media swayed over the traditional media. Prof. Carry ascribes this to the candidacy of Ross Perot. “The talk shows, the infomercials, made all the difference the way campaigns were hitherto covered”. When Perot’s candidacy became active, Music TV (MTV), radio call-in-programmes, Larry King live shows were at their active best. Perot, refused to appear on the NBC. He said he knew how to reach out to people. “The mediated politics, thus was changed to directpolitics”, according to Prof. Carry.99

Time magazine describing Clinton as the “Man of the Year” hailed Clinton’s victory as historic which placed him “to preside over one of the periodic reinvention of the US - those moments when Americans dig out of their deepest problems by imagining...Clinton carrying the distinctive values of his generation represents a principle at home of broadened democracy”.100

Interestingly, Time had announced flat out in early 1992, after reviewing the record that Clinton could not win. Perhaps, the Magazine, may like to review its criteria of judgment, suggested Herbert Atlschull.101

An Overview of Federal Election of 1994 in Germany:

In the second general elections in the Unified Germany on 16 October, 1994, the CDU/CSU/FDP coalition with Chancellor Helmut Kohl managed almost by a whisker. It was never as dramatic as today”, remarked Hans Guenther Merk,

99 Based on discussions and in-depth interview with Prof. James Carry on 14 November. 1996 at the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia Uni. New York.
100 Time, 4 January, 1993.
101 Ibid, n. 95, p 4
Germany's top election officer, after the polling was over. Kohl's Christian Democratic Union and its Christian Social Union sister party (CDU/CSU) scored 41.5 per cent of the votes.\footnote{102}

Coalition partner FDP, the Free Democrats led by Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel managed to cross the 5 per cent hurdle - receiving 6.9 per cent vote. The ruling coalition has 341 seats in the Bundestag, the Lower House of Parliament, against a total of 331 seats of the opposition parties, the ruling coalition having won by a narrow margin of 10 seats.

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) under Rudolf Scharping who tried to unseat Chancellor Kohl, received 36.4 per cent of the votes (i.e. 252 seats). With 7.3 per cent or 49 seats, Alliance 90/ the Greens, Germany's environmentalist Party, entered the Parliament as a third strongest faction.\footnote{103}

The reformed Communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) won 4 direct seats in Berlin entitling it to its full share of 30 seats.

Over 79 per cent electorate participated in the election process by going to polls for the October 1994 election, as compared to 77.8 per cent four years ago.\footnote{104} Realising a narrow margin Kohl said after the results “it is of course a majority that I can govern with. A close result has one advantage. It imposes more discipline. It will be difficult but that is life”. FDP, the coalition partner overtaken by the CSU, had “got the message” from the voters said Kinkel. The party needed to address some “serious questions” and “talk up the grass roots”, he emphasised.\footnote{105}

*Throuw*, a Dutch Paper commenting on the election wrote, “the outside world can live easily with another four years of Kohl. Just as far many Germans, he stands for international stability. But the message from Kohl’s re-election is clear: his power base has crumbled at home, and the opposition is stronger, German politics is becoming exciting again”.\footnote{106}

German Ambassador to India Frank Elbe commenting on the election said, “

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\begin{footnotes}
\item[102] *German News* (New Delhi), October, November, December 94 issues.
\item[104] Ibid. n. 103, p. 10.
\item[105] Ibid. n. 102.
\item[106] Ibid. n. 102.
\end{footnotes}

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the 64 year old Kohl who got the fourth consecutive chance to form the government, though with the tiniest majority, will however emerge as the sole European leader from the Cold War to remain in office, after the French President Francois Mitterrand’s term ended in May 1995. In 1996, Kohl will have served 14 years, longer than Konrad Adenauer, Germany’s first Post-War leader. Only Bismarck, who first unified Germany in the 1870s was chancellor for longer, 19 years.107

Political analysts feel that Kohl’s victory reflects Germans’ desire for continuity when the country had to come to grips with modernizing its economy and social safety net.

Replying to a question on the reasons of CDU coalition victory in 1994, Ralf Golinski, spokesman for the party reasoned that despite the fact that not all promises of 1990 were fulfilled in four years, people voted for the CDU as sincere efforts went in undertaking major projects like, hospitals, security, telecommunications and issues relating to senior citizens. People in the western states were convinced through the action plan that their resources were not squeezed to benefit the new states. The currency became stronger and there was increased social peace, which favoured the party at the hustings, reasoned Golinski.

Commenting on the adversary SPD, he said, the party spoke regionally which was a “bad strategy”. CDU, he said, spoke to the nation as a whole.108

“Voters do not like Kohl, but they trust him”, Rita Suessmuth, the President of Bundestag, once commented.109

Gunter Schwedhelm, an SPD spokesperson was short of words when he tried to reason out SPD’s failure in the 94 elections. “I don’t know if we made any mistakes. Media wrote very high about SPD’s chances of winning. Scharping was written about as an energetic and youthful leader in the beginning but suddenly the tables were turned and media dubbed him as unsuitable”, bemoaned Schwedhelm. Replying to the query as to what could be the reasons for the media turning against Rudolf Scharping,

107 Ibid., n. 102
108 Based on discussion and in-depth interview with Ralf Golinski, Chief Spokesperson for the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) at Bonn. on 9 October, 1996.
109 As reported in German News, November 94 issue.
he quipped "the Conservative party has very good contacts in the media".110

Though Kohl lagged behind Scharping in the popularity rating barely six months ago, Kohl capitalised on the upswing in the German economy and fall in unemployment index, to emerge as a popular politician just around the election time.

Rudolf Scharping, while taking over leadership of the Party's Bundestag delegation vowed to press the government hard during the current legislative term and anticipates taking over in 1998.111

Interestingly, the SPD has not decided on their leader for the ensuing 1998 Federal election which is less than two years from now. The decision, the party spokesperson said, would be taken in the Spring of 1998. For the CDU, the choice according to many analysts will definitely be Helmut Kohl, generally referred as the "Lucky Mascot" for the party.112

As the composition of the Bundestag has emerged after the election, it comprises quite a diverse group. German law allows politicians to hold both the Bundestag seat and a government post: Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and Minister of the Economy, Guenter Rexrodt of the FDP and Interior Minister Manfred Kanther of the CDU have taken over newly won deputy seats. The most prominent newcomer on the SPD side is Rudolf Scharping, who gave up the post of Prime Minister of Rhineland - Palatinate to head his party's parliamentary group in Bonn. Joschka Fischer has joined the Bundestag for the Greens. The Greens also boast the youngest member, 25 year old student Matthias Berniger, and the only Turkish born deputy, Cem Ozemit. The PDS has the great grandson of Otto Von Bismarck namely Heinrich Graf von Einsidel. The CSU has a former beauty queen in the Bundestag former Miss Germany Dagmar Wihri.113

A closer look at the election fortunes suggests the declining share of the national vote in the Kohl era fall heavily - from 48.8 per cent in 1983, to 44.3 per cent in 1987 and only 43.8 per cent in the unity year. The 1990 Polls and Land elections

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110 Based on personal interview with Gunter Schwedhelm, spokesman of the Social Democrat Party (SDP) in Bonn, on 9 October , 1996
112 Based on observation and discussions with a cross section of people during the field visit in October 1996.
113 Refer Die Zeit issues from 18 October to 20 October, 1994.
have also reinforced the results by reflecting popularity decline yet again after unification, and they only began to recover with the economic upturn in the spring of 1934.¹¹⁴

It is easy to make Kohl responsible for the declining fortunes and the sole scapegoat, feels Jonathan Carr, of the John Hopkins University, but he feels Kohl must take some of the blame for raising expectations that have not been met. On the economic front, Kohl’s pledge to reduce the role of the central state after thirteen years of “socialist misrule” through privatization, deregulation, tax reform, and trimming of social benefits, Carr feels, were pursued half-heartedly at least until the spiraling costs of unity forced it to make a bigger effort. Had Kohl tried to introduce a conservative revolution on the Reagan Thatcher lines, the author feels, the party would have lost more votes than it won. Kohl similarly miscalculated in 1990, when he hoped to sustain German unification without raising taxes. He imagined flourishing landscapes to emerge in the ruined east in “three to five years”. To his credit, he was not alone in his optimism, but he and his party has been bearing the brunt of the public’s ire if, declining voting is any indication remarks Carr.¹¹⁵

Analysts feel that like the Social Democrats, the Greens paid a heavy price for their lack of enthusiasm for German unification - at least for the “rush to unity” in 1990 as was demanded by most of the East German citizens. Though the Greens and the Alliance 90, were opposed to communism before the Wall fell, their main aim was for a reformed and independent socialist state, not a merger with West Germany. The results of the free and democratic East German Parliamentary election held in March 1990 showed how little this aim was shared by their fellow citizens. Running on separate tickets, the East German Greens won just 1.96 per cent of the vote and the Alliance 90 only 2.9 per cent. Subsequently both combined forces, and the Western Greens forged campaign links with them in the run-up to the December federal election, held just two months after the two Germanys were united. Interestingly, however, only the easterners then won seats in the Bundestag. The ruling by the Federal Constitutional

Court in September came in handy for them which said the small parties in the east be
given a fair chance, it was decided that for the 1990 election alone the “minimum 5 per
cent” rule would be applied in each former German state separately. Alliance 90 and
the Greens jumped the hurdle in the east, but the western Greens failed to do so in the
old Federal Republic. The easterners and westerners finally merged to become a single
nationwide party in 1993. Contrary to the expectations of the people in general and
analysts, the Alliance 90 and the Greens managed 7.3 per cent votes or 47 seats, being
the third largest party in the Bundestag.\(^{116}\)

The 1994 issues would remain live in the ensuing European Union and
Bundestag elections in 1997 and 1998 opined Dr. Lossack, a member of Bundestag
representing the Green party. The Greens who have united with the Alliance 90 will
have to rewrite the Programmes keeping in view the ever increasing problems in the
labour market. With monetary union with the European Community, she feels there
will be threats to jobs and security but then there was no other political choice.\(^{117}\)

In what turned out to be the watershed in the German political history, the East
Germany’s ex-communists were able to become a parliamentary force in the Unified
Germany, thanks to the West German Basic Law. The Constitutional Court ruling of
September that allowed the eastern Alliance 90/ Greens to get into the Bundestag did
the same for the Party of Democratic Socialism successor to the East German ruling
Socialist Unity (Communist Party). In the December 1990 elections, the PDS collected
1.1 million voters, all but 109,000 of them in the East. That gave the party a bare 2.4
per cent of the total German vote but 11.1 per cent of the eastern one. Since the East
and the West were being treated as separate voting areas with their respective 5 per
cent hurdles, the PDS won entry to the Bundestag with 16 seats.\(^{118}\)

Banned in 1956, the (Western) Communist Party returned with a reconstituted
name in 1968, but despite moral and monetary support from their communist party
comrades from the Eastern part, never with more than 0.3 per cent federal votes. It
failed to run in the 1987 elections. Three years later, they made it to the Bundestag in a

\(^{116}\) Based on interview with Dr. Anglika Koster Lossack, Member of Bundestag, on 9 October. 1996,
representing the Green Party and Ibid. n.108 and n.110.
\(^{117}\) Ibid.n.116.
\(^{118}\) Taken from the Research findings - Vortaufiges amtliches Wahlergebnis : Wahltagsbefragung

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different avatar. The other parties felt that being a special election, one without separate East and West voting areas, they would only have to put up with the PDS in Parliament for 4 years i.e. till the 1994 elections. How wrong they proved their detractors. The PDS won four district seats in Berlin entitling it to its full share of 30 seats. The PDS, in a short time has been able to project itself as the party for the “poor people”, which surely was in competition with the SPD. According to opinion pollsters Richard Hilmer and Rita Hilmer, among the PDS voters, men, well educated, employed and people with high household income have been over represented. Nonetheless every second person in this category considers himself a socially loser (among the entire population, every fourth person) or loser due to unification. The PDS also attracted the youth. According to projections every fifth youth in the age group of 18-29 intended to vote for the PDS.\(^\text{119}\)

If one analyses the election, one finds that the ruling party owed its majority practically to the old German states (western). In 1990 the CDU/CSU and FDP got almost equal result from the old and new states - 53 per cent from both east and the west German states. CDU lost some base in the new states during the 1994 election. In the old states, the union with the FDP received only 49.9 per cent while in east only 42.5 per cent. The loss of votes from the vote bank of the ruling party in east was 2-1/2 times as much (-12.6 per cent) as in west (-4.8 per cent). The oppositions were able to strengthen their base at the cost of the ruling coalition. The trend in the east was very strong (+13.6 per cent) as compared to that in the west (+5.4 per cent).\(^\text{120}\)

Christoph Mestmacher, correspondent with Northern German Radio sums up the election of 1994 and its difference with the 90 elections very succinctly:

"The 1990 election can be classified as an emotional election. The prospect of the forthcoming unification reduced the major issue of the election to the question: who wants the unification and who does not?" (The Greens for example missed the "Magic" 5% because of their unclear muddled position on this point. They opted for a new constitution and against the so-called "Währungsaunition". From 1990-94 they

\(^{120}\) Suddentsche Zeitung. 18 October . 1994. The newspaper quoted analysis by polling agency INFAS.
had been represented by Alliance 90, an amalgamation of opposition parties in the GDR, who tend mainly towards environmental issues. In 1994 the election was more factual and this election can be described as a choice between persons. The CDU favoured the “one man show” - Helmut Kohl. The SPD tried to revive the “troika” (During the late 60's Willy Brandt, Herbert Wenner and Helmut Schmidt were called the troika). Their main actors were Rudolph Scharping, Oskar Lafontaine and Gerhard Schroeder. On taking a close look at the election posters one will recognise the CDU chose more photos of Helmut Kohl and less slogans. The SPD opted for photos as well. But they had to cover three persons. Nevertheless the new strategic element had been: The person is important. So the question was not, what to vote for - but whom to vote for.

SPD suffered from internal fights and problems. Scharping was not granted the support he needed. The predicament began in January 94. The polls turned out against him and the party showed a nervous reaction. Internal discussions emerged - whether he was a right candidate against Kohl. Not only the party but the candidate himself lost shape. His awkward behaviour coincided with his carelessness. He confused things and was not able to correct his mistakes by at least being charming. One might say these are only superficial aspects, but they played an important role. It was a mixture of nervousness, panic, short-sighted behaviour and a contribution to the internal rivalry, that finally led to the construction called the troika. Three prominent social democrats Rudolf Scharping, Gerhard Schroeder and Oskar Lafontaine were supposed to fight together against Helmut Kohl. But this construction was not able to stop the rivalry between them. For the public opinion, the SPD was a quarrelsome party and spoilers.

Last but not the least, the SPD did not explain how it was planning on taking over government, for example in coalition with Alliance 90 / The Greens. And finally the upcoming economic boom was beneficial for the CDU.

121 Based on a questionnaire left for Mr. Christoph Mestmacher, correspondent with Northern German radio, as I could not meet him while in Germany. He sent a filled-in questionnaire in December 1996.
Role of German Media in Campaigning:

Media in Germany, as in any liberal democracy have been playing an important role during the elections. Von Anke Funchus is of the view that 75 per cent German public form their views over issues after watching television. He feels the politicians build their image according to the reactions they receive through the medium of TV.\(^{122}\)

Anxious about the growing role of media especially, the broadcasting media the SPD after the Party reforms in 1984, in their action programmes offered to remove the influence of the parties on radio and withdraw the old rules which applied to the radio system and frame new ones to check the growing influence of various groups on radio.\(^{123}\)

Dieter Velrich spokesperson for CDU feels that media politics in fact is power politics (*Medien politik ist Macht politik*) and since no one in the Party has contradicted him, this, according to Gerhard W Willkamper, could be construed as Party’s view point also.\(^{124}\)

Willkamper feels the political parties must be allowed to express their view through the electronic media. Party politics, he writes is the manifestation of the pluralistic view point of the German Society. Quoting Saarlandischen Rund Funks, the author warns about the dangerous implications of control saying "Warum die Zur Kontroller enden Kontrolleure det Kontrollierenden Sind". (Why control an institution like media which in fact keep a check on politics).\(^{125}\)

The Greens feel very strongly about the freedom of expression. The Party feels every one has an inherent right to express his or her views in writing, speech and pictures. All the laws which hinder the freedom in their view should be abrogated. To them, the confrontation between politics and the media is a reality and can not really be ruled out. The Party, it says stands for plurality of views and freedom of expression in private media and public right wing media.\(^{126}\)

\(^{123}\) Ibid.n.121. In his book *Medien und Politik*, the Editor Gerhard W. Willkamper has provided a perspective of the views of political parties and various experts on the role of media and politics in Germany.
\(^{124}\) Ibid.
\(^{125}\) Ibid.
\(^{126}\) Ibid.
H. Kleinstenber is of the view that from its historical origins onwards the broadcasting system has been the object of power and politicians attempt to influence and control it. Media politics has always been about power politics, he feels.\textsuperscript{127}

Paul Sethe quoted by E.Spoo in \textit{Der Spiegel} said, “Press freedom is the freedom of two hundred rich men to disseminate their opinions... the Constitution has given (the Citizen) the right to express his opinion, but economic realities take it away”\textsuperscript{128}

Peter J. Humphrey writes that Sethe’s comments caused quite a public stir not the least because he had long innings in a newspaper, \textit{Die Welt}, owned by one of the most powerful press barons in the history of the world’s press, \textit{Axel Springer}, because he had also worked in another leading conservative daily, the \textit{Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung}, where also he had raised an important issue which tended to explore the social, economic and political power relations behind the media system.\textsuperscript{129}

Ralf Golinski of the CDU was of the view that media had a definite role to play but they were “no one’s friends in particular”. The public broadcasting station had the representation of political parties, churches, industries and institutions, hence some influence could be possible but the print media and private channel by and large had no interest in their party or that party. “When they are clever, they get money from all the parties”, he reasoned.\textsuperscript{130}

Contradicting the above, Gunter Schwedhelm, an SPD spokesman said the media in Germany was “pro-right to a great extent”. Most of the media writers in Germany, he opined had definite political preferences.\textsuperscript{131}

Christoph Betram, Executive Editor of \textit{Die Zeit} very strongly denied that media had any power or role to make or break politicians. However, if there was a scandal, a “skeleton in the cupboard, did create a mood”, he said.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{128} Paul Sethe as quoted by E. Spoo in Der Spiegel, 1 September, 1965.
\textsuperscript{129} Peter J. Humphrey, \textit{Media And Media Policy in West Germany: the Press and Broadcasting since 1945} (New York:Berg, 1990).
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid. n.108.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid no. 110
\textsuperscript{132} Based on interview with Chritoph Betram Exe. Editor of \textit{Die Zeit} in Hamburg, Germany on 10 October, 1996.
Richard Hilmer of lnfratest Burke, an opinion polling agency felt that the public broadcasting stations could not be influenced by parties because they were in competition with private channels. Credibility, he said, was the key word. Newspapers, according to Hilmer, had a role of watchdog though television was gaining more popularity.133

Commenting on the role of mass media in German elections around the 1994 elections, Guntur Hoffman in an article headlined “when politics finally becomes show business”, in Die Zeit, feared that, the borders between politics, media, advertising and public opinion research were truly vanishing. The new “magic word” was stage management, he lamented.134

The text-less posters showing well built Kohl surrounded by admirers, the newspaper commented, were part of the campaign management. The slogan “No experiments” appeared many a time in the election year. Two huge bill boards in front of the party offices, one showing Scharping on a racing cycle with a caption saying “Now it starts” and the other showing Helmut Kohl without glasses smiling amusedly with a caption “politics without beard”. Photographs of these hoardings appeared in many newspapers and magazines, thus spreading the message. Some young voters found the slogan on Kohl’s hoarding as absurd as reflected in an opinion poll. Gunter felt, Kohl’s fiddling with his spectacles was also strategic in nature. In 1986, his media advisor Gerd Bacher had made him to have a new pair of glasses with a new frame. This was aimed at against Helmut Schmidt.135

The Politicians, the author commented, were no longer politicians. They had reduced the journalists to public relations managers. “Why otherwise”, he said “Berlin’s young senator Kuger would have allowed the journalists to take his picture in nude in the posters”? “Because they want to attract attention”, he reasoned.136

Helmut Kohl generally lamented saying “My predecessor was more talented in stage management than I”. His purpose, the newspaper said was to bring home the point that he was conscious about his image build up. The truth however, commented

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133 Based on interview with Richard Hilmer, CEO of one of the largest research organisation viz. INFRATEST Burke, in Berlin on 13 October, 1996.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
the author, was to convey the contrary. Kohl allowed only those photographers to take his pictures who were considered the best in the trade.¹³⁷

Mathias Wanbach, a CDU spokesperson in Berlin felt, the mass media had only a marginal impact in building or tarnishing the images of politicians. He felt Helmut Kohl was the best example to be cited. The press, he said wrote very badly about him in early 1990s, people still voted for him. Actions, he said spoke more than media images.¹³⁸

The floating voters zapped from one channel to another. Only big entertainers could hope for a consistent response to some extent. Under the circumstances, even politicians were trained for communication. Some of them trained themselves on their own. Cultural hegemony, the critics felt was on the wane. Even WAZ, one of the largest media houses chose to be on the side of left wingers for the election year. The right too did not possess any hegemony. According to one organizer of the election campaign, the rule of “event hegemony” prevailed.¹³⁹

Mestmacher, a radio journalist is of the opinion that the media have the power to make and break politicians. At the same time, it was also true that smart campaigners were able to manipulate the media. It required people from both sides to play the game. Writes Mestmacher, “In my point of view, the system is balanced, political correspondents always have to check themselves with scrutiny and continually review their connections into politics. But without connections you are not able to work. Correspondents and politicians have to live together, even if they would prefer to live independently of one another. Thus, if you want to know the name of the game in Bonn, you have to be on the playground. Fortunately, this game is less dramatic than an outstanding person might think”.¹⁴⁰ Winfried B. Lerg commenting on media power in politics in retrospect writes that during the 1930’s with the coming of talkies, the potential power of film was realised in influencing public opinion. With the wide spread of the mass media in the 1960’s, its potential was realised. The Federal constitution

¹³⁷ Ibid.
¹³⁸ Based on interview with Mathias Wanbach. CDU spokesperson on 13 October 1996, in Berlin.
¹⁴⁰ Christoph Mestmacher, correspondent in Bonn for NDR (Northern German Radio).
seized of the issues laid down certain norms for checks on the media.¹⁴¹

Media were expected to project news, curtail on the sensational (Federal Court judgment, passed on 4 November, 1985).

One of the major issues of discussion among the politicians in the recent years according to the author has been the increasing power of media and the nexus between media and politics.

Quoting Herbert Schiller from his book Die Bewa Btseims - Managers, 1976, where he speaks of the all pervasiveness of the American media which may not be good for the American society, Lerg criticises the highly “bureaucratized” German Radio with ‘right wing inclinations’. The radio may project itself being controlled by the people, which in reality, according to the author was in effect controlled by right wing parties.

There is a feeling among a cross section of people in Germany, that the media in their country were right-oriented. More analysis will be made on the subject in the following chapter.

General Election in India - 1991 : An Overview:

India faced its electorate in 1991 for the tenth time in 40 years of its becoming a Republic. The elections in fact were mid-term polls. The Ninth Lok Sabha had a life of only one year three months and 12 days. To recapitulate, no party received a clear cut verdict in the 1989 hustings. The Congress (I) which secured an unprecedented number of seats in 1984 (415 in a house of 529) managed to get only 197 seats, highest of all the bidders, but not enough to form the government on its own, decided to be in the opposition. The National Front formed the government comprising Janata Dal, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Bhartiya Janata Party and Telugu Desam. The BJP and the Left Party did not stake claim in the government directly. When the BJP withdrew support over the Ram Janma Bhoomi tangle, the issue of reservations for the OBC’s (Other Backward Castes) was looming large. V.P.Singh’s government

¹⁴¹ Winfried B.Lerg, Media power and politics. in Gerhard W. Wittkamper’s Medien und Politik: (Hrsg:1992), Part II.
was defeated on the floor of the House. A splinter group from the Janata Dal headed by Shri Chandrashekar formed the government with the outside support of the Congress(I) and allies. In just four months the Congress party withdrew support alleging the minority government, ordering surveillance on Rajiv Gandhi, former prime minister and Congress president. The minority government submitted its resignation on 6 March, 1996. President Venkatraman dissolved the Lok Sabha on 13 March.143

On 17 April, 1991, the President issued a notification asking the constituencies all over the country except the state of Jammu and Kashmir to elect members for the new House and with an electorate of over 520 million voters, the world's largest democracy went to polls. Fifteen states had a one day poll while for seven states, it was a two-day span.144 Elections were also held simultaneously for the Assemblies of five states and one Union territory. 8,953 candidates joined the fray, most of them in multi-cornered contest.

Just a day after the first round of polling on 20 May, 1991 was over, Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister and Congress(I)'s aspirant for premiership was gruesomely assassinated on 21 May 1991 by a human bomb at Sriperambadur in southern Tamil Nadu, where he went campaigning for the party.

The Election Commission announced the postponement of polling schedule by some three weeks. The revised dates for the second and third rounds of polling for 113 Lok Sabha seats were 12 and 15 June against 23 and 26 May 1991 announced earlier.145

The 1991 elections have been dubbed by analysts as the most brutal and violent election in the Indian history. There were large scale rigging, booth capturing, killing of candidates and various mal-practices. Re-poll was ordered in a number of constituencies. Distressed at the mounting violence, the President in an unprecedented move, addressed the nation via the state-run television and radio appealing for a free and fair poll.146

Observers feel that trends emerging out of the 1989 elections manifested

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143 *The Economic Times*, 14 March, 1991
144 The Poll dates were 23 and 26 May, 1991- Source: *Indian Express and Patriot*, 18 April, 1991.
146 President addressed the Nation via the State-run Television and Radio on 8 June, 1991.
themselves even more clearly in 1991. On the positive front, a trust in electoral approval, persistence of a centralist position in the electoral area and the rise of identity on a salient political issues gave the tenth General Election its distinctive character. 147

"The Indian paradox", notes political scientist Myron Weiner in an insightful analysis "is the contradiction between India’s high level of political violence and its success at sustaining a democratic political system". 148

Lamenting over the under-developed status of the discipline of political science in India in sorry contrast to the state of economics as the most productive social science, N. Ram, editor, Hindu, comments thus: “What exists here and there in universities and research institutions cannot aspire to do elementary justice to the complexity and richness of data generated by the practice of politics across this vastly mixed up land. The theoretical conceptualisation of a serious kind is extremely rare. Under the circumstances the amateurs of journalism perform as the brightest and the best in the business... Only astrologers and others who claim savant to be (if not super human) powers compete today, with the Pundits of the press in the business of unraveling India’s political future. 149

If one were to look closely, as far as ideologies and programmes were concerned, there was not much of a difference between Congress (I), the Janata Dal(s) and the Janata Dal, in the tenth round. All three were “ideologically loose catch all” parties and stood for secularism, socialism, national unity and integrity. All three wished to carry the minorities, the backward classes and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with them. BJP created the niche of “Hindutva” which they termed as “genuine secularism”. The BJP began with the Ram Janmabhoomi issue, though its slogan was Ram and Roti and after Rajiv’s assassination, it high jacked the Congress (I)’s plank of stability. Senior BJP leader L K. Advani, corrected that by the “clumsy and inept” manner in which the Congress(I) had behaved on the leadership issue, “they have handed the stability plank to the BJP on a platter”. 150

150 Quoted by Indian Express in its issue of May 29,1991.
The Janata Dal and the left parties took credit for announcing reservation for the backward communities and a greater share in power in the name of social justice.

According to Subash Kashyap, all parties tried to seek votes on community, caste, sub-caste, language or region-based affinities and issues. Ideologies and programmes, he feels, are mere facades or means to power.\(^{151}\)

The election results were intriguing. A Party which rode the crest of sympathy in 1984, in the aftermath of assassination of Indira Gandhi, could not muster even an absolute majority despite its charismatic leader Rajiv Gandhi’s in-human assassination.

The Congress (I) emerged as by far the largest party in the House but a little short of absolute majority to be able to form a government on its own. The party was completely routed from the two major states in the North viz. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It lost its traditional supporters. There was a swing of scheduled castes votes in favour of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). The Muslims, traditional supporters of the Congress were also weaned away by the Janata Dal (JD). The Brahmin vote by and large favoured the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP).\(^{152}\)

The Congress, however, could draw solace from its performance in Maharashtra, Kerala, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Assam. It also successfully broke the communist strongholds of Tripura and Kerala, brought back Haryana from Janata Dal and marginalised the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.

A look at the seats and per cent of votes by major parties since the first election make an interesting study.

The Congress has never been able to get 50 per cent vote in any of the ten General elections despite its three fourths majority in 1984 election.\(^{153}\)

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\(^{152}\) Data analysis from *The Business and Political Observer*, 18 June, 1991.

\(^{153}\) Ibid.
The Party secured 364 seats with 45 per cent vote in 1952; 371 seats and 48.8 per cent vote in 1957, 361 seats and 40.8 per cent vote in 1962, 283 seats and 40.8 per cent vote in 1967, 352 seats and 43.7 per cent vote in 1971, 154 seats and 34.4 per cent (the lowest) in 1977, 353 seats and 42.7 per cent vote in 1980; 415 seats and 48.1 per cent in 1984, 197 seats and 39.5 per cent vote in 1989, 227 seats and only 37.6 per cent vote in the tenth General election in 1991.

Source: Ibid. n.152

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The BJP’s (including the erstwhile Bhartiya Jan Sangh) per cent of vote has been on the increase from 3.1 per cent in 1952 to 19.9 per cent in 1991. But interestingly not in consonance with the relative increase in the number of seats. When it won only 3 seats, in 1952 it’s per cent of vote was 3.1 per cent, with 35 seats in 1967 ten per cent of votes was only 9.4. Similarly in 1971, when it secured 22 seats, its per cent of vote was only 7.4. In 1984 while it won only 2 seats, the per cent of vote was 7.4. With 85 seats in 1989 and 119 seats in 1991, the per cent of vote has been 11.4 and 19.9 respectively.\footnote{154}

Janata Party/Janata Dal which made its foray in the Indian political scene in 1977 secured 298 seats with 43.0 per cent vote which was reduced to 31 seats and 19 per cent vote. This further went down to 10 seats and 6.7 per cent vote in 1984. The party resurrected under the leadership of Mr. V.P. Singh in 1989 but could manage only 143 seats and 17.8 per cent vote. In the last general election, it secured 56 seats and 10.8 per cent vote.\footnote{155}

Other political parties with the exception of socialist party in 1952 (no more in existence) have not been able to get two digit percentage of votes in any one of the elections. Though the performance of left parties in terms of seats has not been that bad. From 19 seats in 1967 the CPI(M) was able to muster 35 seats in 1991. CPI’s fortune has been fluctuating from the highest 29 seats in 1957 and 1962 to 6 in 1984. It secured 13 seats in 1991.\footnote{156} With growing consciousness, opines political scientist C.P. Bhambri, there has been a higher voter turnout forcing the parties to put issues or pseudo issues as their planks. Renewing the performance of various parties, before the elections on various planks, Prof. Bhambri in retrospect refers to Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s slogan of “eradicating poverty” of 1971 elections and Mr. V.P. Singh’s slogan of “equity and social justice” during 1991 Lok Sabha elections which he comments were exercises in political populism. Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister, hints Bhambri, was more restrained than his daughter in 1971 and V.P. Singh in 1991. Electoral competition, according to him has also put secular parties on the defensive. During the 1991 elections, all major political parties were competing to challenge each other on

\footnote{154}{Ibid.}\footnote{155}{Ibid.}\footnote{156}{Ibid.}
the basis of personality, populist-programme and appeals to communities for votes.\textsuperscript{157}

In the 1991 election, the trend of fierce political campaigning through the mass media which began in 1984 continued unabated in the 1989 and 1991 elections. It is an exercise in futility to gauge the actual expenditure incurred by major players but looking at the multi-media blitzkrieg, one could estimate that crores of rupees were spent in a matter of months by major parties to catch the attention of the voters.

The government allowed free time once to all recognised political parties on television and All India Radio to air their views and present political programmes to the audience. The methodology followed by the Election Commission was through a draw of lots in the presence of representatives of various national political parties on 22 April, 1991. The BJP was the first party to begin the series on 6 May, 1991 at 8:20 p.m. on national network \textit{Doordarshan}. The duration of the programme was 15 minutes. On All India Radio, the recognised parties were allowed broadcast time in two rounds. Two political parties were allowed 15 minutes each from 9:30 p.m.\textsuperscript{158}

Looking at the naively and lack of enthusiasm on the part of most of the parties, communication researcher Bhaskar Rao commented that “despite that recognised political parties had availed of the electronic media for election time programmes for the fourth time now (meaning since 1980), most parties gave the impression of using these media for the first time, or perhaps they did not avail them with similar seriousness as they did with video and audio”.\textsuperscript{159}

Election manifestoes were compared to fishing rods by \textit{Indian Express}. As Election manifestoes are primarily fishing rods loaded with goodies as baits to catch the susceptible voters, hence the considerable overlap of promises in them” commented the editorial.\textsuperscript{160}

“Hundreds of promises but few ideas”, said the editorial of \textit{Business India}.

“The economic content of the manifestoes and campaigns of the three major political parties - the Congress, National Front and BJP - bear a striking resemblance to one

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Deccan Chronicle}, Hyderabad, 23 April, 1991.
\textsuperscript{159} Based on personal interviews with Mr. Bhaskar Rao on 18 December, 1996.
\textsuperscript{160} Editorial comment in \textit{Indian Express} on 2 May, 1991.
Similar views were aired by Ashok Upadhyay in *The Business and Political Observer*. “Reading the Manifestoes one gets the impression that parties have either succumbed to the lure of privatization (Congress) or apparently lured (BJP) or reaffirmed the traditional role of a regulatory state”, observed Upadhyay. 

In one of the discussions on television, S.P. Singh, then editor of Hindi daily *Navbharat Times* felt that there was a complete hijacking of the media by the Bhartiya Janata Party. Every time a BJP VIP visited a constituency, ten to twelve media persons would accompany the caravan and on return, there obviously was coverage. An impression was created deliberately by the party through the media messages that “BJP was sure to sweep polls”, commented Singh.

Commenting on the sophistication of marketing armoury employed by the BJP, T.N. Ninan, then Editor of *The Economic Times* said “Political campaigns have been like any advertising and marketing plans. Candidates and policies are packaged and marketed most professionally. As market adjustments are made up to keep in view the consumer preference, BJP did just the same”.

If one were to content-analyse the campaigns of various political parties, it was evident that the Congress (I) and Samajwadi Janata Party’s campaigns revolved round their leader Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. Chandra Shekhar respectively. The Bhartiya Janata Party, instead, projected the team.

Mr. L.K. Advani who maintained a low profile during the 1989 elections, emerged as the BJP’s star candidate for Prime Ministership during the 1991 election campaign.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad which had fielded many candidates for the BJP ran a multi-media campaign simultaneously. The issue was Ram Janmabhoomi and the plank “Hindutava”. Though they did not support the Party overtly, the voter, was expected to make linkages. It was in fact, quite obvious. The BJP received a great share of flak.

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163 S.P. Singh in a programme on Election Analysis on *Doordarshan* on 1 June, 1991.
164 Ibid. T.N. Ninan now is the editor of *Business Standard*.
166 Ibid.
for the VHP campaign, which the media commentators termed as "virulent and communal".\textsuperscript{167}

The two major players, who took on each other through their respective campaigns were the Congress (I) and the Bhartiya Janata Party. In the Hindi belt, the Congress (I) targeted the Raja of Manda, Shri V.P. Singh of Janata Dal also.\textsuperscript{168}

After Rajiv Gandhi's death, the Congress (I) did feel a vacuum. Finding a leader acceptable to various sections, age groups and who could sail through the next five years (which even the most optimists doubted) was indeed a Herculean task for the Party.

PV Narasimha Rao emerged as the consensus leader heading a party short of clear majority in the Parliament. Politics, as they say is a game of chess, of adjustments and manipulations. With the merger of Ajit Singh's group a faction of the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Party did manage to have absolute strength. It must be said to the credit of Rao that the Party was able to complete five year term.

Similarly, the Bhartiya Janata Party emerged as the single largest party in the 11th Lok Sabha in 1996 but short of absolute majority. The President invited Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, leader of the BJP to form the Government and prove their majority in about two weeks. Barring the support from Samata party and Akali Dal, BJP could not get support from any party including independents. In a marathon session in Parliament which was telecast live, Vajpayee spoke of the principled politics of the BJP and exhorted members to vote by conscience. But looking at the general mood of the parliamentarians and probably as a strategy, Vajpayee tendered resignation of his government to the President, taking the credit of heading a government for the shortest period of 13 days in the history of parliamentary democracy in India. Thirteen parties joined together to form the government with Congress (I) supporting it from outside. HD Deve Gowda, Chief Minister of southern state of Karnataka emerged as the consensus candidate for Prime Ministership to head the coalition. Communist Party of India has also joined the coalition. Despite different ideologies and planks, the parties joined together to keep away the right-wing Bhartiya Janata Party. "By not giving any

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid. p. 27.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
party, a clear mandate”, wrote Vinod Mehta in an editorial in Outlook, “the Indian electorate has taken grave risks which our fragile Republic can ill afford. For once I would be happy to be proved wrong” 169

Organising a general election in India is a mammoth affair in terms of infrastructure, manpower and financial resources. It is not often appreciated within and outside the country. Despite the constraints of a heterogeneous society and multifarious pressures - social, economic and political, TN Chaturvedi, Editor of the IIPA Journal, feels the electoral system has performed fairly well during the last 45 years with aberrations at certain places of a limited extent.170 The negative traits of 1977 however according to Chaturvedi became quite visible in 1989 and also 1991 elections which included wide spread electoral violence and gross and blatant indulgence in electoral mal-practices like massive booth capturing, rigging, putting a big question mark on the credibility of our electoral system, particularly in some states 171

TN Seshan, the controversial Chief Election Commissioner of India till December 1996, passed strictures against overspending in the elections in 1996. In fact a battery of officials went about from constituency to constituency to gauge for themselves, the extent of expenditure. Strict monitoring on the election day to avoid booth capturing and rigging of polls was also organised (photo identity cards were issued to citizens). So much was the scare about countermanding of election that the 1996 election was lack-luster, without the usual festivities that accompany a general election, but of course much austere when compared to the elections of 1984 to 1991.

Seshan may go, but his legacy would continue, wrote Rajdeep Sardesai in Sunday, a weekly magazine, about the time, Seshan laid office of the Chief Election Commissioner. 172

Same views were echoed by Balbir Punj, Executive Editor of the Business and Political Observer. Seshan, he said may go but his effect will continue. He credited the

169 Vinod Mehta, editorial comment in Outlook, New Delhi (weekly news magazine), 22 May .1996.
171 Ibid. n 170.
172 Rajdeep Sardesai in Sunday, Calcutta (Weekly), 15 December. 1996.
media for continually supporting Seshan’s crusade.\footnote{173}{Based on personal interview with Balbir Punj, Executive Editor of \textit{The Business and Political Observer}, on 16 December 1996.}

The Press Council of India (PCI) issued guidelines to the Press on coverage of elections in 1996. The code of conduct issued by the PCI was not taken very kindly by the media writers. It was dubbed as “infringement to their right of speech and expression”.\footnote{174}{Based on personal interview with Justice P.D. Sawant, Chairman, \textit{Press Council of India}, on 17 December 1996.}

When one looks at the elections of the three democracies held in the 1990s, one thing is apparent- the faith in the democratic process, the vibrancy of mass media which get activated to serve as an important conduit between politics and populace in disseminating information about issues, personalities and seamy side of politics.

It is a general feeling that the media have a vested interest in chaos. Bad makes better copy. A dispassionate content analysis of media stories in any country where the media enjoy the freedom of speech and expression one would find that it is the “negative” which hit the headlines more often than the “positive”. The journalists defending their right argue that normal is expected any way because we all work towards that. It is, the abnormal which needs reporting and debating. Rita Beamish of the Associated Press spoke of the journalists inherent role in fulfilling public’s needs and people in every society, she felt, were the same “American public is not different than an average public in any society in being interested in the “Halloween and salacious”\footnote{175}{Based on personal interview with Rita Beamish of \textit{Associated Press}, in New York, on 12 November 1996.}

But is that what is expected of the Media, especially when serious matter like governance and elections are at stake? Politics and media are intertwined, each depending on the other for survival, as Christoph Betram of \textit{Die Zeit} put it, “Media and politics have vested interest in each other. They provide cross-fertilise each other”.\footnote{176}{Based on personal interview with Cristoph Betram, Executive Editor of \textit{Die Zeit} in Hamburg, on 10 October, 1996.}

The electorate, generally get a feeling through the media messages that those whom they elect, seldom fulfill their promises as reflected in many studies. The
political scientist Gerald Pomper's study of the party platform in nine Presidential elections in the US, however, found that victorious candidates attempted to fulfill nearly all of their policy commitments and succeeded in achieving most of them, and when they failed to deliver on promises, it was usually because they could not get the House to agree, or because the pledge conflicted with a higher priority commitment, or because conditions had changed.  

There is a growing feeling among scholars, political scientists and media observers after certain happenings (electoral process being one of them) that the outcome could have been different, if not better, if only the media had reported the matters differently (more often meaning objectively). The assumption underlying this feeling is that the media have the ability to shape things and organise matters as they would like to. Walter Lippmann the legendary journalist and scholar knew about the potential of the press and its limitations also as early as the beginning of the century. "The Press", he said, "is no substitute for institutions. It is like the beam of searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision. Men cannot do the work of the World by this light alone. They cannot govern society by episodes, incidents and interruptions".  

At the same time, a free press is a barometer of democracy and public opinion.  

Despite varying political systems, the USA, Germany and India can rightly be called democracies in a true sense. There are however, areas in each country which need addressing and the experiences in these countries can be studied and adapted wherever found suitable. Although the electoral process in the USA is long, complicated and cumbersome but it has worked well in the country over the last couple of centuries. The issue in sharp focus in the US is the influx of unauthorised money in the election process. Mass media have come to acquire an invincible place in the American elections which make many critics comment adversely on the role of media in usurping the traditional function of political parties in reaching out to the people. Because of the larger than life image of the mass media especially the television

178 Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion(1922, reprint, NewYork: NewYork Free Press,1965), p.229. In Lippmann’s work, the reference is always as “Press” or “News”. At the time when Lippmann wrote, only Print journalism existed. Over the years, the term used is “Media” which encompass various channels of communication, including, press, radio,TV, outdoor et al.
personalities of the candidates and the "packaging" that goes with that, at times become more important for the candidates and parties than creating an informed public opinion in the society.

In Germany the election process is simpler. Party affiliations are strong in Germany. The electorate in the eastern Germany is also catching up with their counterparts in the western Germany in assimilating the democratic process. As of now however, issues seem more important to them than party affiliations. Media in Germany however are not so obsessed with politics as reflected in a number of studies. It is also a fact that some of the media houses have definite party biases. The voter turnout in Germany is one of the highest in liberal democracies.

India, despite fifty years of democracy seem to have fallen victim to criminalisation in politics. Many history sheeters contest election and get elected. In India there is no funding of public funding of elections, hence money by and large comes from the corporate sector. The 1991 Parliamentary Election has been dubbed as the bloodiest since independence. Thanks to an informed public opinion (The media can take credit for that!), some independent institutions like the Election Commission and the judiciary, an average person in India looks for transparency and demands accountability from the elected representatives. The 1996 Election bore testimony to that. The issue of funding the election and other electoral reforms have acquired the center stage and it is hoped that that very soon solutions acceptable to all concerned will be found.

The USA more or less enjoys a monopoly in the satellite media market hence the impact of the American culture in most of the countries. Over the years especially in the Nineties, serious concern and anxiety has been expressed in many countries about the increasing "Americanisation" of elections in liberal democracies. Media have come to acquire an all pervasive role in the election process in societies, hence a study of public opinion, democracy and media has become imperative.