Chapter III

Demographic Profile of the Electorate in USA, Germany and India: Role and Possible Impact of Opinion Polls on the Voting Behaviour of the Electorate

Elections are an inevitable part of democratic societies. Democracies provide universal suffrage, the right to vote to its citizens. Granting of voting rights has been a process of evolution in all the three democracies under study viz. the US, Germany and India.

All modern societies conduct census to know about various characteristics of its populace. Termed as demographic profile, the data comprises information by age, sex, income, occupation, religion, media access, ownership et al. This may be an administrative requirement for the governments. The data however, provides a basis for sociologists, political scientists and researchers to go deeper to gauge how and why people with different characteristics think and behave differently. With an ever increasing exposure about the world around the people, thanks to the mass media reach, an average citizen is better informed today than he was a couple of decades earlier. Whether the constant hammering of media messages have any perceptible impact on the behaviour of the people is a matter of much empirical research. Political parties, candidates, media organisations and researchers, however, are interested to know how people perceive the political campaigns, which by and large are mediated through mass media. That people with different demographic profile think and behave differently, is also a matter of interest to the campaigners as this helps them preparing messages to suit the psyche of the electorate with varying backgrounds and tastes to get the “desired response”.

To explain, why elections produce varying outcomes would probably be an exercise in near futility, because of cross currents determining such phenomenon. Nonetheless one can study various factors which govern the voting behaviour of the electorate.
Of the three democracies under study, the voter turnout has been the highest in Germany. Sociologists, political scientists and psephologists ascribe a number of reasons for high and low turn out in elections. Opinion polls provide some interesting insights about voting patterns based on age, sex, religion, income and occupations.

People have different interest levels in general and for using their franchise in particular. Flanigan and Zingale ascribe five factors to the differences in level of interest. Their referral point is the presidential elections in the US, but this may hold good in any election, anywhere as well.

1. difference in media coverage in a given election;
2. significance attached by voters to the office;
3. importance of issues raised in the campaign;
4. attractiveness of the candidates;
5. competitiveness of the contest.¹

Variations in these factors, according to Angus Campbell are called "high stimulus" and "Low Stimulus" elections.²

For a long time, scholars who have studied the media behaviour of the public have found a close relationship between their interest level in politics and attention to political stimulus through mass media coverage. The phenomenon has several consequences in political communication. The most interested in politics can also be partisans or "brand loyalists" to certain political parties. This leads one to seeking more political information about political parties or candidates of their choice. Such category of electorate are more prone to retain and use new elements of information than the apathetic and the inattentive. Some of the studies suggest that through a process of filtration and selective perception, they retain only those information which reinforce their existing belief patterns. The impact of media, the research suggests, is likely to be greatest when the recipients of the message have little information and few existing attitudes.³

³ Ibid. n. 2.
Politics has always been a subject of intense discussion and debate in liberal democracies. If media is referred as the fourth estate, some of the recent political studies have reckoned public opinion polls to the fifth estate.

The role of opinion polling especially during the last few decades has been a subject of much fascination to those who are engaged in it but of concern to political scientists, sociologists and concerned citizenry.

Do opinion polls play a decisive role in elections? Is their power in politics a reality, an exaggeration or a myth? While no definitive answers are in sight, politics over the years has become a booming business. Hence the political practitioners employ the techniques of fierce market place to gain a larger slice in the market of ideas.

Some of the issues concerning the society include:

- Do early unfavourable poll findings discourage otherwise qualified people from seeking office?

- Is it proper to seek perceptions on a public policy issue from a relatively uninformed decision making process?

The question is, when is it appropriate to pay attention to the polls? And how much importance should be given to public opinions as expressed in the polls? And most importantly what role do media play in the process?

Wherever opinion polls are publicised, people have questioned whether they affect the final outcome by having either a ‘bandwagon’ effect in encouraging voters to vote for the winning side or an ‘underdog’ effect, evoking sympathy and support for the apparent loser which increases his votes.

Polls can go wrong and have gone wrong a number of times. Dr. Gallup who pioneered opinion polling, who made a reputation in 1936 by correctly predicting President Roosevelt’s re-election, his forecast had a large error than the prediction he made later. Gallup overstated Roosevelt’s vote by 7 per cent. Roosevelt won with 55 per cent of the vote compared to the Gallup forecast of 62 per cent. In 1948, though Gallup’s error was only 4.5 per cent, he predicted the wrong winner. Dewey lost by 4
per cent while Gallup had forecast a victory margin of 5 per cent.\(^4\)

Similarly in Britain, in February 1974 election, Conservatives victory was forecast. In 1992, a majority of polls predicted one per cent lead for the Labour but the Conservatives won by seven per cent.\(^5\)

Dr. Bhaskar Rao, a leading pollster in India, a student of Dr. Gallup says emphatically “I am a critic of the polls. Opinion polls are supposed to help making an intelligent, a better choice, a better decision. That’s looking beyond temporal things. But, we have reduced them to a commercial exercise.”\(^6\)

Some of the reasons as to why polls were losing objectivity and becoming commercial, according to Dr. Rao, were that opinion polling by and large had become a domain of market researchers. Not many social scientists were into it. The reports also, he felt concealed more than they revealed. The survey technique, selection of sample size, selection procedure, universe, spread, interview technique, all needed to be reported which unlike the West was not generally adhered to. Very often the “no-response” was not reflected which was equally important, lamented Rao.\(^7\)

Polls can and do wrong because of a number of reasons like incomplete sample, poor sampling procedure or because a significant number of electors stay away from the booths. Apologists ascribe this trend to “late swing” i.e. voters changing their minds during the last few days between the final opinion poll interviews and the actual casting of ballots.\(^8\)

As the costs of mounting political campaigns have been on the rise, an investment in public opinion research has become increasingly important to candidates.

In the following paragraphs, we shall take a look at the demographic profiles of the electorates in USA, Germany and India and study the extent of opinion polls around the election time and the possible voting patterns based on demographic profile and media coverage to focus issues.

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\(^5\) Ibid. n. 4, p.40.
\(^6\) Interview with Dr.N.Bhaskar Rao was held in New Delhi on 18 December 1996.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Ibid. n.4, p.40.
The American Electorate:

In 1992 elections, for the first time in the history of America, over 100 million people voted in an election. This worked out to approximately 55 per cent of eligible voters voting in the Presidential election.9

Because of the complexity of the process in the US, it is rather difficult to calculate voting turnout rate. It is not known as to how many ballots are cast throughout the country.

For example, the calculations do not include the people who went to the polls but skipped the Presidential race. The ballots which are inadvertently invalidated also cannot be counted. Worse still, there is no official count of citizens since the census no longer asks about citizenship. All non-citizens are also counted despite the fact that they do not have the voting right.10 The US racial/ethnic composition in 1995 stood as under.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of the American Electorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non Hispanic/White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Americans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Population Ref. Bureau

The extension of franchise to eighteen year old in 1972 has enlarged the pool of eligible voters in the US, yet in the 1980 election, the turnout gradually declined to its lowest point since 1948. The 1992 election provides some interesting insights. It depicts the likelihood of voting increasing from young adulthood through middle age, with a subsequent down trend among the senior citizens.12

For the 1992 elections, there were some 200 million eligible voters. In terms of geographical spread, the north-east accounted for 20 per cent, middle east 24 per

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9 Ibid. n.1.p. 23.
11 Data obtained from the Population Reference Bureau, Washington D C while on a field visit in November, 1996.
12 Ibid. n.1.p.38.
cent, south 35 per cent and west accounts for 22 per cent of population. The voting
rates vs. numbers in the 1992 election were as follows:\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{table}[!h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
& & \\
Elderly (65+) & 70 per cent (21.6 m) & \\
Middle age (45-64) & 70 per cent (34.4 m) & \\
Baby boomers (25-44) & 58 per cent (47.4 m) & \\
Youth (18-24) & 43 per cent (10.4 m) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Voting rates Vs. Numbers in 1992 Election}
\end{table}

Source: Ibid. n. 1

\begin{flushleft}
A portrait of the American Electorate in 1992-96:
\end{flushleft}

As in 1992, Bill Clinton won re-election in 1996 without a majority of the
popular vote. He was able to hold on to the support of many of the demographic
groups who elected him in 1992, and increased his share of their voters. Women,
Blacks, Young voters, Democrats and Liberals gave majority of their votes. He did
well with swing groups like independents and sub urbanites. The following table
provides interesting insights about voting patterns based on demographic
characteristics of the American electorate (1996 and 1992 election).\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{table}[!h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& & & & & & \\
\% of 96 total & 1992 & 1996 & \\
\hline
& Clinton & Bush & Perot & Clinton & Dole & Perot & \\
Total vote & 43 & 38 & 19 & 49 & 41 & 8 & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Voting Pattern on Demographic Characteristics of the US Electorate}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. n.11.

\textsuperscript{14} Data taken from an analysis by Majorie Connelly, as appeared in the \textbf{New York Times}, Sunday, 10 November, 1996. Connelly’s reportage is based on data for 1996 collected by \textit{Voter News Service} based on questionnaires completed by 16,627 voters leaving 300 polling places around the US on the Election Day. Data for 1992 were collected by \textit{Voter Research and Surveys} based on questionnaires completed by 15,490 voters.

148
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of 96 total vote</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Perot</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Dole</th>
<th>Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48 Men</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 Women</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 Whites</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Blacks</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hispanics</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Asians</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Voting by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Perot</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Dole</th>
<th>Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 18-29</td>
<td>43 34</td>
<td>22 53</td>
<td>34 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 30-44</td>
<td>41 38</td>
<td>21 48</td>
<td>41 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 45-59</td>
<td>41 40</td>
<td>19 48</td>
<td>41 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 60 &amp; above</td>
<td>50 38</td>
<td>12 48</td>
<td>44 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

By Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Perot</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Dole</th>
<th>Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>10 33</td>
<td>17 73</td>
<td>13 80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>38 32</td>
<td>30 43</td>
<td>43 35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>77 10</td>
<td>13 84</td>
<td>10 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

By Faith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Perot</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Dole</th>
<th>Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>33 47</td>
<td>21 35</td>
<td>53 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>29 44</td>
<td>35 53</td>
<td>37 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>80 11</td>
<td>9  78</td>
<td>16 3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

By Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Perot</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Dole</th>
<th>Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 15000$</td>
<td>58 23</td>
<td>19 59</td>
<td>28 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 $15000 -</td>
<td>44 35</td>
<td>20 53</td>
<td>36 9</td>
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</tbody>
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The Gender Gap:

The difference between a candidate's votes from men and his votes from women was first noted in 1980, when men were 8 percentage points more likely to support Ronald Regan than women were. Since then the gender gap has ranged between 4 and 7 per cent. In 1996, an 11 point gap among Clinton's voters was noticed - in almost all age groups - from 17 points between men and women under 30 to 8 points for those aged 45 to 59. The gender gap persisted even among black voters who supported Clinton very strongly over all.  

Pocket Book Concerns:

It is generally observed that incumbents win the support of voters who feel their finances improved during a President's tenure. Four years ago, George Bush was supported by voters who said their family's finances were better than four years earlier, and Clinton received the support of those who thought their situation as declining. In 1996, the reverse was true. Clinton, the incumbent got two thirds of the votes from those who said their personal economics had improved while Bob Dole won the support of people whose economic condition had deteriorated.

Independent voters in 1992 split their votes equally among the three candidates, but in 1996, only 17 per cent of them supported Perot, while Clinton's share increased to 43 per cent. Clinton did well with liberal and moderate independents while Dole was favoured by independents who described themselves as

\[\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{% of 96 total vote} & \text{Clinton} & \text{Bush} & \text{Perot} & \text{Clinton} & \text{Dole} & \text{Perot} \\
\text{1992} & \$29999 & 27 & 38 & 21 & 48 & 40 & 10 \\
\text{1996} & \$30000 & 39 & 44 & 17 & 44 & 48 & 7 \\
& \$49999 & 39 & 44 & 17 & 44 & 48 & 7 \\
& \text{over $50000} & 36 & 48 & 16 & 41 & 51 & 7 \\
& \$75000 & & & & & & \\
\end{array}\]

Source: Ibid. n. 14

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
Voter turnout is one of the lowest in America among liberal democracies. A number of reasons are ascribed to that. The League of Women Voters in a survey in 1996 found that it was not “alienation” about politics (as generally believed) which kept off the voters from voting, but lack of information and recognition of the consequences of election. The non-voters were unable to base their voting decisions because they did not have access to news of substance.

The league’s survey also found that non-voters attached less importance to voting to other activities. Asked if time constraint on election day meant either going for casting vote or working extra for overtime pay, 57 per cent opted for working for pay, only 16 per cent opted for voting. If the choice was between voting and going for an annual sale at one of their favourite stores, 30 per cent of non-voters chose the sale compared to 6 per cent of voters. Interestingly, if a new episode of a favourite TV show was on, 27 per cent of non-voters would stay home instead of vote, for voters the figure was only 3 per cent. “There is a clear message here for the political parties the candidates and the media, according to Becky Cain, President of the League of Women voters, “People aren’t getting the information they need so they can understands the consequences of election in their lives”.

In a related finding, the survey also found that both voters and non-voters wanted more information about the voting process itself, with 56 per cent of votes and 59 per cent of non-voters saying it would be “very helpful” to provide “information about the voting process such as where to vote and how voting machines work”.

Another hypothesis that was supported by the League’s survey was that direct contacts from candidates, political parties and organisations interested in getting people to vote played an important role in increasing electoral participation.

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16 Ibid.
17 Surfed on World Wide Web: ht./www/electriciti–wrus/mellsumm/htn, at the Foreign Press Office, Manhattan, New York during the field trip to the USA in November 1996.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
Is there an average American Voter?

Not many agree. Given the complex character of the American society, academics, political scientists, sociologists and researchers feel the average does not exist in the US and probably will never for quite some time. There were “blocks of voters” who tended to vote on traditional pattern, opined Prof. Allan Lichtman at the American University. The Blacks traditionally supported Democrats, the rich went for Republicans, Catholics voted more for the Republicans against Democrats. Women preferred democrats, the Jews opted for Democrats.21 Carol De Vita, Director at the Population Reference Bureau felt it was not so simple as that. It was not just race, religion or income but cross currents which worked underneath all the time and the sub-groups within major blocks that were crucial. A White Woman from a rich family, she said, may not vote for Republicans, because, may be, she believed in “pro-choice”. Similarly a rich black man may vote for the Republicans.22

Minority population, she felt, was very important in a democratic process. The minority vote which was concentrated in certain areas could be very crucial to the outcome in an election. Based on the research studies, the trends she said were changing. Hispanics traditionally voted for the Democrats, but it depended on the sub-group. Cuban Americans sub-group preferred Republicans while Mexican Americans went in for Democrats.23

Though the population Bureau did not have any scientific data on voting pattern by religion, but the gut feel according to Carol De Vita was that faith was a factor specially on pro and anti-abortion issues.24

Referring to the campaigning, she said, this time (1996), the campaigns were sharp focused to certain specific groups. Clinton “zeroed in on women as a block of voters”, and he proved successful. More women voted for him.25

21 Based on interview with Prof. Allan Lichtman held at the American University, Washington D C on 26 November 1996.
22 The interview was held with Dr. Carol De Vita in Washington D C on 27 November, 1996.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
Royce Crocker, Senior Researcher at the Library of the Congress also echoed the same view that the average American voter did not exist. But keeping in view the broad social demographics of the country, one could loosely describe an American voter as:

- A baby boomer (post war birth); a white; some college education; gets his information from television, newspapers; not a strong supporter of any ideology/is not a partisan; employed/one who makes $30-50,000 per annum; someone who attends church but not regularly/is not very religious.  

Opinion Polls in the US:

Hundreds of opinion polls are conducted in the US around the election time. Some of the professional research organisations include the Gallup and Robinson Inc. AC Nielson company, Voter Research Surveys, Times Mirror Center for the people and the Press and various media organisation who either conduct themselves or sponsor such polls. A number of academic institutes and universities also conduct surveys.

There are basically two different uses of polls. There is the descriptive function, which tells of candidates and his staff who is ahead and who is behind, what people will feel the most important issues are and what people believe the candidate will be able to do or not to do, if elected.

In order to maintain a standard for reporting polls, the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) has suggested the following parameters, first introduced in 1969 and modified in the 1986 - AAPOR code of professional ethics and practice. The media columns are expected to include the following while reporting polls: Poll sponsor, sample size (i.e. total number of persons questioned); population definition (i.e. what group was polled i.e. registered or likely voters); timing (dates on which poll conducted), method of data collection (by telephone, mail or face to face interview), sampling error at some statistical level of confidence.
Random glimpses of opinion polls - a secondary data analysis:

CBS News/New York Times conducted a number of studies to gauge voters' perception on varying issues. During the early primaries, in a poll conducted by the duo, some interesting findings emerged. In the late fall 1991, four out of five registered voters said they had not heard enough about Clinton to form an opinion. By early January, seven in ten admitted ignorance. But just a month later, only 19 per cent of all registered voters said they had not heard enough about Clinton to form an opinion. This rapid movement in public awareness according to Kathleen Frankovic came in the wake of accusation of "sexual impropriety and draft evasion".27

The credit however goes to the media in bringing Clinton in sharp focus.

The developing evaluations were alarmingly negative, and they continued in that direction throughout the spring, even while the Clinton campaign picked up momentum during the Democratic nominations. By late March, 40 per cent of all registered voters held unfavourable view about Clinton.

President Bush, being the incumbent candidate did not lack in public awareness. He had long been familiar to the electorate. In October 1991, the findings revealed that only 5 per cent felt at a loss to judge the President. Bush, who however, suffered from the declining public assessment of his presidency. In January, 47 per cent of the voters were favourably inclined. Once the campaign began, Bush came under heavy attack from rival Democrats, and also from a challenger within his own party. By April, his positive balance changed to negative, and it continued to slide until it stabilised at the Republican National Convention in August 1992.28

Although Ross Perot was a beneficiary of the increasing dissatisfaction of the electorate with the two major party nominees, but even by early May, the late primary season, more than half the voters admitted they did not know enough about Perot to

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28 Ibid. p 116.
have an opinion, but those who had formed opinions were overwhelmingly positive.²⁹

Presidential debates gave opportunity to voters to reevaluate or reinforce their already held view about the contestants. Analysts feel that in 1980, the debates served to calm voters' worries about the presidential abilities of Ronald Reagan. In 1988, the debates confirmed public's doubts about Michael Dukkakis. But in 1992, the debates seem to turn round voters evaluations of the third candidate, Ross Perot.³⁰

Ratings by the AC Nielson company recorded higher levels in 1992 than four years earlier. 34.4 million homes watched the first presidential debate on the three major networks combined and 33.6 million homes watched the vice-presidential debate. Their figures for the last two debates included the audience on Fox broadcasting: 40.4 and 41.5 million homes respectively. ABC estimated that 88 million viewers watched the last debate.

In an evaluation of the campaign's last week, the CBS/NYT, asked the following question: Do you think electing (candidate) in November would bring about the kind of change the country needs, or not regardless of how do you intend to vote? Clinton received 41 percent response in the affirmative against 29 percent for Bush and 26 percent for Perot.

In reply to the question "which candidate do you think did the best job or won tonight's debate?" (asked of those who had watched or listened to the debate), the following response emerged:

**Debates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table: 3.4 US Electorate's Response to Presidential Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid.n. 31

In the past, the campaign analysis tended to view a candidate's image as fixed.

²⁹ Ibid. p 116.
³⁰ Ibid. p. 119.
once the image is formed, the common wisdom asserted that it was hard to shake except as a result of some extreme or extraordinary event. The 1992 campaign showed just the opposite to be true. They did change their mind. When new information became available to them they changed their evaluations, and both Clinton and Perot evidently succeeded, where Bush did not, in making the voters change their minds.

Between 20-23 October 1992, the CBS News/New York Times poll, ventured to gauge the impact of television advertisements on the voters. The question asked were:

*How much attention have you paid to these commercials for (candidates)? Of the commercials you have seen for (candidates) have almost all of them been truthful, or some false, or have almost all of been false. Have (candidates) commercial made a difference in how they will vote in November? (If yes), how they made you more likely to vote for (Bush or Clinton or Perot) or less likely to vote for (Bush or Clinton or Perot)? The response was as follows:*31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad. viewer</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid a lot of attention</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost all truthful</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made you more likely to vote for the candidate</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Times Mirror also conducted a number of Surveys. One of the survey was conducted nationally among a representative sample of 1,227 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period of 20-23 February, 1992. The Times Mirror by their own reckoning developed “a unique voter classification scheme that divided the electorate on the basis of political values, party identification and measures of political
participation”. The typology was developed for administration by personal interview that it required about 15 minutes of interviewing time to ask the full battery of questions.32

The modified typology for the 1992 surveys was based on important concepts about the “homogeneity” of various voting groups. A psychographic profile of each group is given below for better understanding of the voting patterns. The typology is based on combined survey results from January 1992 and November 1992. According to the typology there are two core Republican groups:

**Enterpriser:** Fiscal conservatives who hold positive attitudes towards business and are anti-welfarist. They are affluent, well educated and well-informed. Their pro-business stance leads them to differ with most Americans on the idea that too much power is concentrated in the hands of big companies. Enterprisers are also less likely to completely agree that society should make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity.

**Moralists:** Moralists are highly religious, socially conservative and show low levels of concern for personal freedoms. They are less affluent, older and many of them live in south.

**Sixties-Democrats:** Strong believers in peace and social justice, the sixties Democrats (SDs”) are likely to agree that peace is through military strength. sixty-five percent of the SDs’ completely agree that society should guarantee everyone equal opportunity. This is heavily female, middle class, middle aged group that supports most of the policy positions of the national Democratic party.

**New Dealers:** Drawn heavily from the South, many of these old time Democrats have party roots that go back to Franklin D. Roosevelt. Despite the end of the Cold War, the New Democrats still “universally agree that the best way to insure peace is through military strength (96 percent)”.

**Pocketbook Democrats:** Pocketbook Democrats overwhelmingly agree that they don’t have enough money to make ends meet (98 percent) Concerned with social

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32 Based on Research Findings: The people, the press and Politics Campaign '92 Survey III, and Survey IV, received from Times Mirror Center for the people and the Press, Washington D C on request.
justice, they feel the government should take an active role in the solution of the socio-economic problems that plague them and one-third of Pocket Dems are minorities (32%) and many are school dropouts.

Three typology groups are basically independent.

Seculars: Seculars lean to Democratic party. They are strongly supportive of personal freedoms. Well informed, relatively affluent, Seculars are more often found on the East and West Coasts. There is this total lack of religious conviction. While 87 percent of the seculars hold this view, public says prayer is an important part of their daily life, only one in ten (12 percent)

Disaffected: Disaffected are “personally alienated, financially pressured and deeply skeptical of politicians”. This middle-aged, lower-middle income group contain many blue collar workers. Disaffected are nearly twice as likely as others to agree that hard work offers little guarantee of success.

Upbeats: Upbeats are primarily young people who tend to be uncritical of government and other institutions. 88 percent of them believe that Americans can always solve their problems.

Finally, one typology group by definition is apolitical.

Bystanders: Bystanders have an almost total lack of interest in politics and public affairs. This urban, lower socio-economic group contains many young singles. Forty-six per cent of bystanders say they seldom vote.

Let us now analyse how the American electorate with above typology reacted to the pollsters’ (Time Mirror) survey in February 1992, during the Presidential Primaries.

Bush’s approval ratings slipped below 40% (39%) for the first time ever. The survey found that a significant gender bias emerged and “two traditionally strong constituencies -- the affluent and younger voters are starting to edge away from the President. younger people and those earning $50,000 and more were divided evenly between the Democrats and Republicans. Women supported Democrats over Bush by a wide margin (51 percent)

The “good news” the survey found was that despite a strong possibility of the

\[33\text{ Ibid. n. 31.}\]
now famous unnamed Democrat beating the President, the public still believed Bush to win hands down. The Republicans preferred Bush to Buchanan by a whopping 33 percent to 18 percent margin.

The survey under study, found 64 percent of respondents saying they had a favourable opinion of Bush personally, while 34 percent gave him an unfavourable personal evaluation. It was only in November 1991, Bush enjoyed a 71 percent favourable to 26 percent unfavourable rating. In May 1990, well before the President's Gulf War surge, Bush achieved a 76 percent favourable 22 percent unfavourable evaluation from a nationwide Times Mirror Survey.

The nation wide survey also revealed that although Americans had a somewhat better opinion of the Democratic candidates than they had a few months ago, most Americans judged the Democratic candidate as only fair.14

The Times Mirror Typology found support for a Democratic alternative increasing among upbeats. These younger moderate independents preferred Bush to a Democrat by a modest margin than in previous polls (48 percent to 32 percent). The typology also continued to show an increasing party loyalty among core Democratic groups. Disaffected, a group of independent voters was deeply skeptical of politicians that divided their support evenly between Bush and a Democratic alternative.15

The view that the President will ultimately triumph over a Democratic challenger in the Fall, predominated in all political and demographic groups. The survey found that even among the Democrats, a 53 percent majority felt that George Bush would be reelected. Tsongas supporters were slightly more pessimistic (61 percent) than Clinton supporters (52 percent).

The above findings are based on Survey II and III of the Times Mirror. Yet another Survey No. xiii was conducted in November 1992, the weekend falling the election which has also been analysed.

Conducted between 5 and 8 November 1992, a nationwide sample of 1,012 respondents was drawn. The survey was based on telephone re-interviews of adults 18 years and older originally conducted on 28 May to 10 June, 1992.36

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
Based on the same typology as referred to above in Survey III, the table below shows the percentage of the survey respondents in each typology group for Survey xiii.

Graph: 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of the Survey Respondents in different typology</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upbeats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaffected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bystanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seculars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60s Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Dealers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far, left</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Times Mirror

The Questionnaire comprised 24 questions. The panel back post-mortem survey of voters conducted the weekend following the elections found 77 percent of Americans thinking they “learned enough during the campaign to make an informed choice” between President George Bush, governor Bill Clinton and Ross Perot.37

Voters graded the performance of the Press, the Pollsters, the political parties and most campaign participants better than they did four years ago.

A large part of the increased satisfaction with this year’s struggle for the presidency appeared to be related to a feeling among voters that “issues” played an important role in the campaign. By a 59 percent to 34 percent margin voters felt there was more, rather than less discussion of issues when compared to previous election campaigns. The view was more prevalent among Clinton supporters (67 percent) and Perot supporters (58 percent), than among those who said they voted for George Bush (48 percent).38

Respondents lauded the presidential debates. Seventy percent of respondents in the survey said the debates were helpful in deciding who to vote for. Four years ago, just 48 percent of voters in a Times Mirror post-election survey rated the debates

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37 Ibid.
as helpful.

The debates made great difference to voters under fifty years of age, whose increased participation appears to have played an important role in higher voter turnout. Eight one per cent of voters under 30 rated the debates as helpful, as did 73 percent of voters 30-49. Significantly fewer voters 50 and older (61 percent believed the debates were any helpful to them.

Eighty one per cent of Bill Clinton’s voters felt they learned enough from the campaign to make an informed choice, in contrast, only 68 percent of Bush voters felt that way in Times Mirror’s 1988 postmortem panel back survey.39

Throughout the month of October, Times Mirror measured the reactions of voters on an ongoing basis to the advertising of the three campaigns. Perot and Clinton’s ads were given better grades consistently for being convincing than were George Bush’s ads. But for the most part few voters gave any advertisements very high grades for making a good cause to vote for the candidates paying for the ads. In particular, the research found that 72 percent of voters felt they learned a lot from Ross Perot’s half hour “infomercials”. However, only 40 percent said the billionaire’s commercials made them more likely to vote for him. When asked which candidate ran the most informative commercials, mentions of Perot (55 percent) outnumbered combined mentions of Bush (8 percent) and Clinton (20 percent) by nearly two to one.40

It may not have made the campaigners happy, but the percentage of voters saying they learned more about candidates’ positions on issues from news reports than from campaign commercials rose to 74 percent in 1992 from 63 percent in 1990. In 1992, only 21 percent said they learned more about a candidate’s position on the issues from commercials compared to 28 percent in 1990.

As in 1990, news reports enjoyed a much narrower margin over campaign commercials as the medium that provided a better idea of what the candidates were like personally. Fifty-eight percent chose news reports, but as many as 35 percent chose campaign commercials in the survey.

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
Reflecting Republican discomfiture with the press, the percentage of voters who thought that the press was unfair in the way it covered George Bush steadily increased over the course of the campaign. In March, only 13 percent of voters believed the press was being unfair to the President. By mid-September it grew to 22 percent. In the post-mortem survey, 35 percent respondents felt the press was unfair to Bush in its coverage. Comparatively, 77 percent believed the press was fair to Clinton and 67 percent believed the press was fair to Ross Perot.41

Voters made up their minds later in the 1992 elections -- 24 percent decided in the final week in 1992, compared to 15 percent in 1988.

According to Times Mirror typology, the Disaffected strayed the most from their 1988 voting pattern. Although Bush carried this group of angry and financially hard pressed voters four years ago. Clinton won the vote of Disaffecteds with 36 percent as Bush and Perot divided the rest 26 percent and 27 percent respectively.

In the end, Bush carried the Upbeats, the other independent Republican leaning group in the Times Mirror Typology. After flirting with Clinton for much of the early part of the campaign, 45 percent of this young moderate group supported Bush, 32 percent Clinton and 17 percent Perot.42

Interestingly parties were considered more important than the candidates less in the 1992 election. In 1988, one in three Bush and Dukakis voters said that votes were more for the parties, than for the candidates personally. In 1992, this was the opinion of just 19 percent of Bush's supporters and 26 percent of Clinton's.43

The table given below details the vote preference by the typology group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table: 3.6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8-12 October</td>
<td>20-22 October</td>
<td>5-8 November</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GB</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>RP</td>
<td>GB</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
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<td>35</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enterprises</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moralists</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41 Ibid.  
42 Ibid.  
43 Ibid.
The outcome:

In the 1992 presidential election, Bill Clinton swept all the seats in the East (plus the District of Columbia), most of the states in the mid-west and West and enough of those in the South to keep President Bush from competition in the electorate vote.

In the three cornered contest, Clinton failed to win a majority of the popular vote, which some Republicans said meant that he did not get a mandate for governing. Clinton’s vote percentage was the fourth lowest of any one elected president. Yet two of those who won with a lower percentage than Clinton were Abraham Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson, regarded as among the most powerful and strongest Chief Executives in the US history.

According to Pomper, the 1992 elections results present a bundle of anomalies. The Democratic tide swept across a nation that had habituated to Republican Presidents. The Democrats won decisively, yet could not muster
impressive popular votes. Social alignments resembled and established party cleavages, but new patterns emerged. An electorate disillusioned with politicians, feels Pomper, “paid rapt attention to the political process. An independent candidate captured nearly a fifth of the vote yet had no direct impact on the outcome”.14

There is a growing feeling among various sections of people that coverage of opinion polling and “agenda setting” by media organisations in their news stories and various other columns in print media and programmes in the electronic media have definite role in changing the psyche of the electorate thus influencing their voting behaviour.

The American Press Community was also sharply divided as to whether they acted “responsibly” and adequately in covering the elections.

**Media’s perception on issues:**

Times Mirror conducted two surveys between 20 April and 8 May, 1992 and the other in December 1992 to know media’s perception on the issue. It was, in fact, an exercise in self assessment.45

Let us analyse both the surveys to conjure up media’s assessment about themselves.

Based on telephone interview, the April-May survey included 213 members of the National Press Corps. and 200 from the local media. The sample comprised scribes, news management executives, top level editors, executive producers, middle level people, Bureau chiefs, political reporters, columnists and correspondents. A mix of closed and open questions and an average time of 10 to 15 minutes was devoted to administer each interview.46

Fifty-seven percent respondents felt, the media focused on the irrelevant and avoidable issues, but at the same time 49 per cent believed that the ’92 coverage was superior to the press performance during the 1988 campaign.

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45 *The Press and Campaign ’92 : A Self Assessment*, Times Mirror Center (TMC) for the People & the Press. Data received from TMC on request.
The Gennifer Flowers press conference was cited by 20 percent as the campaign's most important movement. Interestingly among the senior respondents (editors, top media managers) the principal media decision makers, one out of three considered Perot as the most significant campaign event. 47

The findings reflected sharp differences between the press assessment of its own impact on the campaign and views of the general public. Two questions illustrate the point. Asked how much influence news organizations had on the choice of the Democratic presidential nominee, well over half the press respondents answered evening newscasts and front pages all around the country.

All the older age groups, from 35 through 60s, felt the Republican candidate had a good chance to win the presidency. Eighty-four percent of the press community across all media believed that the Democrat's presidential chances were either "only fair" or "poor".

Although nearly half of the national press corps believed that their "about the right amount (56 percent)". But the general public had quite another view. In the Times Mirror survey completed in February 1992 almost three out of five Americans (58 percent) said that the press had "too much" influence on the selection of the nominee.

Bill Clinton was seen by all segments of the press community as being responsible for the difficulties he encountered during his run (67 percent).

The advent of c-span as a major sources of campaign coverage also received high marks. Nineteen per cent thought that c-span has had good effect on the campaign thus far and the CNN effort was approved at the same level.

The information about the campaign came to the media persons in part out of "their own efforts" and as "the product of the organisations to which they belonged to" and also other sources of information. Interestingly, the leading national newspapers like the New York times, the Los Angels Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal were cited as the principal outside sources of campaign news for all sections of the press including the principal arbiters and decision makers as to what

46 Ibid. n.45. For Design of the Press survey. refer P. 9.
47 Ibid. n. 43.
appears on the organisations were putting fewer resources into covering the election campaign than they did in 1988 (46 percent), only 15 percent of the respondents in this group thought that the reduced emphasis itself resulted in poorer coverage than in the past. Thirty-eight percent respondents from the local media sensed a reduction in commitment. Resources notwithstanding, over seven out of ten respondents believed that their own organisations were giving the campaign the right amount of coverage and only fourteen percent of the entire survey sample believed that a reduction in resources had resulted in lower quality media coverage.\textsuperscript{48}

Majorities of all segments of the press believed that a tendency to judge a candidates' electability too quickly had been a major problem in the campaign coverage.

A substantial number (55 percent) of the American Journalists who followed the 1992 presidential campaign believed that George Bush's candidacy was damaged the way the press covered him. One out of three journalists (36 percent) felt that media coverage helped Clinton win the presidency while a mere 3 percent believed that the press coverage helped the Bush effort.\textsuperscript{49}

Despite reservations about the fairness of the coverage, eight in ten journalists rated press coverage of campaign 1992 as excellent or good. Fewer than one out of five (18 percent) judged Press performance as only fair or poor. The survey also found the press thinking it did a good job on most of the major elements of the campaign coverage.

Although the conclusions about who was helped and who was hurt changed over the course of the year, both surveys found journalists lauding press coverage despite their wide spread belief that the coverage was having a negative impact on one of the campaigns.

In-depth interviews with top media executives conducted as part of this project reflected a widespread view within the media community that the press bore no responsibility for the impact of its campaign coverage. By and large journalists believed that media campaign coverage was either neutral in intent or neutral in

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
effect. Media was reluctant to accept responsibility for its impact on the campaign, as reflected in the Times Mirror’s in-depth interviews with top media executives. ⁵⁰

While 80% of the news media sample rated the 1992 coverage as either good or excellent, surveys of the public throughout the campaign found fewer than six in ten rating press coverage of the campaign positively and more than one in three voters feeling that the press was doing only a fair or poor job. The public also became sensitive to differences in the way the press covered Bush and Clinton over the course of the campaign.

Times Mirror’s Press respondents were for the most part positive about press coverage of political advertising and the press covering its own campaign performance.

Possible impact of poll coverage in media on voters:

In the presidential elections over past three decades, the frequency, variety and sponsorship of political polling have grown manifold, so too have the length and breadth of post-mortem of the polls by critics and analysts.

Following the last few general elections, the soul scratching by the media, pollsters, and many a political scientist appears to have been deeper and more extensive than ever before. Much of the concern has focused on whether the political process was adversely affected by the heavy stream of polling results.

In the Times Mirror poll of December 1992, the press community barely gave a positive plurality to media-sponsored polls (41 percent) negative, twelve percent saying neither negative or positive and eight percent saying not much effect. Print respondents were marginally more favourable towards polling compared to the average. But Talk Show moderators were far more hostile (74 percent negative). Familiar arguments were put forward for and against “The voters get to know what the candidate knows, so he can better evaluate why the candidates are doing this or that”, said one editor: “Polls add insight and understanding” said another: “It is a horse race, and people want to know who’s ahead”. But opponents complained that

⁵⁰ Ibid.
polls can be treated as "self-reinforcing prophecies" and that respondents may give "politically correct" answers that reflect who is ahead in polls rather than their own views. A television newsman observed that polls are often used as a substitute for reporting. "Polls are still a work in progress", said a columnist. 51

Swearing off polls, Martin F. Nolan considered polls unreliable that lead press and public astray. "Bury them in agate with other trivia", he wrote disgustingly. Politicians, according to Nolan loved to cite polls when they were lopsided; when the issue was divided, complicated or important, polls and pollsters were of little use. A sizable caucus of politicians he feels get in and remain in office because of public opinion polls. The most important question remained - do politicians manipulate the polls or do the polls manipulate them? The same question must be asked of newspapers, feels Nolan, himself being an associates editor of the Boston Globe. A possible impact of early polls on the voting behaviour of the voters may help decide the need and efficacy of polls per se. 52

For years, a number of national organisations have used the electronic media to conduct exit polls. Because of difference in time from east coast to the west, exit polling outcome can have impact on the voting behaviour. On the basis of key sampling on the east coast, winners can be projected before the voting ends in the west three hours later. Voter may be discouraged from casting ballots because they may feel the game is already over. 53

The Media Studies Center (MSC), New York as in the last election conducted a number of surveys along with Roper Survey, to gauge the perception of the electorate on various issues. A content analysis of press release during the 1992 election revealed that horse race information (who was ahead, who was trailing) hogged 64 percent content, advertisements and staged events, 12 percent perceptions of candidates, 9 per cent, voters in the electorate 5 per cent, the polls themselves only

51 Ibid. n. 43. p. 6.
53 Reflected in Discussions with Martin Falik, Executive Director, Honest Ballot Association Inc., who arranged visit to two polling stations on 6 November, 1996 in New York for the present researcher along with other foreign journalists.
Public opinion polls, found out the survey, were ubiquitous during a presidential campaign, so much so that the message was to say “enough is enough”. Little, if anything was added to the quality of public discussions, opines Nancy Woodhull, of Media Studies Center. The problem according to her is not polls per se. It is what they ask about and how they were reported. Forty percent of Americans felt the media covering did not help them decide how to vote.5

Finding nothing wrong with early opinion polls, Rita Beamish, a senior journalist in the US felt the data served as a “reporter’s tool”. She did not agree that early polls might lead to “bandwagon” or “underdog effect”. “I feel”, said she, “people vote who they want to vote for. This is American psychology”.

Media, she felt was unnecessarily maligned. “How would you know about the world in such complex times, if there were no media?” she questioned. Media, she felt needed an image build-up exercise for themselves. In contrast S. Sreenath, an academic felt that not only early opinion polls could result in “bandwagon” effect, it may even put off people from casting their vote in a “misplaced belief” that the “die

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54 The Media and Campaign briefing, No-3, September 96( New York : Media Study Center ) . The organization formerly worked from the Columbia University.
55 Ibid. The findings are based on a survey of more than 2000 registered voters conducted by MSC and Roper surveys, in early 1996.
56 Interview with Rita Beamish, Senior Journalist with Wire Agency Associated Press was conducted on 12 November, 1996
57 Ibid.
James Carry, senior journalist and a professor of journalism echoed the same view. Every time the leading journalists met after an election, he said, they swore they would never cover opinion poll findings next time, but “got into the rut”, equally religiously when it happened next time. Opinion polls felt Prof. Carry did divert people’s attention to horse trading and “narrowed their political horizon”.

“I hate opinion polls” said Prof. Allan J. Lichtman, author of the book “Key to White House” researcher and spokesperson for Bill Clinton on World Wide Web tele conferencing. He did not favour Opinion polls not because they may lead to band wagon effect but because they could be grossly inaccurate, if not handled carefully. Opinion polling, he said could help in raising funds for the supposed “winner”, make someone a serious candidate, but there was no solid evidence to suggest that early opinion polls may deter people from going to polls.

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE GERMAN ELECTORATE

The Federal Republic of Germany was formally established in October 1990 upon unification of German Democratic Republic (GDR) with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, West Germany). Almost all citizens of the former FRG profess Christianity and adherents are about equally divided between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Almost 35 per cent of the inhabitants of the former GDR are Protestants and about 7 per cent Roman Catholics.

Spread over an area of 356,959 square kilometer, the population of the unified Germany stood at 79,753,227 which has increased to 80,974,632 as of 1992 figures comprising 65,289,234 in the former Federal Republic of (West) Germany and 15,685,398 in the former (East German Democratic Republic). Of the total (rounded to the nearest 100), 39,300,100 were males and 41,674,600 females. Germany is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe (222 people per sq. Km.)

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58 Interview with S.Sreenath, Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University was conducted on 14 November, 1996.
59 Interview with Professor James Carry, Professor at the Graduate School of Journalism, was held on 14 November, 1996.
60 Based on Interview with Professor Allan J. Lichtman on 27 November, 1996.
With an average life expectancy of 74.8 years (males 71.7, females 78.2) about 50 per cent population is economically active. Of the total work force of about 40 million, 23 million comprise males and about 17 million women. Of this 2.6 million were unemployed as of April 1991.62

The unification of East & West Germany also brought together, people with different upbringing, economic status, political grooming and varying access to information and mass media. Things have looked up in the last few years. The 1994 elections witnessed a near similarity in media access and reach between the old and new states.

A number of opinion polls were conducted by research organisations, academic institutions and media to map the perceptions and behavioral patterns of the electorate on various issues.

According to Padgett and Burkett, voters exercise critical judgment on political parties, about their values and policies, their competence or potential competence of government, about party leaders and the ‘image’ which parties project. The research, according to authors, reflects that the critical judgments which voters make are heavily influenced by party identification. Not unexpectedly, a party’s sympathizers judge, say the competence of their party at reducing unemployment, more favorably than non-aligned voters. For the majority of the voters “party identification is the overriding determinant of electoral behaviour” in Germany they feel.63

The long standing party loyalties may not be personal, but based on affinities between a particular social and economic group in the electorate and a political party. In Germany, one finds close affinities between trade union members in manual occupations and the SPD, or between church-going Catholics and the union parties. Such affinities are based on shared values, attitudes and traditions, and on the representation of group interests by the party.64

62 Ibid. n.61 and Facts about Germany (Frankfurt: Societats-Verlag, 1993), p 12.
64 Ibid.
Occupation, status, confessional attachment, geographical region, age and gender are the main lines of political cleavage along which political opinion and party alignment tends to divide feel the authors. They have listed all those factors that have to do with demographics and psychographics. Mass Media impact, however, does not figure in their perception, as a factor that could directly or indirectly influence voting behaviour.

Charlie Jeffrey also believes that the central feature of elections in the unified Germany has been the unusually fluid relationship which existed between electorate and parties ... voters of similar occupational, religious or regional background with shared values, traditions and aspirations have tended to develop affinities to parties which have sought to articulate and represent their common interest. In the East Germany, however, there has been absence of strong voter-party alignment due to historical reasons. Jeffery ascribes two major reasons for disillusionment among the voters. On the one hand long term processes of social and economic change and modernization has broken down many of the “insular social milieu” within which shared interests and identities have traditionally found expression in firm loyalties to particular parties. On the other hand, he writes, evidence has accumulated which indicates a growing sense of disillusionment (or parteinvezrdrossenheit) with the ‘establishment’ parties viz. the CDU-CSU, SPD and FDP.

In surveys conducted in 1991-94, against a statement “I am disappointed with the four parties, the response in the east and west between November 1991 and September 1994 were as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table: 3.7</th>
<th>(in percentage)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 91</td>
<td>Jul. 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid. n. 63

The impact of social change has introduced new elements of unpredictability

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65 Ibid.

172
in the West German voting behaviour. Long standing patterns of party identification according to the author have declined in relative terms in their importance in shaping electoral outcomes, opening the way, as he says for more “capricious short term assessment” of party performance and appeal to play an increasing role in influencing voting preferences.

An element of fluidity was added in December 1990 by the nature of election, dominated by one-point issue - of unification. Some of the opinion poll findings reflected that a majority of both East and West Germans approved of the broad principle of the national unification process which advanced so quickly in 1990. There is no gainsaying the fact that the East and West German voters had approached the unification election with vastly different experiences and perspectives. The voting pattern, in many respects was an “issue whose historically emotive resonance cut across normal bases of voter-party alignments.68

**Opinion Polls around the 1994 Federal Election:**

*Forschungs Gruppe Wahlen*, a polling agency conducted a number of surveys around the 1994 Federal Election to analyse the voting patterns based on the demographic profile of the German Electorate. The following table provides some insights:69

**Voting by age and sex -1994**

(Responses in percentages)

Table: 3.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CDU/CSU</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>FDP</th>
<th>Alliance/ PDS</th>
<th>Others</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY SEX</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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67 EMNID Surveys published in *Der Spiegel* on 17 September, 1990 and 19 November, 1990
68 Ibid. n. 63.
69 Source: *Befragung am Wahltag by Forschungs Gruppe Wahlen*. The survey was conducted on a sample of 17708 respondents spread over all the 16 states in 1994.
As reflected in the statistics, women preferred CDU/CSU more than SPD. Young people however preferred SPD to CDU/CSU. The difference in the voting pattern between men and women by age and gender is not very wide when it came to choosing the parties.

When, however, one looks at voting pattern by profession, the workers have traditionally been supporting the SPD and in 1994, the trend continued as reflected in the table below. However, CDU took a lead with the white collared, self employed and farmers.70

Table: 3.9  
**Voting by Occupation** (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CDU/CSU</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>FDP</th>
<th>Alliance/ Green</th>
<th>PDS</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<td>Men</td>
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<td>39.2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid. n. 69

70 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDU/CSU</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>FDP</th>
<th>Alliance 90/SPD</th>
<th>PDS</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolute</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**By Segmentation**

| Workers | 36.9 | 45.3 | 3.5 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 4.9 |
| Salaried | 38.4 | 36.4 | 7.5 | 8.8 | 5.8 | 3.1 |
| Employees | 42.7 | 32.9 | 8.0 | 10.9 | 2.6 | 2.9 |
| Officers | 52.2 | 17.5 | 14.9 | 7.7 | 3.4 | 4.3 |
| Self Employed | 64.3 | 14.0 | 8.6 | 4.3 | 2.7 | 6.1 |

Source: Ibid. n. 69

When one looks at the voting behaviour of workers between the East and the West, CDU scored over rival SPD in the East even among workers. In fact CDU was the party which really pushed unification. The SPD was a reluctant partner, at least in the beginning.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDU/CSU</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>FDP</th>
<th>Alliance 90/SPD</th>
<th>PDS</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Total</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers West</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Total</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers East</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid. n. 69

The survey by the *Forschungsgruppe wahlen* also included religious preferences of the electorate in the West. A majority of the catholic voters preferred the CDU/CSU.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDU/CSU</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>FDP</th>
<th>Alliance 90/SPD</th>
<th>PDS</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Total</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers West</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Total</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers East</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid. n. 69

The survey by the *Forschungsgruppe wahlen* also included religious preferences of the electorate in the West. A majority of the catholic voters preferred the CDU/CSU.  

Table: 3.11

**Voting by Faith** (in percentage)

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
Catholics | CDU/CSU | SPD | FDP | Alliance/ | PDS | Others
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
Stray Believers | 73.9 | 13.8 | 5.9 | 2.3 | 0.2 | 3.9
Moderate Believers | 54.2 | 29.0 | 7.7 | 5.5 | 0.3 | 3.3
Non-Church goers | 37.4 | 41.1 | 6.8 | 9.2 | 1.0 | 4.5

Source: Ibid. n. 69

The 94 election results also vindicated the long standing perception that church going Catholics generally vote for the Christian Democratic Party.

Against a question about expectation from the coalition partners the survey found fluctuating expectations between February 94 to September 94, which explains how the tables turned against the SPD, which was doing fairly well in the early months.

Table: 3.12 **Expectations from coalition partners** (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDU/CSU/FDP</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD/Green</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid. n. 69

While the CDU and the media in general ascribed the falling fortunes of the SPD to loss of faith in Scharping, internal bickering and lack of a definite programme, the SPD felt the “right wing” media had to do a lot in this respect.  

**Voting Patterns on Geographical Structure:**

In the survey conducted by the *Forschugs Gruppe Wahlen*, the SPD came out as a winner in the densely populated election constituencies. It obtained 39.6 per cent vote over the Union vote share. In the sparsely populated areas, the SPD scored less as compared to its national coverage. The population density and SPD’s result was more significant in the western part than in the eastern. In the old German States, the vote share went up with the population density. In the low density areas, SPD reached only every third voter share. In East German States, the SPD on the contrary was weak in

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73 As reflected in the discussions with CDU and SPD representatives during a field visit to Germany in October, 1996.
the mid-category, where it scored 28.4 per cent of valid votes.\textsuperscript{74}

The Greens secured better votes in densely populated areas. In the high density areas, their vote share reached a high of 9.4 per cent against 4.7 per cent in the sparsely populated areas, which was under the 5 per cent hurdle. Against 1990, the Greens had a considerable uniform change in West and East Germany. In the 1994 elections, the Greens profited from densely populated areas in contrast to East Germany where there was a tendency of losing in the thickly populated areas.

On an all German perspective, the PDS was successful especially in the thinly populated constituencies. Here the PDS went up above the 5 per cent hurdle by securing 8 per cent vote.\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{Strongholds of the parties:}

In Germany, social structures play an important role in party support. An examination of the strongholds is particularly meaningful covering the social structures and changes in these areas. In their respective strongholds, the union and the SPD received the mandate in such a manner that it reflected the political climate in those areas. This also helped in knowing the long term change in the composition of the electorate and the immediate mobility of the regular and potential voters of these parties.

In the research conducted, the strongholds of all the major parties were identified. The composition of the strongholds was further referred on different social structures, crucial points of both the major parties viz. the CDU and the SPD. The CDU strongholds were found in the West near the big cities, the only exception being the constituency of the Berlin - Temple Yard.

The SPD stronghold in West Germany is almost exclusive in bigger cities. The three Saarland constituencies which are densely populated, happen to be SPD’s strongholds. It is striking that the Catholic share in SPD - stronghold did not differ

\textsuperscript{74} Source: \textit{Politometers}, by the ForschungsGruppe Wahlen. Two opinion polls were conducted between 19-21 September and 12-22 November through a random sample survey method covering 1013 respondents from Eastern Germany and 1038 from western region.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
from the population average in the West German states. 76

The strongholds of the FDP in West Germany are spread all over the old states from the constituency of Munchen and Stuttgart in South to Hamburg in North and Bremen in East in Northern Germany.

CDU’s stronghold in East Germany, concentrates around the Southern states. Population density in these strongholds is medium. CDU’s stronghold in the West is lower than average in the Eastern states altogether. Above all, CDU’s stronghold constituencies concentrate in the middle densely populated areas. In contrast, SPD’s strongholds are in the five new states excluding the northern region as well as Berlin. PDS’s strongholds are concentrated in Mecklenburg - Vorpommern, Brandenburg and Berlin. The only exception is the constituency of Dresden 2 in Sachsen. Above all, on the basis of concentration on the East Berlin, the population density in PDS stronghold is very much higher than in the CDU or SPD strongholds. 77

Who Voted for Whom:

A majority of electorate mostly voted for the same party in 1994 the second election after the unification. This held true specially in regard to the Union parties and the SPD which have had a long term influence on the social structure.

In the federal and regional parliamentary elections, the above pattern was not reflected in the new states. The socialisation process is a long drawn battle. Hence despite the intervening period of four years between 1990 and 1994, this could not be manifested. To the electorate of the new states, it was questionable, as the survey reflected, whether the German party system and the “limited vote pattern”, was of any relevance.

In order to find the relationship between the social structure and party preference, an exit poll on the election day was conducted. The sample comprised 25,673 male and female voters. The people who voted through post were not included in the exit poll. When one compares the actual election results vis-à-vis the vote pattern, the outcome was on traditional lines. There was a slight difference of 0.8 per

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
Voting by age:

As in the last Federal elections, in 1990, the SPD once again was strongest in the age group of 35 years old electorate. The Union dominated in over 44 years old age group. Between 35-44 years both parties were equally popular. The SPD obtained the best support between 25-35 age. The CDU/CSU came out the best with over fifty per cent of senior citizens in the age group of 60+ opting for the Union Parties. The Greens found favour with the younger lot. While 14 per cent youngsters supported the party, only 3 per cent people in 60+ age opted for the Greens. In the FDP’s case there did not seem any significant positioning with any age group.

It is interesting to find differing trends between the old and the new states. While the SPD was ahead of CDU/CSU with 35-44 age group in West Germany, (39 per cent; 36 per cent) the Union Party was the strongest in the same age groups in East Germany. PDS found favour with younger voters. Twenty three per cent young men and women under the age of 35 years supported it. It received support of only 17 per cent from among 60+ age group.79

Voting by sex:

On the whole, there has not been much perceptible difference in the election stand between men and women of same age group.

While the union parties obtained significant support from among the women of 35 years of age vis-à-vis men, it was reversed in case of the age group of 35+. Twenty nine per cent women in the age group of 25-34 years supported the union. Senior aged women in the 60+ category also supported the party to the tune of 53 per cent. This group is three times more in strength than younger women.

The SPD came out better with younger women. Senior women did not seem to support the party to that extent. Forty three per cent women in the age group of 25-34 years supported the party. Men up to the age of 25 years supported the party to the tune of 33 per cent. The Greens found favour among all age groups of women than

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
men.

In East Germany, the PDS was supported by 23 per cent men and 13 per cent women. Women under 45 years of age supported the party better than men of the same age group.

When one analyses the voting pattern in the election, 63 per cent of the election result of the union parties is based on the voting of 45+ age category. On the other hand the 20 per cent of the voters supporting the Greens are between the age group of 18-24 years. When one, however, looks at the PDS, despite, it found favour among all age groups, the Greens superseded it in the election results. Fifty one per cent of Green supporters are up to the age of 35 years against 35 per cent in case of the PDS.\cite{80}

Demographic factor of age and sex plays an important role in the voting in social structure of the Federal Republic. In the last decade or so, however, the occupation and religion have also become crucial in election matters. The SPD in the past has been favourite with the workers and trade unions, and the CDU with the farmers.

The general trend reflected that 45 per cent workers supported SPD against 37 per cent supporting the CDU. Among the professionals/employees, 38 per cent supported the union, which was ahead of the SPD. Among the government employees 43 per cent supported the CDU against 33 per cent SPD. Eleven per cent supported the Greens.\cite{81}

**Voting by religion:**

The Catholics favoured the Union parties. In addition to the new states where a significant majority does not belong to any religion (non-denomination), the overall share of the Catholics has significantly reduced. Fifty-two percent Catholics favoured the Union against 39 per cent Protestants and 29 per cent non-denominational.

With the SPD, there was a slight difference. They obtained average support from among the non-denominational, over average response from the Protestants and

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\cite{80} Based on data received from Population Census Bureau, Gustav-Stressmann: Wiesbaden on request.

\cite{81} Ibid. n. 67.
under average from the Catholics. Similarly the Greens and the PDS got best support from among those who did not belong to any church (non-denominational). Seventeen per cent non-denominational supported the PDS.\textsuperscript{82}

**Perceptions about opinion polls:**

Early opinion polls have been receiving mixed response from amongst a cross section of people in Germany.

Ralf O. Golinski, CDU spokesperson felt, the number game was very significant for politicians as it sustained people’s interest in elections and issues. Media support, according to him depended on the poll mandate and the political bias of media houses. If a newspaper was pro-liberal, it would give front page coverage with tables in case liberal parties were projected winners in the survey. but in case, the findings favoured the conservative party, the survey would find a small mention, somewhere on an inside page of the newspaper, lamented the CDU spokesperson.\textsuperscript{83}

Gunter Schwedhelm of the SPD subscribed the views of his counter part in the CDU but felt the game which went on between some polling agencies and political parties in “fudging” data may not be healthy for democracy.\textsuperscript{84} In the 1994 election, the CDU according to him gained due to the “Bandwagon” effect The SPD, being a centrist party was not lucky enough, he felt. Schwedhelm spoke of the veteran pollster Ms. Neumann, who was not only a CDU sympathiser, but closely worked on strategy for the Party.\textsuperscript{85}

It is also a fact that INFAS, a pro SPD polling agency in Germany, also conducted surveys on behalf of the party for a long time till it went bankrupt in 1996.

Schwedhelm, however. felt the opinion polls had no daunting impact on the outcome of any election.\textsuperscript{86}

Jurgen Mexiner, CEO of a leading Poll agency viz. AC Nielson felt that in a democracy, it was important to mobilise public opinion, set agenda for discussions.

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\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Interview with Ralf Golinski was held in Bonn on 8 October 1996.
\textsuperscript{84} Interview with Gunter Schwedhelm was held in Bonn on 8 October 1996.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
and opinion polls without vested interest, could be a step in that direction. 87

On asking, if any research had been conducted to know the impact of opinion polling on the voting behaviour of the masses, he said, a lot of inference and conjecture were drawn, but probably no empirical research had been conducted “and who would like to do and why?” he questioned. Opinion polls, he said provided the “bread and butter” for many and were big business and no one would like to put one’s hand in the “hornet’s nest”. Academic institutes however, could undertake the exercise, he suggested. 88

Based on his long research experience he felt, women were more susceptible than men in being influenced by the poll data. Among the various age-groups, youth, middle aged and senior citizens, in that order could be influenced by early opinion poll results as reflected in the media.

Christoph Mestmatcher from the electronic media felt that early polls had become an indispensable part of the German democracy. At the same time more than once in the election history polls had been corrected by the voter. “I don’t believe polls are not healthy for democracy, because most of us are aware that polls can be manipulated as well as statistics. And we as journalists ask ourselves which party ordered the polls and we know which institute favours which party.” 89

Richard Hilmer CEO, of yet another large research organisation, Infratest Burke, said that opinion polls were almost a continuous exercise in Germany, as elections at one level or the other kept happening in different lands all the time. He did not find anything wrong in publishing the poll data before the election “What’s wrong, if one knows which way the trend was going?” questioned he. 90

Comparing the voter behaviour in the old and new states in Germany. Hilmer opined that party affiliations were strong in the West. These were relatively weaker in the East as the process of democratisation was yet to assimilate in the psyche of the electorate. The people in the East hence looked at elections with issues in mind than

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87 Interview with Jurgen Mexiner was held in Hamburg on 10 October 1996.
88 Ibid.
89 The response is against a questionnaire sent to Christoph Mestmatcher of the “North Deutschland Radio” in October 1996.
90 Interview with Mr. Richard Hilmer was held in Berlin on 13 October 1996.
personalities.\textsuperscript{91}

Hilmer felt, it was not the passive or the fence sitters but the highly educated who were more influenced by the opinion trends because they saw a scientific base behind such polls.\textsuperscript{92}

According to Hilmer, the voting patterns in the erstwhile West Germany were almost similar during the 20-30 years. These may however change in the unified Country because of the increasing social, economic and political complexities as also the increasing mass media exposure among the electorate.

According to the Infratest Chief, in the election year 1994, about DM 4 to 5 million were spent in conducting the poll surveys.

On a question why the opinion polls did not address serious political questions, Hilmer defended saying, the opinion polls probably, were not the right forum, keeping in view a vast cross section of people. But serious debates, he said did emerge when media covered the findings.\textsuperscript{93}

He referred to the opinion polls organised by Infratest Burke for the 1994 elections when a serious issue like possible combinations of coalitions was asked of the Electorate.

Against a question “in case no party managed to get a majority, which coalition combination” would they prefer, the responses brought some interesting insights into the public psyche between February to September 1994. For instance in February 32 per cent respondents preferred the CDU/CSU/SPD combination which reduced to 31 per cent in July 94 and further went down to 26 per cent in September 1994. The CDU/CSU-FDP found favour with 19 per cent respondents in February 94, which increased to 27 per cent in July 94 and went down to 25 per cent in September 94.\textsuperscript{94}

SPD-Greens were considered as good coalition by only 17 per cent respondents in February 94. Their prospects increased in the eyes of the electorate in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. Richard Hilmer’s view is quite path breaking as the general perception is that it is the gullible or the passive people who get “biased” by an overriding media stimuli.  
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{94} Source: \textit{Waii-Zcit'94, 7 Welle, Infratest Burke GmbH Berlin}. The survey was based on a sample size of 2507 respondents, spread over all the 16 states.  

183}
July 94 with 27 per cent opting for it. It marginally went down in September 94 with 25 per cent opting for it. SPD-Greens- FDP combination found favour with only 11 per cent respondents in February 94, which went down to 8 per cent in July and further plummeted to six percent in September 94.95

Graph: 3.3

Voters' Choice about Party Coalitions

Source: InfraTest Burke

Another important question raised in that opinion poll was to gauge the public perception about the PDS. Against a question, "in case the current coalition CDU/CSU or the opposition SPD-Green could not attain a majority, do you think PDS could play a role in the Bundestag?". The responses were as under between the old and new states.

Sixty per cent were against PDS holding the reins of power against 24 per cent finding no problem with it. Nine per cent in the East and 10 per cent in the West had no opinion on the issue. When one looks at the responses in the East and West one finds responses on the expected lines. Fifty three per cent respondents from the East favoured the role of PDS against only 17 per cent in the West. In contrast, a staggering 73 per cent respondents in the West saw no role for the PDS in governance against 46 per cent from the East.96

When one analyses the primary data related to Infra test Burke's opinion polling, same frivolous issues on lines of American elections (based on personalities) were also asked of the electorate. like "if there is direct voting, who would you elect as Chancellor, Helmut Kohl or Rudolf Scharping?" The responses were taken between

95 Ibid.
February 94 to September 94. Kohl found favour with 28 per cent in February, which consistently rose

Graph: 3.4

![Voters' response in case of PDS coming to power](image)

Source: InfraTest Burke

to 41 per cent in September 1994. In contrast, Scharping who was favoured by 42 percent in February 94, consistently went down in the esteem of the electorate month after month. In September only 30 per cent wanted him to be the Chancellor.97

Dr. Lussack, member of parliament, representing the Alliance 90/ Greens felt, early opinion polls or media had no direct impact on the voting behaviour. "If any thing", she said, “my view is that the media rather digresses your attention from politics”. One extreme effect, she said could be “If I cast my vote any way, the guys will do what they want any way”.98

People, she firmly believed, did not consider politics as a “major turning point” in their life unless a major crisis like war, or economic catastrophe happened.99

In Germany, she said media unfortunately did not really mobilise the people to an “informed opinion about politics”.100

Mathias Wanbach, yet another CDU spokesman in Berlin felt, opinion polls at times were like a “necessary evil” to flashlight how political parties were doing. Though, he said, they should undertake the study of serious political questions and not

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97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Interview with Dr. Angilka Lussack representing the Green Party was held in Bonn, 9 October, 1996.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
indulge in "horse trading".\textsuperscript{101}

The general feeling in Germany was that opinion polls had become a necessary input in the elections, and there was nothing that could be done except that the pollsters needed to be more responsible in conducting the polls and media in reporting them.

\textbf{An average German voter:}

Describing an average German voter, pollster Richard Hilmer said "an average German voter has faith in representative democracy. He is traditional to the extent that in the last 34 years there has not been much perceptible change in his voting behaviour".\textsuperscript{102}

CDU spokesperson Mathhias Wanbach felt that voter behaviour at a micro level had been changing over a period of time. In former times, he said all big parties had 30 to 40 per cent share of "committed" voters. The remaining voters decided at the last moment. Presently, he opined there were not more than 15-20 percent committed voters. The rest of the electorate according to Wanbach decided during the last ten days of election. There was a growing number of people who did not decide on issues but on personalities. In 1994, he said it was by and large Kohl vs. Scharping. The states too were falling into the trap of "charismatic" leaders as in the National elections, he felt.\textsuperscript{103}

\section*{DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE INDIAN ELECTORATE}

In 48 years since the first elections, there have been 12 general elections and over 300 state level contests in India. Despite a huge population, poverty, illiteracy, caste-ism, religious fanaticism to name a few problems, both at the center and states, governments have been changed or confirmed by the will of the people of India. In 1977, the electorate ousted one of the most powerful prime ministers viž. Mrs. Indira Gandhi punishing her for excesses during the Emergency in 1975. In 1980, she was

\textsuperscript{101} Interview with Mathhias Wanbach was held in Berlin on October 13, 1996.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. n. 89.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. n. 101.
brought back when the opposition parties despite a major mandate could not rise above petty squabbles. In 1984, when Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated, a new leader viz. Rajiv Gandhi was brought in, who secured the highest number of seats for the party since country’s independence. Just in four years he was condemned to defeat amidst allegations of kickbacks in the Bofor’s purchase deal. The electorate opted for change. In just eighteen months, they reverted narrowly to the traditional dominance of the Congress. The country faced its 11th round in April/May 1996. No party received the absolute majority. A thirteen party coalition is in saddle in the Eleventh Lok Sabha.

Understanding the demographic profile of the Indian electorate is challenging because the Election Commission publishes definitive figures for each election, but these are “not arranged in a compact, easily accessible way” and they have not been put together in sequence so that the continuous story since the first general election could be weaved and studied. Media persons, some academic and research institutions have undertaken some useful compilations but “not in a fashion that fully realises their potential as a means of illuminating evolution of the Indian system” opine psephologists David Butler et al. 104

Over the last few decades, there have been studies in America and in Britain, which together with a growing body of painstaking work by opinion poll agencies, have developed new techniques for looking at voting behaviour. A lot can be learnt by exploring elections as parts of the political process and as aspects of mass psychology. A lot can be revealed about the relationship between patterns of voting and the social and economic characteristics of different regions and communities.

The mid-term poll in India in 1991 was a mammoth affair. World’s largest democracy with an astonishing 500 million plus voters were expected to choose over 500 candidates out of about 9,000 aspirants. A voter turn out of 51.13 per cent was recorded which was higher than the first two general elections. The lowest turn out was recorded in 1952, when 45.7 per cent people voted and the highest of 64.1 per cent was recorded in 1984, in the post Indira Gandhi election after her gruesome assassination.

In the 18 months between 1989 and 1991 polls, an additional 33 Million voters were added with the passing of the 62nd amendment in 1988, bringing down the voting age from 21 years to 18 years.

Census data published for each of the 507 districts of the country is not on a constituency basis. Since constituencies and districts do not match, i.e. constituencies span more than one district boundary or are a part of a district --it does not become possible to relate electoral results with demographic and socio-economic characteristics of voters provided by the census. The psephologists, however, depend on the unpublished census data aggregated at the tehsil and taluka level, making the exercise of matching electoral results with census findings theoretically possible. If census data was made available at this level, Butler David et.al., feel a wealth of research in this area could lead to a far more detailed understanding of factors affecting voting behavior of the Indian electorate.105

As per the census statistics for 20 years between 1971-1991, some interesting data emerges.

From a population of 548 million in 1971, in two decades it rose to 846 million, making the density of population from 177 per square kilo meter to 273 per kilo meter in 1981. the rise in population increased more in the urban India vis-à-vis the rural in terms of relative percentage. The rural population rose from 439 million to 629. The urban population increased from 109 million to 218 million. The chasm between male and female population ratio further widened. Against per 1000 males, from 930 women in 1971 it came down to 927 in 1991. In 1981 it had increased to 934 per 1000 males.106 The population by age, sex and literacy on an all India basis stood as follows:

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105 Ibid. p.122.
About 48 per cent (47.7 per cent) population were in the age category of 0-19, 29.9 per cent in 20-30 age group, 14.8 per cent in 40-59 and 7.8 per cent in 60+ age group. Women in different age cohorts comprised 48.1 per cent of the total population in 1991. If one were to look at the data state wise at micro level, one finds Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, both hill-states in the north-eastern parts of India recorded the largest percentage of population in 0-19 age group at 53.7 per cent and 52.5 per cent respectively. In the second age category, 36.4 per cent of Delhi population came in 20-39 years age category recording the highest percentage followed by Goa at 34.3 per cent. Tamil Nadu recorded the highest number of people in 40-59 age category at 18 per cent followed by Kerala at 17.4 per cent. The senior citizens in the age group of 60 years and above with a national average of 7.8 per cent, recorded the highest percentage at 9.4 in Himachal Pradesh followed by 9.1 per cent in Kerala.  

With an overall literacy rate of 52.2 per cent in 1991, males stood at 63.9 per cent and females at 39.4 per cent. The urban rural divide was recorded at 73.0 per cent and 44.5 per cent respectively. At state level, Kerala ruled the roost in both male and

107 Ibid.
female category with a literacy rate of 94.5 per cent for males and 86.9 per cent for females, followed by the tiny island of Lakshdweep which recorded 87.1 per cent literacy for males. Mizoram women stood at second highest at 78.1 per cent literacy rate. When one sees the urban rural divide 93.5 per cent of urban Mizoram males were literate followed by Kerala at 92.2 per cent. Among the rural population, 88.9 per cent Keralites followed by 78.2 per cent Lakshadweep citizens were recorded literate as per 1991 census.

Forty per cent people in India are below poverty line. Twenty five per cent people are totally unemployed. Work participation rate in 15-59 years is 37.0 per cent. The economic growth (GDP) stands at five per cent. The life expectancy of an average Indian is 59 years.\footnote{108}

The whole country is divided into 4061 state assembly (Vidhan Sabha) constituencies which are grouped together to form the 543 Lok Sabha constituencies. Normally, seven assembly constituencies are arranged to form one Lok Sabha constituency, but this may vary from state to state. In Uttar Pradesh, there are five assembly constituencies to each Lok Sabha constituency, i.e. 85 MPs and 425 MLAs.\footnote{109}

\footnote{108} Ibid.
\footnote{109} Ibid. n. 104.
The average voter turnout in the Indian elections has been 56.6 per cent, varying from a low of 45.7 per cent in 1952 to the record turn out of 64.1 per cent in 1984. The turn out among men voters has consistently been higher than among women but over the years more and more women are inclined to use their suffrage. Female turn out increased from 38.8 per cent in 1957 to 57.3 per cent in 1989. This, however, dropped to 51.4 per cent in 1991. The male turn out increased from 55.8 per cent in 1957 to 61.6 per cent in 1991. In the 1996 General Election, a voter turn out of 56.9 was achieved. Voter turn out in urban India has always been higher than in rural area by about 6 to 8 per cent.

Graph: 3.7

Source: Graph based on data ref.at Ibid. 104.

Is there an average Indian voter?

How does one describe the Indian voter? How do various demographic groupings divide among the parties? Only extensive opinion poll can answer questions such as these. Opinion poll is still in a nascent stage in India. Over the last decade or so, some media organisations along with some leading research outfits and psephologists have been doing some pioneering work.

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110 Ibid. n. 104, p. 9.
There is no satisfactory data on who voted how in most of the Indian elections but a very large number of surveys conducted in 1991 provide a profile of the Indian voter.

India, according to pollsters is particularly a difficult country. Its size, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity stand in the way of a uniform procedure. Its over 500 million electorate is more than the combined electorate of the USA, European Union and Japan put together. More than 70 per cent of the Indian electorate reside in villages, some of which are inaccessible.

Selecting a sample for a poll raises special problems. Sample sizes as small as 1,000 are common in the west. Because of heterogeneity, the sample size in the Indian context has to be bigger. Most of the opinion polls in America and elsewhere are telephonic. In India, it will be an impossibility with just about two per cent telephone connections in the entire country. Interviews in India have to be face to face, especially in the rural area where literacy rate is not good. The interviewer generally has to go through the village headman. While interviewing respondents, it is not uncommon to find family members and neighbours swarming around making the task of the interviewer challenging if not impossible. The interviewers are generally thought to be acting on behalf of some official or government organisation. Experience has shown that these factors tend to generate a bias in favour of the ruling party, locally or centrally.111

Marketing and Research Group (MARG) a research organisation which has conducted a number of opinion polls, has developed a method to reduce party bias. Interviews try to replicate the actual voting situation as closely as possible. All interviewers carry a “ballot box”. Respondents are given a slip of paper which resembles a ballot paper with names and symbols of political parties, others/independents and asked to mark their preference. The papers are then slipped to the box. This serves two purposes: one it reduces respondents’ fear of exposing their

111 Ibid. n.104 and based on discussions with leading researcher N. Bhaskar Rao in an interview held on 18 December, 1996.
political alignment and, secondly, it allows them to express their preference in privacy. The same method is now used by a number of other polling agencies.

One of the problems faced by the pollsters in India stems from the fact that issues which may be important for the urban electorate may be non-issues for the rural audience. “Fear” is generally cited as the main explanation for bias in favour of the ruling party, which may not be wholly correct.

Another problem faced by the pollsters is change in system adopted by the Election Commission. Polling booth data used to be available - each covering 1000 votes - which was useful element in securing a representative sample. The Election Commission has now stopped counting votes by polling stations. Today, ballot papers from all booths are mixed together before counting begins.112

Detailed data about the characteristics of voters in each area is a pre-requisite to a good sample design, which is sadly lacking in India.

Opinion poll in India is only a few decades old. In the 1950s, there were virtually no market research organisations in India. Analysts feel that the dominance of Congress diminished any interest to develop political polls. However, things have taken a 180 turn in the last one decade. The first national poll was carried out by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (IIPO) before the 1957 general election. Real interest in opinion polling in India really started in the 1980s. Around the 1991 mid-term poll, a number of media organisations, polling agencies and academic institutions conducted opinion poll to gauge peoples perception about various candidates and political parties. Given below are random glimpses of some of these poll results.

Opinion polls - a secondary data analysis

The Week-Mode, among others conducted an opinion poll in December 1990, over five months ahead of the mid-term election. Around that time, mid-term poll was not in sight. Among the questions asked of a representative sample of 4,056 voters, spread across 456 constituencies, were the popularity of leaders like V.P. Singh, Rajiv Gandhi and L.K. Advani. Rajiv seemed to fair better among the three. Price rise was considered a burning issue by 37 per cent, followed by the issue of communalism by 22

112 Ibid. n.104.
per cent respondents. Unemployment was also considered an issue by 17 per cent respondents. Virtually no voter considered Chandrashekhar suitable for the prime ministerial office. On the Ayodhya tangle, 41 per cent felt a negotiated solution was the answer, against 27 per cent in favour of shifting of the mosque, and 12 per cent for shifting of the temple. Nineteen per cent felt court’s verdict would be the best solution.113

Graph: 3.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voters' response to Ayodhya Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Response in percentage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift Masjid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiated Solution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Week-Mode Survey

The opinion poll predicted a “hung” parliament and so it was. In view of the surcharged atmosphere during the last few months centering on two key issues - reservation for the OBCs and the Ramjanambhoomi/Babri Masjid imbroglio, voting pattern by caste and religion was expected to provide important pointers to the electoral outcome.

Strong support for the BJP’s stance on the Ayodhya issue, not only among forward caste Hindus, but even among OBCs and SC/STs demonstrated effectiveness of the religious card. Fifty seven per cent forward caste Hindus, 53 per cent OBCs, 52 per cent SC/STs, and 18 per cent others and 8 per cent Muslims supported VHP/BJP’s stance on the Ayodhya stance. Conversely 84 per cent Muslim respondents did not support BJP’s stand on Ayodhya. Among the Hindus also, 34 per cent forward caste, 35 percent OBCs and 33 per cent SC/ST also did not support VHP/BJP’s stand on the

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113 Reported in the weekly The Week, 6 January 1991.
On the issue of reservations, 53 per cent Muslims supported V.P. Singh followed by 54 per cent SC/ST, 45 per cent OBCs and 27 per cent forward caste Hindus. This aggregated to 40 per cent voters supporting him on the issue.  

Graph: 3.9

Electorates stand on BJP’s stance on Ayodhya
(Response in percentage)

Source: Week-Mode Survey

On the question about the capability of different parties handling various issues, interestingly, a party condemned just 15 months back seemed better equipped on most of the issues. Fifty four percent felt the Congress (I) could provide a stable government, against 30 per cent vouching for the BJP followed by 24 per cent for the National Front/Left.

On handling the communal issues also, Congress scored the highest with 24 per cent respondents evincing confidence in it followed by 17 per cent for the BJP and 17 per cent favouring the Janata Dal. On tackling reservation issue surprisingly the Janata Dal was supported by only 14 per cent, while the Congress evinced support from 22 percent electorate. The BJP could wrench support of only 8 percent of

\[114\] Ibid.
electorate. The Congress received the confidence of 30 per cent respondents on the issue of controlling price rise followed by 19 percent for the JD and 10 per cent for the BJP.\textsuperscript{115}

As reflected in the above graph, a majority of the people did not express any opinion.\textsuperscript{116}

Frontline/MRAs was another media-pollster duo which conducted a pre-poll before the mid-term election. The poll predicted 220-230 seats for the Congress (I), and the party did receive a mandate for 227 seats; BJP ran short of the expectations. Against a prognosis of 135-145 seats the party could win 119 seats only. A seat prediction of 110-120 was made for the Front-Left and all partners put together. They garnered support for 104 seats only.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} David Butler \textit{et al.} Ibid. n. 104, p. 42.
In 1991, most of the opinion polls according to their findings seemed to fare reasonably well. Three of the four nationwide surveys came up with forecasts that were within 20 seats of the final Congress tally i.e. *India Today* 233, *Frontline* 224. Weekly *Sunday* predicting 310 seats by Congress seriously erred. All these surveys were conducted before the assassination of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. Butler *et al.* felt if the constituencies that voted belatedly in June had behaved like those that voted on May 21, the Congress would only have won about 190 seats and that would seem the "correct benchmark" against which to assess the accuracy of the 1991 Polls.118

In the column 'Analysis' titled "The Pollsters and 1991- Will the elections be a psephologists nightmare?" *Sunday* columnist Padmanabhan opined that it was perhaps ironic that so many opinion polls had been commissioned for the elections when the public interest in the election was dismally low.119

The Columnist asked a number of psephologists and pollsters like Prannoy Roy, Dr. Balachandran and Trilok Mukherjee about their views on different aspects of polling. All of them seemed to agree that although most of the polls had focused on replies to questions about communalism, job reservation, best prime-ministerial candidate and the like, a majority of the sample considered Rajiv to be the most favourable prime minister and the burning issue being the spiraling prices (at the same time believing that no party will be able to tackle it), the real issues that were likely to decide the voting patterns were matters such as the Ayodhya (religion) and Mandal (reservations) the reason being that the electorate was polarised on these issues.120

The table below provides, at a glance the predictions by different pollsters about the three political parties between 6 April and 8 May, 1991.121

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poll Dates</th>
<th>Publication Date</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Pollster</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>No. of Constituency</th>
<th>Cong.</th>
<th>B J P &amp; Allies</th>
<th>JD &amp; Allies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-9 April</td>
<td>21 April</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16 Apr.</td>
<td>28 April</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-22 Apr.</td>
<td>5 May</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-28 Apr.</td>
<td>12 May</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10 May</td>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Today</td>
<td>MARG</td>
<td>20312</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-5 May</td>
<td>19 May</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

118 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid. n.104., p. 42.
In India, the counting of votes is often delayed for a few days till the last state has voted. This provides an opportunity to pollsters to use exit polls. In 1989, it was tried nationally for the first time. India Today, a fortnightly, commissioned MARG and famous psephologist Prannoy Roy. The survey interviewed 77,000 Indian voters as they left the booths. On the basis of the replies, the exit poll predicted 193 seats for the Congress and two days later, the figure proved exactly the same.

During the 1991 election, India Today/MARG conducted an exit poll in two phases. 48,299 people were interviewed on 20 May and after the elections were postponed and 25,140 were interviewed on 12 June and 16,566 on 15 June. With a countrywide sample of over 90,000, the 1991 exit poll probably was the largest conducted anywhere in the world.122

In the aftermath of Rajiv’s assassination, there was violence in several parts of the country. It became pollsters’ nightmare also. As there was quite a gap between the first round of voting in May 1991 and the next round of voting in June 1991, a potential dilemma in the use or misuse of exit polls in India came in focus. There is no legislation suggesting publication of exit poll data. The Press Council of India has however issued guidelines to the media about publication of “pre-poll and exit poll” surveys before the 1996 Parliamentary elections.

In the document, the Press Council has emphasised that it is of the “view that the newspapers should not allow their forums to be used for distractions and manipulations of the elections and should not allow themselves to be exploited by the interested parties”. The guidelines read as follow “no newspaper shall publish exit poll surveys, however, genuine they may be, till the last of the polls is over”.123

The above guidelines are suggestions and it is expected of the media that they would follow them. Time however will tell, whether these are adhered to fully by the

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122 India Today, July 1991 and Ibid. n. 104, p. 46.
media. “I hate opinion polling. It colours peoples’ attitude”, said Justice Sawant in an interview.¹²⁴

MARG and Prannoy Roy had in the last election voluntarily withheld their exit poll results and allowed publishing the data only after it was clear that the publication would not substantially alter the voting behaviour.

The results of the exit poll vis-à-vis the actual polling provides interesting insights.

Of the sample, 36.1 percent said they voted for the Congress (I) while the actual figure was found out to be 36.5 per cent. There was a large gap in the BJP/Shiv Sena tally. While 32.6 per cent said they voted for the BJP/Shiv Sena, it turned out to be 20.9 per cent. For Janata Dal/TDP, it was 13.7 per cent in the exit poll against 14.8 percent actual. About 5 percent (4.6 per cent) voters said they preferred the Janata Dal (Samajvadi) while it was actually 3.4 per cent. In the case of CPI/CPI(M) it was 7.5 per cent in the exit poll against 8.7 per cent in the actual case. For others (independents, other parties), while 5.5 per cent said they voted for such candidates/parties, it turned out to be 15.7 per cent.¹²⁵

When we look at the variants of age, sex, caste and location of the voters, some interesting data emerge.

Among the first time voters, i.e. up to 21 years of age, the preference seemed for the BJP/Shiv Sena. While over 39 per cent voted for the party, over 30 per cent voted for the Congress (I). Janata Dal/Telugu Desam carried 13.5 per cent of this age group.

Over 34 per cent voters in the age group of 21-30 voted for the Congress I and the BJP and 13.2 per cent and 7.7 per cent for the Janata Dal/TDP and CPI/CPI(M) respectively. As people grew in age they seemed to prefer the “tried” party, the Congress. People in the age cohorts of 31-41 (37 per cent), 41-50 (38 per cent) and 51-60 preferred the Congress (I) (41 per cent) followed by 30.6 per cent, 30.3 per cent and 29.8 per cent respectively preferring the BJP/Shiv Sena.

When we look at party preferences sex wise, 35.5 per cent men and 37.5 per

¹²⁴ Interview with Justice P.D. Sawant was held in New Delhi on 17 December, 1996.
¹²⁵ Ibid. n.120, p.11.
cent women preferred Congress against 33.3 per cent men and 31.1 per cent women for BJP. Janata Dal/Telugu Desam was preferred by 14.7 per cent men and 11.7 per cent women.

Preferences of parties by caste perhaps was on the expected lines. Over 58 per cent Brahmins preferred the BJP against 30.4 percent opting for the Congress. Janata Dal/TDP attracted only 4.5 per cent Brahmin votes and Left parties only 2.5 percent such vote. Another Forward caste, namely Kshatriyas seemed to prefer BJP over the Congress with 41.1 per cent voting for the former against 35 per cent for the Congress. The other parties did not attract even two digit votes from the Kshatriyas. The trading community viz. the Vaishyas also preferred the BJP over the Congress, with 49.6 per cent preferring it against 28.4 per cent owing allegiance to the Congress.

When we look at the backward castes and SC/ST vote, the pattern seemed to be on expected lines. The Congress attracted 43.5 per cent of the SC/ST votes against 23.5 per cent for the BJP. The Janata Dal/TDP attracted 12.4 per cent vote. Interestingly 34.9 per cent OBC vote went to the BJP/Shiv Sena (whether it was the religious card the Hindutava plank, one has to go deeper to analyse) against 29.9 per cent preferring the Congress. The Janata Dal which spear headed the reservation issue attracted only 12.4 per cent of the OBC vote with its TDP ally.126

Muslims went for the Congress in great numbers. Over forty five per cent Muslim vote went to the Congress, followed by 28 per cent to the JD/TDP. The Left parties attracted 13.9 per cent Muslim vote. BJP did dismally low with the community. Only 3.4 per cent voted for the right wing BJP.

When we look at the rural urban divide, Congress attracted 36.3 per cent urban vote against 35.8 per cent rural vote. The BJP/Shiv Sena did better at the grassroots, with 41.2 per cent rural rate garnered by it against 29.8 per cent urban vote. 127

India has already had the 11th General Election held in April/May 1996. The Tenth Lok Sabha had its full term of five years despite the Congress not getting the absolute majority (which they managed by splitting the Janata Dal when Ajit faction joined the party after some time). The poll announcement came just a month ahead of

126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
the polling dates for the 11th Parliamentary election. The pollsters got busy as bees predicting polls, given a very short time of just about a month between the announcement of polling and the actual dates. The nominations had barely closed and the campaign was yet to start but analyses were available about what the outcome of the poll would be.

DB/MRAS came up with the findings of the first nation-wide opinion poll and election forecast conducted for the Outlook magazine. Psephologists Prannoy Roy and Dorab Sopariwala provided interesting analysis in India Today of the likely outcome. The Center for Media Studies (CMS) also presented an analysis of the trend in the four southern states based on surveys conducted between January - March 1996 and the Week magazine published the results of a survey conducted by the Mode in eight Metro cities.

What all the analyses seemed to suggest was that no one party or alliance was likely to win an absolute majority of seats on its own. The DB/MRAS poll projected a tally of 191 seats for the party against 232 seats it won in 1991. Times of India columnist commented that even the 191 was an optimistic tally because the survey in Tamil Nadu was conducted before the Moopnar-led split in the state unit of the party. The 35 seats in Tamil Nadu could change the overall figure.128

The DB/MRAS gave about the same number (170 seats) to BJP. The Outlook survey predicted only 139 seats to the NF/LF combine. Interestingly, however, the survey done in March assumed that the National Front would include the Telugu Desam Party factions, the Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Janata Dal and the Assam Gana Parishad; the NF had fallen in disarray, each constituent issuing a separate manifesto.129

Prannoy Roy and Sopariwala felt that the post-election scenario was likely to see a fresh round of splits and alliances in a bid to cobble together a working majority, "an exercise which the Congress will be better placed to carry out than the BJP" they opined.130 But as things stand today neither of the party is in the saddle. The 13-party coalition survives on Congress (I)’s outside support.

In the Week-Mode forecast, 60 per cent of the respondents opined that the

128 As analysed by K. Balakrishna in Times of India, on 5 April, 1996.
129 Ibid.
130 As quoted in The Times of India, 5 January, 1996.
Center was heading for a coalition, rather than a single party entity which proved right.\footnote{The Week, 6 January, 1996.}

The study conducted by the \textbf{Center for Media Studies} showed a notable preference for women candidates as they were perceived to be less prone to corruption, especially by rural voters.\footnote{As reflected in the media as also in discussion with Dr. N. Bhaskar Rao, Chief of CMS, on 18 December, 1996.}

In the absence of a charismatic leader, some pollsters tried to get people’s perception on Sonia Gandhi’s chances in the electoral fray. Forty six per cent citizens felt that Sonia should join politics, while 36 per cent said a “no”. Eighteen per cent did not have an opinion. When asked, if they would support, if she stood in elections, 60 per cent affirmed, 20 per cent declined, while 20 per cent were undecided.\footnote{Based on a tele-survey conducted by the \textit{Times of India} and Mode, a Research Agency among 264 Delhites between 14-16 February, 1996.}

\textit{Rashtriya Sahara}, a monthly magazine brought out from Delhi claimed the first “Internet” poll survey. According to the findings, Congress would wrench 36 per cent seats followed by JD and left parties, 27 per cent seats. BJP according to the survey finished at 3rd position with 24 per cent seats. Others accounted for 13 per cent seats.

On the performance of the full term of 5 years of Rao Government, 35 per cent reckoned it to average, 25 per cent felt it was poor, 20 per cent thought it was bad. Only 12 per cent thought it was excellent and a mere eight per cent gave it an excellent rating.\footnote{\textit{Rashtriya Sahara}, (Monthly), March 1996. Although the poll was claimed to have been conducted by the Magazine itself, but the methodology and universe of the survey was not indicated.}

In the \textit{India Today} - MARG opinion poll, conducted between 27-31 March, 1996, in 50 randomly selected parliamentary constituencies spread across 16 states, reaching 12,870 registered voters, 83 per cent rural and 78 per cent urban literate, following were the major findings.

When asked who would be the best prime minister, Rao still seemed popular with 34 per cent voters, followed by 28 per cent voters preferring Vajpayee. Laloo Yadav and Jyoti Basu could garner only five per cent support against two per cent each for Arjun Singh and Madhav Rao Scindia. A number of factors seemed to decide
voters' choice of the prime minister including the issue of corruption and rising prices. When asked which was the most important issue, poverty and unemployment were considered the top issues by 36 per cent voters followed by corruption considered important issue by 27 per cent, rising prices by 25 per cent. Communal harmony, Kashmir problem, and political stability caught the imagination of only four per cent, three per cent and five per cent voters respectively. Congress scored the highest ranking on being a party which could tackle the problems listed above.

As many as 63 per cent voters had not heard about the Hawala scam against 37 per cent who had heard about it. Seventy two per cent of the electorate felt that politicians who were tainted in the scam should not contest the elections against 23 per cent feeling there was nothing wrong till they were proved guilty. A bare five percent had no opinion on the issue.

On the question of communal Harmony i.e. whether the Hindu-Muslim relations had improved in the past five years 46 per cent voters felt the relations had improved, while 32 per cent felt they remained the same. Seventeen percent thought the relations had worsened. Interestingly among the Muslims, 55 per cent felt had improved against 45 per cent Hindus feeling that way. On the question of whether the standard of living had improved in the last five years, 41 per cent felt it had improved, while 39 per cent felt it remained the same.

The Times of India commissioned the Centre for Media Studies to conduct a pre poll survey. Known as the Times Poll by CMS, 26,700 voters spread over 80 constituencies in 16 states including Delhi were chosen for the survey. The Field work for the survey was conducted between April 7 and 8 by 60 field executives and 240 well trained, well qualified (post-graduates and above) field researchers' in different states. With a margin of error of three to five per cent, some interesting prognosis were made.

Congress vote according to the survey may fall to historic low and BJP was set to emerge as largest party. Congress share of vote predicted the survey “may come down from 39 per cent in 1991 to 31 per cent in the 1996 election. BJP’s share was

135 For detailed findings, refer, India Today, 30 April, 1996.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
predicted to rise from 21 to 23 per cent, NF/LF’s vote share could also suffer from 28 per cent to 26 per cent”. No party according to the survey was to get absolute majority. BJP was expected to get between 180-195 seats, Congress I between 135-150 seats, NF/LF between 135-145 seats, and others between 62-66 seats.138

Zee TV, a satellite channel had a number of election related programmes. In a Zee Gallup survey called the Zee Gallup, people’s manifesto, the channel transmitted a five minute capsule for a few days. Presented by upcoming TV star Ashish Vidyarthi, the anchor, talked about the survey findings which were supported by graphics/pie charts/tables etc.139

When asked what were the parameters of giving their vote for a candidate, a staggering 91 per cent said what they looked for in a candidate was honesty. Fifty Two per cent thought charisma was an important attribute in a leader, while 41 per cent thought a candidate’s belonging to the constituency was important enough reason for them to vote for him.140

As predicted by most of pre poll surveys, it proved a “hung” mandate. The pollsters did not go wrong in their prognosis. For instance against 168 seats predicted by India Today-Marg survey, the United Front (Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party, Communist Party of India (M), Communist Party of India, DMK, Tamil Manila Congress, Telugu Desam Party (N), Assam Gana Parishad party, INC (T), FB, RSP, MPVC, KCP and MGP), the Front got 179 seats. The BJP + Allies (BJP, Samata, Shiv Sena, HVP, SAD) fell short of expectation. Against 208 predicted, they managed 194, Congress and allies (Cong, IUML, KCM, AIADMK) managed 139 seats against 134 predicted.141

Mapping the Nation

In the 50th year of Indian Independence, there is a lot of curiosity and concern among sociologists, political scientists, intellectuals and citizens whether democracy is

138 For detailed survey results, refer Times of India between 24-28 April, 1996.
139 Zee Gallup People’s Manifesto, a programme at 8.00 p.m. on Sunday, April 21, 1996 on Zee Network.
140 Ibid.
141 India Today, 30 June, 1996.
sustainable in India and how do the common man take it. The Indian Council of Social Sciences (ICSS) had conducted a survey in 1971. The ICCS along with the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and fortnightly *India Today* conducted a poll after 25 years i.e. in 1996 to gauge the attitudes and perceptions of people at large on their faith in democracy.\(^{142}\)

In response to a question “Governance is better without parties and elections”, the response was: 69 per cent said “no” in 1996 against 43% saying “no” in 1971. Against a question “Does your vote make a difference?” 59 per cent said in the affirmative in 1996 against 48% in 1971. On a question whether only the educated should have the right to vote, 76 per cent said “no” against 12 per cent saying “yes”.

“Did the elected representatives care for the people?” was another question. Sixty three per cent felt they did not in 1996 against 58 percent in 1971. Twenty two per cent felt they did in 1996 against 27% in 1971. Against a question, whether the voters felt close to any party, 69 per cent said “no” in 1996 against 63 per cent in 1971. Thirty one per cent said they felt close in 1996 against 37 per cent in 1971. This trend is akin to the American electorate. In Germany party affiliations are stronger, although some researchers feel it is eroding in Germany too. In India against a question “Is there a party you will never vote for” (party’s name not indicated )16 per cent said “yes” in 1996 against 17 per cent in 1971. Of those who said “yes”, 34 per cent were graduates, 29 per cent Muslims and 23 per cent upper caste. Given the “hung” mandate in 1996, what kind of government did the voters prefer? Thirty three per cent preferred coalition, of this 34 per cent were Congress voters, 24 per cent BJP voters, 47 per cent United Front voters.\(^{143}\)

Some of the other findings of the survey included the following revelations:

In 1971, the Communist parties held the dubious distinction of being the most hated parties. In 1996, it was the Bharatiya Janata Party, followed by the Congress.

Independent institutions like the Election Commission and Judiciary enjoyed higher esteem than political parties.\(^{144}\)

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\(^{142}\) For detailed survey analyses, see *India Today*, 31 August, 1996. The research document is also available for reference of researchers at the *Indian Council of Social Sciences*, New Delhi.

\(^{143}\) Ibid.

\(^{144}\) Ibid.
Contrary to the experiences in western democracies opposition to democratic system in India is stronger among the privileged sections of society - urban, educated upper castes, rich and much weaker among the deprived groups. The popular disaffection is directed mainly against the political parties.\textsuperscript{145}

Opinion polls seem to be an unavoidable evil in modern day elections. Millions of rupees are spent to gauge the opinions of the electorate on varying issues before elections. Whether people change their decision after knowing the findings of the pre poll opinions i.e. whether they follow the “bandwagon” effect or the “underdog” effect, not much serious work seems to have been done in any of the democracies under study. Though it is a matter of serious concern but will it suit the opinion poll agencies to conduct such studies? The answers are not far to seek.

A small exercise was done in this regard among Californian voters around the 1996 Presidential election in the US. The redeeming feature was that only six per cent voters said they had heard the announcement before they went to vote - less than one per cent voters said that hearing the announcement made them change their presidential vote choice. Also 78 per cent said it was not proper for the networks to announce before the Californian Polls had closed while 16 per cent called it proper.\textsuperscript{146}

Opinion poll has become a booming business. In India, the added dimension is hundred of forecasters and astrologers and “\textit{Compu babas}” who jostle with high-flying pollsters in predicting the future. Indian astrologers do not lag behind suggesting astro focus for overseas democracies as well (Times of India, Astro-Focus Column in the month of April 1996 predicted victory for Clinton and so it was!). Leading pollster Bhaskara Rao believes that newspapers ought to be transparent in their objectivity. The reporting about polls “should help enhance the quality of the campaign and stimulate public debate” At the end of the poll, he said an introspection must be done, “Today everyone claims”, lamented Rao, “\textit{we are the best}”. They even give paid advertisement, said Rao.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Based on exit poll data from ABC News, surfed on internet http://Politics now can/resource/poll track/exit polls/exit analysis/salient. htm, at the Foreign Press office, Manhattan, during the Field visit to the USA in November, 1996.
\textsuperscript{147} Based on interview with Dr. N. Bhaskar Rao on 18 December, 1996.
Interdependence of opinion polling and news media - an analysis

Since their beginning pre-election polls have been under attack from politicians, social scientists, concerned citizenry, analysts and at times the journalists as well. One of the scathing criticism of polls is that they can influence the political process and the results could be different, if the electorate's mind was not influenced by an avalanche of poll data, often signifying the horse race aspect of election, i.e., who is winning and who is losing.

In the early sixties, Daniel Boorstin added a powerful new concept to the American lexicon, one grounded in the history of journalism and mass persuasion. In his book, *The Image*[^148^], he defines pseudo event as a synthetic piece of news that is “planned, planted or incited” specifically in order to be reported, whose ambiguity of meaning is intrinsic to its interest, and that often has the character of a self-fulfilling in which pseudo-events have the power to overshadow spontaneous events, he opines, “By this new Gresham’s Law of American public life, counterfeit happenings tend to drive spontaneous happenings out of circulation..... once we have tasted the charm of pseudo-events, we are tempted to believe they are the only important events”.

Boorstin criticizes polling for offering images of “public opinion....[that are] synthetic, believable, passive, vivid, simplified, and ambiguous as ever before”. The respondent having been polled as a representative of the public, feels the author, then can read reports and see how he looks. As polls become more scientific and details broken down into occupation, constituencies, income, groups, religious denominations etc.-the citizen can discover himself [and the opinions he “ought” to have or is likely to have].... public opinion-once the public’s expression -becomes more and more an image into which the public fits its expression....it is the people looking into the mirror.[^149^]

When we analyze, we find that Boorstin’s critique bears centrally on one hypothesised attribute of press and other polls: *their capacity to distort people’s perceptions of*

[^149^]: Ibid. pp. 233 and 238.
politics and social life, and press news coverage, moving them ever farther away from what both might be in the absence of public polls.

Von Hoffman also follows Boorstin [with attribution] by terming polls pseudo-events that give news companies the power to make every day election day. News people believe that "the noise they hear in the conch shell their pollsters hold up to their ears in the true, genuine and unadulterated vox populi." Similarly Kovach wonders, "If we [meaning the media and opinion polls] are feeding each other. A poll suggests an issue, to which there is a political response, which is then reported and another poll is taken.... beginning a sort of chain reaction". 150

According to Gollin, opinion polls are a powerful tool for use against the powerful: political brokers, image manipulators, and officials who themselves make frequent use of private and public polls. Polls according to him, enable the press actively and independently to define or divine public opinion, as a counterweight to polls taken by others for their own purpose. The issue raised by critics of press polls, and of opinion polling, according to the author are likely to persist. The press, however, is courting some added risks in its growing reliance on polling, some of which can affect the polling profession whose success have inspired the proliferation virtually guarantees the production and dissemination of inconsistent or contradictory results, which in time can confuse or render more skeptical a poll-weary public. It can also materially reduce the value of poll findings as indicators of trends in public opinion that have some policy relevance. 151

Analysts feel, that a new type of journalism, one that made use of social science tools and concepts is being grafted onto the stock of traditional modes of reporting. This trend was defined and promoted by Philip Meyer in his book Precision Journalism [1973] which gained a wide audience and helped to launch a "movement" in journalism schools and among the working press. Meyer was not alone in seeing how the social science could be adapted for use by journalism. Opinion polls have long been a press feature, primarily in the form of syndicated polls that enjoyed added popularity in

election years. However, news gathering organizations are no more simply printing or airing the findings of others. Instead they are creating news on their own initiative by the spotlight they share on topics of their choosing and the news value or “frames” that shaped their phrasing of questions and responses in measuring public opinion.

Media Studies Centre and Roper in a content analysis of 80 press releases between September-October 92 found some interesting insights. Based on those, they have offered the following caveats:

Beware of press releases that suggest a “slight” or “modest” trend. These according to them are pollsters’ code words for “not statistically significant” and might be interpreted as “we can’t really say there is a trend, but it makes for a more interesting press release”.

• Distinguish between poll findings and pollster’s interpretation of poll findings. There may be a huge difference- a difference often “disguised in a press release”. Citing an example from 1992; in September, a national poll by a leading firm was released, stating that “Barbara Bush’s popularity reduces Clinton’s lead by four percentage points”. The data in the poll did show that Mrs. Bush was more popular than Mrs. Clinton, however, there was no evidence to even hint that Mrs. Bush’s popularity had any influence on Bill Clinton’s lead.

• Beware of the analyst who seeks to predict the election based on a poll. Polls describe what is happening at the time they were taken. Period. They offer the illusion of predictability because most voters do not change their minds from late in the campaign to Election day. Research in the USA however indicates that more and more voters are not deciding until the day of the election itself. One of the reasons is that contemporary campaigns especially advertising are launched just around the election time and a significant amount of ad spend is used the weekend before the election.

Lighten up on the horse-race. A closer review of the 1992 polls revealed that there was little real change in the horse race standings during the final two months of the campaign. Yet nearly two-thirds of the press releases issued by polling organizations during that time focused on the horse race.152

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152 Ken Dautrich and Jennifer Necci Dineen. “When is a poll newsworthy”? Media Studies Centre Research, No. 3., September 1996.
Analyzing the interdependence of news media and opinion polling between 1980-1994 in Germany, Frank Brettschneider, based on content analysis of 443 pre-election poll articles published in Germany’s leading dailies, Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung [FAZ], Frankfurter Rundschau [FR], Suddeutsche Zeitung [SZ] and Die Welt [Welt] came out with some interesting findings. The quantity of news media reporting of public opinion polls has “improved” over the years in Germany. Poll stories are a standard feature of German newspapers. The frequency of reports depends on the conditions of each election—e.g. on the expected closeness of the election outcome. The formal quality could be better—that is the conformity to American association of Public Opinion research [AAPOR] standards. The researcher opines that horse-race journalism isn’t found in Germany as often as in the USA. Journalists in Germany often use opinion poll data to predict election outcome. Interestingly, the research found an ambivalent relationship between liberal journalists and polls, while the reporting of conservative journalists was more in favour of opinion research.

Each time federal elections in German Bundestag approach, discussions about the meaning of opinion polls is raised. Generally politicians criticize pollsters for the methods they apply, which often in their opinion are manipulated to the benefit of the sponsor/client. While taking up the reproaches on a regular basis, politicians, at the same time do use election surveys to suit their interest, especially if the findings are favourable to them. They attack survey data if they don’t match their campaign strategies. It is also to be borne in mind that political parties represent, apart from the media, the largest customer group for political opinion research.

From the journalists’ point of view, the question is: What are the pros and cons of applying poll data in journalism? One of the arguments as pointed out in the chapter is that polls in journalism are important because of their supposed news value. Many studies suggest that opinion polls are considered by news media as “newsworthy, topical, relate directly to issues in the news, and are up-to-the moment”.

In the West, especially, the USA, journalists initially had a certain sense of cynicism about opinion research. According to Roper, a few decades ago, opinion polling was seen as a competitive activity, as an invasion of the newsmen's function and prerogatives. In fact, it was Meyer as said earlier who in the seventies, encouraged journalists not to see opinion research as a competitor but to use empirical research methods in their work. Since then, feel analysts, precision journalism has become a legitimate genre of reporting, joining interpretive and investigative reporting as a stylistically distinct and professionally accepted approach to news gathering and presentation.

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumnn, a famous communication researcher and long time supporter of the Christian Democratic Party in Germany in a thought provoking essay: *The Public opinion research correspondent*, opines that in Germany, the two partners in this delicate relationship, public opinion research and journalism have been plagued for decades by survey results from one institute that diverge grossly from findings of other institutes but which obtain great publicity in the mass media. One of the fundamental principles of the news media is to check the reliability of the sources upon which their reports are based. Why is it that, questions, Neumann that this principle is not adhered to whenever survey results are reported? In Germany, writes the author, the subject of quality control of survey results is only discussed as part of a general critique of the method as a whole, and at an utterly elementary level, focusing on the questions such as whether the sample was drawn scientifically or the methodology was right. Neumann adds that in the beginning opinion polling did not find favour with German journalists, who construed it as an attack on the traditional journalism. However, the first reaction to the idea of precision journalism was that some newspapers resorted to taking their own polls. This alone, opines Neumann indicates misunderstanding. Neumann points out following areas of difficulties for the journalists in understanding the poll data.

1. The idea of *measuring* is not understood, nor are the conditions which must be satisfied in order to be able to measure something reliably.

2. The significance of *prognoses* in social science is not understood.

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3. The *interview* as a method of collecting data is misunderstood. Journalists believe that they know well enough what an interview is. However, the interview in journalism and the interview in social research have almost nothing in common. Here lies the root of two particular misunderstandings concerning the questionnaire and the interviewer organization.

4. The whole process of using statistics to acquire knowledge is poorly understood. Journalists are not used to thinking in terms of probabilities and acquiring knowledge from systematic comparison.

5. Understanding the *difference between correlation and causality* poses difficulties. This is a serious problem because journalists take a particular interest in finding explanations, in uncovering connections between cause and effect, and they are therefore easily tempted to interpret every relationship in terms of causality.

The same conditions that have created animosity and misunderstanding could also be the basis for an alliance, referred as *data precision journalism* [against Meyer's Precision Journalism] by Naumann. She feels that attaching small survey units to newspapers would have to be avoided. The experience according to her, has shown that this reduces survey research to its simplest form, that is elementary polling questions. Unexpected developments are not uncovered this way, erroneous interpretations are not prevented, early diagnosis are not given, and social research results contradicting assumptions and expectations are not found.

In the Indian context, opinion polling is a new phenomenon. But it has come with a gusto. In the absence of any empirical studies about the impact of early opinion polling on the voting behaviour of the masses it is very difficult to say for sure whether opinion polling enhances or disrupts the political process in a country which is beset by a plethora of problems including, widespread illiteracy, low access to mass media stimuli, caste politics and poverty to name a few. However, the issue acquired center stage both in the 1996 and 1998 parliamentary elections. Researchers, social scientists, political analysts, the election commission and the press council of India were all seized of the matter, especially with regard to the publication and airing of exit poll findings before the election process was complete in the entire country. Interestingly,
India Today-Mode offered prognoses even before the respective parties released their list of candidates and issued manifestoes!

Justice PB Sawant, chairman of the Press council of India, requested the Election Commission before the 1998 election to impose a ban on the publication/airing of exit poll surveys. Media reacted instantly. Supreme Court lawyer Soli Sorabji felt it was "unwise and unconstitutional" and an infringement of the freedom of press and freedom of information guaranteed by article 19 [1] clause A of the Constitution.

The four phase election polling announced by the election commission, spread over three weeks for the mid-term election [for 222 seats on February 16, 186 seats on February 22, for 132 seats on February 28, and for three seats on 7 march 1998] allowed enough time for pollsters to conduct exit polls and publicize before the outcome of the first phase before the second phase and further publicize the data of second phase before the third phase. Political parties had varying opinion on the subject.

The Bhartiya Janata Party did not voice against the exit polls. The pollsters refrained from publicizing the exit polls till the three phase of election process were over.

Do polls reflect opinions or do opinions reflect polls? While the polls themselves attract much attention [i.e., scrutiny over methodology and sample size etc.], the impact of these polls on voters has been largely ignored. There has been concern all over the world on the issue whether early opinion polling could affect the voting behaviour of the electorate. The Canadian House of Commons has debated several bills proposed to ban the publication of political poll results during the political campaign.156

The publication of poll results immediately before the election is illegal in France and Brazil. In Germany, while it is not illegal, the polling organizations voluntarily restrict polling immediately prior to elections.157

When we look at the voting patterns based on various pre poll and exit polls in all the three countries, it is interesting (may not be considered a healthy sign in a democracy by many) that people by and large are bound by their respective races,

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castes, religions, gender, economic status, and their value systems. The general perception that Indian electorate vote by these parameters may be a truism but it is also a fact that if the pre-poll and exit poll data in the US and Germany are any indication that even the most advanced societies also behave the same way, traditional societies do while expressing their opinion. The voting patterns in Germany have not changed during the last few decades. Similarly, in the USA also, the traditional pattern of voting based on religious beliefs, economic strata and gender continues, if the last few elections are any indication. Voting by Caste affiliations has been the bane of the Indian Society for long. It unfortunately seems to have reinforced in the wake of Mandal reservations in 1990. Political parties and campaign planners have never lost any opportunity in exploiting this sentiment.

When one analyses the questions generally asked in early polls, most of them border the frivolous. Similarly personalities are projected and “created” by pollsters unwittingly and at times wittingly under certain influences. This, fear the social scientists may only result in the electorate being manipulated in thinking about matters, which may not be important either from their (electorate’s) or country’s perspective. Though polling agencies do feel, they contribute immensely in generating public debate on areas concerning societies, especially when in democracies, elections are fought on issues, themes and images.

Analysts largely feel that some of the dangers of proliferating polls have not been lost on a self-critical press, nor upon the opinion researchers with professional or commercial interests at stake. yet the boom in press polling continues unabated, with problems noted by critics being repeatedly encountered afresh. Gollin has succinctly put it thus: “The press and the polling are seated in the same lifeboat, with all the risks that additional passengers pose for its stability. The advent of new, speedier polling technologies only compound the difficulties as they extend the practical value of polls. Some of them exaggerate tendencies towards simplifying and stereotyping the measurement of public opinion, reducing it to a “bottomline” expression that further caricatures the concept”.