Chapter IV

Major Issues, Themes and Use of Campaign Strategies in Elections in the USA, Germany & India:

Media Focus - A Perspective

Each election in a democratic society is fought on certain issues both tangible and intangible. Every party in a multi-party system or a two party system has certain planks based on its supposed strengths which it puts forward before the electorate, giving a programme of action. The agenda revolves round certain themes and issues propped up by the prevailing environment - political, social and economic, the performance of the party in power at the time of the election, the expectations of the voters and above all the strategic considerations of the major players in an election. The election time invariably reflects the mood of a nation.

Communication holds the key in campaigning. Political communication is no longer left in the hands of non-professionals. The “dirty tricks” departments of various political parties, as generally referred to have been replaced by strategists and campaign planners. Gone are the days when the messages were scribbled, loud thoughts or jibes at opposition parties. With the advancement of technology, increase in exposure, awareness of masses and entry of big money, political campaigns have attained sophistication and scientific approach that can be compared to a marketing exercise needed for launching a product on a national scale. The candidates are marketed as products to the specific target consumer groups.¹

The communication wizards have largely been depending on the time-tested and successful theories of political communication. The art of rhetoric’s

is effectively used by politicians in swaying public opinion in their favour. Communication technology using innovative formats, lightening, strategic editing and the art of special effects have come in handy to the campaigners in presenting their "candidates" in the best light.

One of the all time great political philosophers Aristotle identified three principle modes of rhetoric viz. the deliberaive, forensic and demonstrative in political communication. The deliberative rhetoric is designed to sway people on matters of public policy by deliberating the relative advantages and disadvantages of alternative way of things. Its focus is upon what will happen in the future given certain policies. It creates and modifies expectations of things to come; the forensic rhetoric focuses upon what has happened in the past in order to demonstrate guilt or innocence, responsibility or punishment and reward. It’s normal setting is the court room but it occurs elsewhere as well especially in political communication during election; demonstrative rhetoric is a discourse of praise and blame. It’s intent is to amplify the good and bad qualities of a person, institution or idea. Political campaigns are generally replete with demonstrative rhetoric as opponents challenge one another’s qualifications for public office. The media in such times is seen amplifying positive qualities of some candidates and negative of others through opinionated articles, reportage, etc.

In the paragraphs that follow, we will analyze the themes and issues propped up in the Presidential election of the United States in 1992, Federal Election in Germany in 1994 and Parliamentary Election in India in 1991; the strategies employed by various players and the role of media in advocating certain points of view while sidelining others and the possible impact of media messages on the voting behaviour of the electorate.

The American case

Modern presidential campaigns according to James Ceaser and Andrew Busch, use three kinds of strategies based on the following viz. the geography of separate state races, theme and issue appeals, and appeals to

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1 Adapted from Aristotle’s The Republic, referred in Ibid. n.1, p.3.
groups. The strategy according to the authors asks “where?”, the second “what?” and the third “who?”.

Themes and appeals during the 1992 Presidential election in the USA

The campaigns of the Republicans, the Democrats and Ross Perot, an Independent candidate revolved round certain issues and themes, the underlying strategy of each player was to put their candidate more favourably than the opponent. Of course, the contender did just the same. Hence, the strategies were both offensive and defensive keeping in view the electorate which comprised various groups, communities with varying affiliations, perceptions, hopes and aspirations and certain expectations from the “would be government”. The voters can be segmented into three categories viz. committed voters, undecided voters or “fence sitters” and apathetic. Each party tried to position their presidential candidate against the backdrop of the issues and themes in such a manner so as to swing public opinion in their favour.

Some of the major themes and issues which caught the attention of the Political Parties, the contestants, the electorate and the media are mentioned here below along with the stand of the major players.

**Major issues in 1992 election at a glance**

*Abortion:*
George Bush (B) opposed it except in cases of rape or incest, or when the life of mother was in danger.

Bill Clinton (C) supported abortion rights but signed a state law requiring women under eighteen to notify a parent.

*Capital Punishment:*

(B) Supported capital punishment.

(C) Favoured death penalty. As governor, he had allowed three executions.

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**Crime and Drugs:**
(B) Proposed making it easier to admit evidence in criminal trials.
(C) Favoured superannuating 100,000 more police officers and emphasised upon community policing.

**On reducing budgetary deficit:**
(B) Favoured a constitutional amendment requiring opposed tax increases.
(C) Proposed having the budgetary deficit halved to $1.41 billion by 1996.

**Education:**
(B) Advocated voucher system allowing parents to choose public, parochial or private schools. Favoured national testing standards for students.
(C) Supported public school choice but objected to vouchers that would finance parochial schools. Stressed vocational training for non-college youth.

**Environment and Energy:**
(B) Encouraged gas based industry by seeking lower taxes on producers and allowing drilling in the Alaskan National Wild Life Refuge.
(C) Favoured raising auto efficiency to 45 miles per gallon. Backed cuts in carbon dioxide emissions, which cause global warming.

**Family Leave and Child Care:**
(B) Supported voluntary family leave programmes offered by companies but opposed mandating them.
(C) Favoured mandating family leave and would sign the bill Bush Vetoed.

**Gays:**
(B) Supported ban on homosexuals in the military. Opposed special laws to protect gay rights.
(C) Wanted to overturn Pentagon ban on homosexuals. Supported gay rights.

**Gulf War:**
(B) Said his Persian Gulf Policy was high point of his Presidency.

(C) Was ambivalent on War, but supported continued use of sanctions.

**Gun Control:**

(B) Opposed the Brandy bill creating a national waiting period for hand gun purchases.

(C) Backed the Bill.

**Health Care:**

(B) Opposed national health insurance. Favoured tax incentives to help low and middle income families to buy basic benefits themselves.

(C) Promised to announce a national health care during his first 100 days that would eventually provide universal coverage.

**Military:**

(B) Favoured $50.4 billion cut over six years and 25 per cent Force reduction.

(C) Supported $100 billion cut over six years.

**Tax and the Economy:**

(B) Emphasised capital gain tax cut as key to economic growth.

Supported a temporary tax credit for first time home buyers.

(C) Promised to raise taxes on the wealthy while reducing for the middle class.

**Trade:**

(B) Basically for free trading. Supported a new hemispheric trade zone that would enhance US access to Mexican and Canadian markets.

(C) Also for free trading. Favoured a tougher approach to Japan, threatened boycott of imported goods.

**Urban aid and Welfare:**

(B) Supported tax breaks for business investing poor neighborhood “enterprise zones”.

(C) Proposed community based development banks providing small-business loans in poor neighbourhoods.4

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Voters' response to the themes and issues in the 1992 Presidential election

The issues and themes projected by the political parties, spotlighted by the media were weighed by the voters according to their individual perceptions. Though there is no one easy answer as to what really helps in forming the attitudes and opinions of the voters, what makes them decide for and against a party or a candidate, the role played by the media in decision making, has been an issue of much debate and curiosity.

Why did the Democrats win? What were the major reasons of their success, voter research and surveys and exit polls tried to find the preferences of the voters employing certain parameters.

On the issues and qualities of the candidates that the voters considered most important, they judged Clinton superior to Bush. In an exit poll, 42 per cent of the voters said the issue of jobs and economy was the most important issue in the election. These voters supported Clinton over Bush by more than a 2-1 margin i.e. 52 per cent to 25 per cent. To twenty per cent of voters, health care was important, hence convinced that Clinton would do better than the incumbent President, they preferred the former by an even larger margin, i.e. 67 per cent to 20 per cent. The issues that favoured Bush included taxes, foreign policy and family values. But these were important to a small number of voters i.e. 14 per cent, 8 per cent, and 15 per cent, respectively. Interestingly, 21 per cent said that the budget deficit was important but this judgment did not drive them strongly to either candidate. They supported Clinton over Bush by only a modest margin.5 Thirty-six per cent of the voters favoured Clinton for his supposed ability to bring about change and 24 per cent mentioned having the best plan for the country as important to their decision. The qualities that helped Bush, having

the right experience and having good judgment in a crisis - were important to smaller number of voters, 19 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.

### VOTERS' PREFERENCES IN THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Table 4.1  (Response in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent voting for Which issues mattered most</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Perot</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health care (20)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget deficit (21)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abortion (12)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education (13)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy/Jobs</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment (5)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes (14)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Policy (8)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Values (15)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**State of economy:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of economy:</th>
<th>Excellent (8)</th>
<th>Good (18)</th>
<th>Not so good (47)</th>
<th>Poor (32)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
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**Which candidate qualities mattered most in deciding the vote?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which candidate qualities mattered most in deciding the vote?</th>
<th>Has the right experience (19)</th>
<th>Will bring about the change (36)</th>
<th>Is he my party's candidate (5)</th>
<th>Cares about people like us (13)</th>
<th>Is honest and trustworthy (14)</th>
<th>Has the best plan for the country (24)</th>
<th>Would have good judgment in crisis (16)</th>
<th>His choice of vice-president (3)</th>
<th>Has strong conviction (14)</th>
</tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>88</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
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**Which should be the highest priority for the next President?**

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<tr>
<th>Which should be the highest priority for the next President?</th>
<th>Cutting taxes (14)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>41</td>
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Media focus of issues in 1992 with a comparison of 1988 coverage:

The state of economy, unemployment and "change" have generally occupied the center stage in the American politics at the time of Presidential elections. During the 1992 election, the emphasis on these issues however, seemed to be much more as compared to the 1988 elections.

A bibliometric study of the national press conducted by the Freedom Forum Group at the Columbia University revealed some interesting facts. The issue of economy was mentioned 2-11 times more often per 100 campaign related stories in 1992 than in 1988; change was mentioned 1.33 times more often and the topic of jobs was mentioned 1.26 times more often. The subject of jobs came up in nearly 5,777 political stories during the 1992 election in the national press, while the change appeared in 5,140 stories and economy in 4,911 stories.6

Similarly, the researchers undertook a study of the ethnic press. The finding revealed a definite tilt of the ethnic press towards the Democratic party, as reflected in a bibliometric analysis of all articles published in 80 ethnic publications from March to October 1992. The Democratic Party was mentioned in 103 more articles (578) than the Republican Party (475).7

In a total number of 160 articles from March to October 1992 in 80 ethnic publications, family values topped the priority with 41 appearances, followed by the phrase "Four more years" for 32 mentioned. The "character" issue found a mention for 24 times, followed by "National Debt", 18 times. Harry Truman's name was referred 7 times. The expression "populist" was

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6 The Finish Line - covering the campaign's final days (New York: Media Studies center, Columbia University, 1992)  
7 Ibid.
mentioned six times, followed by "Minority Value" and "Southern Democrats" was mentioned two times followed by Middle Class cuts, another two times.\textsuperscript{8}

On the whole when one analyses, media supported Clinton and his stand on issues more whole heartedly vis-à-vis the incumbent President Bush.

Now let us analyze how these focused issues became campaign inputs of various parties and candidates during the 1992 election.

Ceasar and Busch reckon the electorate to a mass of individuals, each of whom has a set of attitudes and preferences. In the case of a large number of voters, these attitudes and preferences, opine the authors, can be affected by arguments and symbolic entreaties in a way that can influence a voter's decision.\textsuperscript{9}

The overwhelming objective of this kind of strategy is to focus the campaign themes and issues which are judged to be important to a large number of people, and on which a candidate is judged more favourably than his opponent. The fundamental is that if you can focus the campaign themes and issues on which a candidate is judged more favourably, it is expected that he will be able to persuade more people to vote for him. The only refinement according to Ceasar \textit{et al} is that as the campaign progresses, it is not the concern of people in general that counts, but the concern of those who are undecided or who might potentially be moved.\textsuperscript{10} The theme and issue mobilisation in the 1992 presidential election, hence took the following route:

A. Basic Theme

B. Candidate's character

C. Major issue areas, which encompassed the following:
   1. which candidate can best solve deteriorating state of economy.
   2. which candidate can best promote domestic welfare and justice.
   3. which candidate can safeguard the best values;

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid. n.3
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
4. which candidate can best provide for the nation's security, promote its cause and interest in the world.\textsuperscript{11}

For Republicans the theme could only be reinforcement i.e. "four more years" (but polls showed people were distressed by the economic condition); for Democrats it was "change" (an intangible promise, a fantasy into the future, yet attractive). "It's economy stupid" became a campaign rhetoric or \textit{mantra}, reflecting the public mood. Hence, the Democrats had a basic theme which the incumbent lacked.

On the character issue, Bush scored high. Clinton's character became his "Achilles' heel". His smart evasiveness, stand of his wife Hillary Clinton, timing and a favourable media bailed him out of troubled waters. What remained was stand of various issues vis-à-vis the Republicans.

Elections are fought at many levels. These include policies, programmes, agenda, diagnostics and solutions. Each contender employs certain tactics and a set of strategies to get a place in the perception of the would be voters. A strategy concerned the development of a campaign's persuasive message and the delineation of groups of voters for which the message is particularly designed. Tactics on the other hand, the operational level of campaign through which strategic decisions become implemented especially managing the delivery of the message to the target audience.\textsuperscript{12}

Let us now analyze how the three candidates, viz. George Bush, Bill Clinton and Ross Perot interfaced with their target groups and how were their campaigns perceived by them.

At the personal level, the candidates interfaced with the electorate on three counts: 1) through the Presidential debates; 2) by appearing in talk shows, and other programmes in the electronic media and interviews in the print media; 3) through campaigning spree at inter personal level from the stage of primaries to the national convention and till the election day. at the mediated level i.e. through political advertising in the mass media.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.

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On the other hand the media which allows space and time to the campaign coverage and candidates, have their own attitudes and opinions about candidates, issues and politics. In order to understand why a campaign failed or succeeded, it is important to make a study of the media to know how was a candidate or a party “projected” or “rejected” by them.

1992 Presidential debates

Three debates were held around the 1992 election. On October 11, President Bush, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton and Independent candidate Ross Perot met at the Washington University in St. Louis for the first debate. The questioners were journalists and also a cross section of uncommitted voters. The format of the programme allowed unrestricted subject matter. Each candidate got two minutes to answer a fresh question. The other two got a minute each to respond to the answer. The three journalists, included John Mashek of the Boston Globe, Ann Crompton of the ABC News and Sander Vancouver, a free lance writer.

Jim Lehrer of Mac/Veil/Lehrer News Hour on the PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), anchored the debate. A number of issues such as ‘Change’, ‘Character’, ‘Economy’, Taxation, International Peace Keeping, building indigenous industrial base to create a job market, the strategies after the Cold War, USA’s stand on China, Family Values, use of drugs by youngsters, combating increasing crime, racial divisions, health, especially AIDS were taken up by the journalists. The aspirants had facts and figures on their fingertips to assert their point of view. These were also used to criticise the opponents.13

The format allowed two minute long final statements from the three participants.

13 Three video cassettes detailed below have been content analysed by the present researcher: (1) USA’s First Presidential Debate, 11 October, 1992; (2) USA’s Second Presidential Debate, 15 October, 1992; (3) USA’s Third Presidential Debate, 18 October, 1992. Source: The Library of the Congress, Washington D C.
Ross Perot was the first to give his statement. His stress was on the “deteriorating economy in a deteriorating country” which he felt was because the government had “lost touch with the people”.

The people in Washington (meaning the Government), he said “are good people. We just have a bad system”. Using metaphors, home-spun analogies and high on oratory, he asked the viewers, “Aren’t you sick of being treated like an unprogrammed robot? Every four years, they send you all kinds of messages to tell you how to vote and then go back to business as usual?”

Bill Clinton, thanking the organisers, cleverly spoke of the computer executives in Silicon Valley, “two third of whom were Republicans, who”, he stressed., “wanted to sign on to a change in America”. He also spoke of “hundred of executives who came to Chicago, a third of them Republicans”, who, he asserted also wanted “change”. He also spoke about “the people who have started with Perot, who have come on to help our campaign”, setting a good example of forensic rhetoric by getting into the territory of the opponents.

He spoke on AIDs, Adoption, and Change. In fact if we closely analyse, “change” or “change and use of it” were the key communication messages of Democrats which they used repeatedly to their advantage. He called on the people to “invest in American jobs, American education, central health care costs, bring this country together again”. This can happen, “if we have the courage to change”, repeated Clinton wherever he got the opportunity.

President Bush tried the defensive strategy sharing some homespun truths with the viewers when he said, “Let me tell you a little what it is like to be President. In the Oval office, you can’t predict what kind of crisis is going to come up. You have to make tough calls. You can’t be on one hand this way and on other hand another. You can’t take different positions on these difficult issues. And then you need a philosophical - I would call it a philosophical underpinning”. Laying stress on his triumphs on the international turf, he

14 Ibid.
claimed: "Mine for foreign affairs is democracy and freedom, and look at the
dramatic changes around the world. The Cold War is over. The Soviet Union
is no more, and we're working with a democratic country. Poland, Hungary.
Czechoslovakia, the Baltic are free". 15

He spoke of the Middle East and "Kicking out the man" (meaning
Saddam Hussein) out of Kuwait.

Realising the wave of change, he said that on the domestic front, "what
we must do is have change that empowers people - not change for the sake of
change; tax and spend".

In the end he exhorted the viewers for their support thus: "Four more
years to finish this job".

On 15 October, the three presidential candidates met at the University
of Richmond in Richmond, VA' for the second of three televised presidential
debates which could be termed as historical in a sense. For, in this debate, an
audience of 209 uncommitted voters from that area were invited, who asked
candidates questions on topics of their choosing. ABC News correspondent.
Carole Simpson moderated the programme. The voters grilled candidates in an
unprecedented format asking the aspirants to specify their line of action and
strategies to solve issues they had taken up, such as how jobs would be
increased, to how deficit could be arrested. Apparently tired of "witch
hunting" techniques which the contestants indulged in, one of the audience
members asked all three of them almost disgustedly, "why can't your
discussions and proposals reflect the genuine complexity and the difficulty of
the issues to try and build a consensus around the best aspect of all
proposals?" 16

While the President of the USA can contest for the second term, the
uppermost limit being two terms, there is no such limit for the Congressmen.
The participants asked the three to state their position on term limits.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
Health care, unemployment, deteriorating standards in school education, social security were some of the issues that bothered the audience.

When no one asked any question on racial amity, the moderator prompted the audience, if any one of them were interested to raise a question on the issue, which they did.

In the final debate which was held on 19 October at the Michigan State University in East Lansing. Each of the three contestants faced a volley of questions from both the moderator, Jim Lehrer and a panel of journalists viz. Susan Rook, Gene Gibbons and Helen Thomas.

Lehrer while setting the tone for the debate cautioned the contestants reminding them of their Richmond debate, and from polling and other data that each of them fairly or not, faced serious voter concern about the underlying credibility of what each of them would say and would do as president in the next four years.

All three while responding to the reply to the other, left no effort to rip apart the opponent.17

News media’s response to the debates

A review of the Austin American Statesman, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald, New York Times and Washington Post by a team of researchers, found that on the day after each presidential debate and vice presidential debate showed that although some newspapers offered more debate-related stories than others, the coverage generally added little to what millions of viewers saw on the television. The findings among other things reflected the following:18

The newspapers carried at least two debate stories; one lead news story and the other often presented as a news analysis.

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid. n. 7
The news analysis often amounted to little more than a summary of debate highlights, merely "using stranger adjectives than the lead stories to describe aspect of the debates".

Some newspapers and newscasts focused more than others on the horse-race aspect of the debates and who "won", using focus groups, experts and poll results to assess performances.

Many newspapers and newscasts evaluated the assertions made by the candidates in their debates.

While other newspapers and newscasts virtually ignored the debates in favour of the next day campaign stories and did not include any debate in their coverage.

On the whole, television coverage provided more quick debate "facts" than did newspaper reports.

Presidential candidates have always sought the most effective means of reaching the electorate. In the 1800s they distributed handbills and banners and spoke to crowds assembled at rallies. In 1896, Democratic candidate William Jeanings Bryan made 600 speeches in 27 states traveling 18,000 miles to speak to five million people.19

The development of mass communications technology in the twentieth century has made it possible to reach millions of voters instantaneously. This in turn has brought profound change to modern campaigning. The rapid rise of television in the early 1950s made it inevitable that the medium would overtake radio as a candidate’s most potent campaign tool. In 1948, there were television sets in just four million American homes. Today television reaches 92 million homes or 98 per cent American public. With the advent of C-Span and Cable net working around the Gulf War times, the audience during the 1992 elections had a wider choice of channels. The candidates made full use of the mass media reach.

19 From the wall-text of an Exhibition at the American Museum of Moving Images in New York, visited on 7 November, 1996.
James Carry, an academic at the School of Journalism at Columbia University, opined that the 1988 election was a watershed. It was the first time, in his view, that the election was driven by "images and symbols" and not "real issues".

In 1992, the new media (which included talk shows, infomercials, music channels) overtook the old media (traditional news formats). The revolt against media was evident. According to Prof. Carry, the most inspiring input in the 1992 election was Ross Perot's campaign— the talk shows and infomercials made all the difference to the way the campaigns were hitherto covered.

Philip Meyer, while analysing the 1992 campaign, hints that sometimes the candidates were bold, and sometimes they were merely desperate. Bill Clinton had his video cassettes of himself distributed door to door to undecided voters in New Hampshire. Candidates and their staffers interacted with voters through on-line computer service and other electronic bulletin boards. Ross Perot used direct-access video to reach 3.7 million voters with satellite dishes, and all the major candidates, even George Bush, appeared on talk shows that once were considered too frivolous a forum for presidential aspirants.

Running a presidential campaign is almost a 24-hour job for over a year for the campaign team. How they manage campaigns, never losing sight of adversary's tactics, could be a study by itself. Unfortunately not much introspection is done at the end of a campaign. If you win, you don't have to prove. If you lose, you are not there to prove. This is what one of the most despised men of the century— Adolf Hitler once said, but there is some truism to it.

Hundreds of people work day and night in the campaigning. In 1992, two key figures in the Republicans and Democrats campaign, Mary Matalin and James Carville respectively, have provided an account of almost day to day

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20 In-depth interview with Prof. James Carry, head of the Graduate School of Journalism at the Columbia University on 12 November, 1996.
management of the presidential campaign 1992, in a pioneering work. Their book provides rare insights into the intricacies of the 1992 election. This also at some level helps us to know the role played by the media consciously or subconsciously in making and marring the prospects of contenders. 22

Clifton’s campaign room at “Little Rock” was called the “War room”.

“Information”, writes Carville “is the major weapon in a political campaign and the new headquarters in the Little Rock had to be a place where someone knew everything there was to know”. The campaign office had the technology, they had the information but that was not enough. So much of what happens in a campaign is that you have information, but unless it’s instantly retrievable, it doesn’t do you any good. You are always fighting deadlines. Time is your enemy, and I had to come up with a way that we could really get people wired up”. 23 Hence to create a campaign culture, the war room was opened all night, a round-the-clock operation that was a key psychological fact. Speed was the essence. It really matched a military campaign. There were maps, electronic-coded chasers, pie-charts, newspaper clippings - to project a sense of urgency. Information was available to the Media round the clock from Little Rock. Whenever Clinton went on his campaigning and addressed groups, the video cameras from Little Rock would also be there to rub shoulders with network cameras. The footage covered was instantly passed on to any TV station, which needed and also beamed through the cable networking.

As the unrelentless work matched with the right tactics and strategy, Mary Matalin, campaign Director of Bush’s campaign reminisced that after the bus tour by the Clinton couple, the Republicans realised that “these guys were going to be more worthy adversaries” than they expected. That did not probably scare them, as their (Democrats’) “hunger level”. “What these guys lacked in experiences or organization they made up for the energy and

22Mary Matalin and James Carville with Peter Knobler. All’s Fair - Love, War and Running for President (NY: Random House, 1994). The 400 plus page book is a must for political communication researchers and also political strategists and campaigners.

23Ibid. n.10,pp. 243-244
ruthlessness”, bemoaned Matalin. Complimenting the “work alcoholism” at Little Rock, the author opined that round the clock environment produced some valuable campaign accounting. Every single day, the documentation person at Clinton’s campaign office prepared a compilation of coverage in local print and TV, editorials, cartoons, in fact whatever media was writing, the previous day and whatever was running on the wires over night. It ran from 15 to 20 pages, informing the readers who was saying what, state by state. “It was phenomenal. Clearly, some one had stayed up all night gathering and processing this information; complimented Matalin writing at the same time, “we (Republicans) on the other hand, had no central information repository. We had separate state political field and press reports, but the national campaign had no such user-friendly compendium of how things were playing out there in the real world”. On surveillance, on the Democratic campaign, Matalin clarified that it wasn’t “idle professional curiosity that compelled us to study George Betsey or Hillary. It was imperative to study their work habits to be able to predict their next move”.

Clinton, according to his strategist - was at a disadvantage right from the beginning - on the issue relating to his character. It was very important to tackle it as a part of the strategy.

The New York Primary, with its enormous media coverage generally offers opportunity to the candidates to communicate directly with the voters. Clinton was interviewed by Net Work television. The famous Donahue show was another interaction with the audience. Donahue with his characteristic style kept harping on the Gennifer Flowers story (an allegation of sexual harassment against Clinton when he was Governor of Arkansas). When the audience took up for Clinton - one lady got up and said, “given the pathetic state of most of the United States at this point… I can’t believe you spent half an hour of air time attacking this man’s character. I am not even a Bill Clinton supporter, but I think it is ridiculous.” It proved a boon for Clinton,

24 Ibid. n.10. pp.262-263.
25 Ibid. n.10. p.171.
the press coverage took a turn giving time to his campaigners to revise their strategy to a lot more aggressiveness.

Clinton, according to his strategist Carville liked “retail campaigning”. He loved meeting people, shaking hands with them, at the end of every speech.26

Bill Clinton once visited Winnisquam High School on October 15, 1991. Mike Morrison who was 16 then and had cerebral palsy went to listen to “yet another guy”. Clinton, however, proved something of a surprise. He told the young audience that they were under educated - way behind the kids in Korea and Japan and they’d have to catch up if they wanted to land good jobs. “He seemed to respect us”, Mike Morrison remembered. “He listened to what we were saying and answered our questions directly”.

Eventually Mike seemed to have fallen for Clinton’s charms and he would go to his rallies and in Clinton’s campaign office. When Clinton visited again in October, Mike vowed to watch polls for him on the election day. But on 3 November, there was a heavy downpour. Mike’s mother was away to work and could not drive him. “You remember that kid in the wheel chair, who always showed up in the New Hampshire?” Bill Clinton would say months later. “He took his wheel chair out on the high way in the rain on election day. He rode two miles to hold a sign for me. Can you believe it”?

Clinton invited Mike for lunch along with 49 other people after he took over as President.27

Clinton’s excellent interpersonal skills in reaching out to the people and sort of cashing on encounters with the likes of Mike Morrison proved a strategy. The proved in a way that leaders must not only be interested in people, they must also make other believe that they genuinely care for them. And Clinton undoubtedly surpassed Bush on that account, at least at face value.

26 Ibid. n.10. pp. 362-363.
In order to interface with young audience, who the statistics showed were by and large disinterested in the election process, Bill Clinton was persuaded by his campaign advisor Handy Grunwald to wear sun glasses and play on Saxophone on the Arsenio Hall Show on 3 June, 1992 in the Heart Break Hotel. She had her eyes clearly on one of the narrow segments of voters, the young and politically uninvolved ones. "Historians of the twenty-first century", comments Philip Meyer, "may well decide that the 1992 campaign marked the time that diversity in channels of political communication began to approach the diversity of political interests in American Society. As a result the hegemony of the traditional media has for ever altered."^{28}

The cover story in the *NEWSWEEK* after his winning the election, commented that Clinton’s campaign was “guided through out by a quiet *messiahism*, It was more than just a holy war against the pinched, divisive brand of conservatism that had taken the Republicans in recent years; there was also a confluence of a long standing aspirations and frustration - Democrats baby boomers, the “new ideas” types all were hoping that their moment had finally come, that it was time to reclaim the idealism of the Kennedy years"^{29}

**Bush Campaign:**

Bush according to his critics, had both considerable strengths and glaring weakness. Despite his impeccable background, his first term did not provide him with a strong basis for a reelection campaign. Because of various events happening globally and his own predilections. Bush had devoted most of his attention to foreign policy, where he had gained enormous success. The fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989, leading to unification of Germany, the US invasion of Panama and arrest of dictator Mammel Noriega in January 1990, the formal disintegration of Soviet Union in December 1991, the Gulf War- despite all that, the domestic agenda compounded by a “ruinous

economy” went against Bush. Bush’s problems were compounded when his candidacy was challenged by his own party men.30

One of the themes that stayed deeply in the background of the 1992 election, despite Republicans attempts to put it on the front burner, was foreign policy. Foreign policy according to Jean Blithke Elstain, was dead on the list of voters’ concerns, and among those 8 per cent to whom it was a vital issue, President Bush received 87 per cent of the vote. “What could have been two sure fire political winners for him”, according to the author, “the victory in the Persian Gulf War and the end of the Cold War - faded into the background of economic gloom and with them went any sustained discussion during the campaign”.31

Early opinion polls around the primaries did immense harm to Bush’s candidature, “The idiocy of reporting on election night in New Hampshire”, writes Matalin, “was staggering. It started with erroneous polls. Throughout the day they showed Pat Buchanan running way up - neck and neck with the leader of the Free World. At one point, they showed him actually surpassing George Bush. The supposed fact that this token candidate was going to beat a sitting President lathered the press into a crazy hyperbolic frenzy.32

“If you make media believe that 20 per cent was a victory and you came in at 35, you were a winner. Conversely, if they expect you to come in at 40 and you come in at 35, you had failed to measure up your were a loser. Even if you won”, lamented Mary Matalin.33

Realising a stiff competition from Pat Buchanan, who indulged in a lot of mud slinging at George Bush, the Republican strategy team brainstormed on whether to run any negative Buchanan spots. They decided to run positive on three accounts; a) Buchanan will get credibility, if he was attacked; b) Bush would appear weak and panicky by putting himself at Buchanan’s level; c) If the negative did not work, Bush would be in trouble.

30 Paul J Quirk et al, Ibid. n.5, pp.57-83.
32 Mary Matalin et al, Ibid. n.10, p.142.
The team felt that the media had a liberal bias, hence they were not particularly interested in promoting Bush's candidacy. What, the media liked was the "dog-fight" between Bush and Buchanan.

The advantages of incumbency at time is over rated. To the extent that there would be media coverage, every time the President opened his mouth, but given media's penchant for the negative and the sensational, it is also true that they challenge everything that is said. One of President Bush's biggest and endless complaints, according to his campaign team was that when they kept him on the road for three days at a time, he felt he was neglecting "the reams of work on his desk".

Before Bush's campaign could attain the necessary momentum, the "Big Mo" as it is generally referred to in the US, three serious "headline grabbing" events in rapid succession happened: the primary lingered on because Buchanan latched on; entry of Ross Perot and the Los Angeles riots, which began on 29 April, 1992. The campaign literally went out of gear.34

According to Bush's strategist, there were three generic components to a campaign strategy; record, qualification, and character the ground rule being "Go after his; promote your own". In the 1992 election, the Clinton opposition offered slim pickings. Although the statistical record according to her amounted to a devastating expose of his liberal record, no one could absolve them all. The Republicans could not lean on the issue of character because the press refused to believe that, what they called the character issue was "not the womanizing, the pot smoking, the draft dodging". To them the character issue was about "poor judgment, flip flops, evasiveness saying whatever the electorate wanted".35

The opinion polls also did not favour Bush until the Convention and into the General election. Bush's campaign became more and more defensive. It was around this time that media started "smelling blood". They probably never thought it conceivable that George Bush could lose, but when the

33 Ibid. n.10, p.143.
34 Ibid. n. 10, pp.162-163.
35 Ibid. n.10.
negative data remained consistent for about a month, the reporters started hypothesizing about the possibility of an incumbent upset.

Many analysts feel that Bush annoyed the media and that too was also a bad strategy. More often than not, he blamed the “Liberal” media for giving him negative coverage. In the harshest, the Republican’s anti-media message in Houston, he lambasted at the press corps, calling them a “gang of reckless left-leaning ideologues masquerading as detached observers, a pack whose real agenda is to defeat politicians of free enterprise, religious piety, family principles, a steady group when convinced that Bill Clinton had a real chance to win is hell bent on assuring that Republican’s control of the White House finally ends”. 36

On the Convention floor, Republican delegates wore signs with inscriptions such as: “Liberal media lynch Mob”, others wore buttons and T-shirts that said “rather Biased”; “Don’t believe the liberal media”. “Annoy Media. Elect Bush” etc. 37

Was the incumbent president fighting against the media to get the second term, or a Democrat and an Independent, who were giving him a tough fight, is a question that can best be answered by Bush himself or his strategists? Taking the media on the wrong foot, nonetheless was not only a bad principle but a poor strategy.

The Republicans probably have this fixation about the media being “Liberal” hence against them. Bob Dole followed his predecessor’s foot steps in the 1996 campaign, which hurt some media persons who felt Dole received a lot of positive publicity also. Margaret Carlson, in her column Public Eye in the Time Magazine wrote thus “it hurts so bad. It was OK when Spiro Agnew and Richard Nixon blamed the liberal media bias for their troubles. But to hear that from Bob Dole, after all, we did for him, it really hurts” 38

37 Christopher Hanson, Media Bashing, in Columbia Journalism Review (New York : Columbia Uni., 1992), November/December 92.
38 Margaret Carlson, “Goodbye to Whatever Man. The Press loved Bob Dole. He was One of us”, Time, 18 November, 1996.
Coming to the use of latest in communication technology both Clinton and Bush used video conferencing to appear simultaneously in various locations for events such as fund raising by committed supporters, during the fall campaign, strategists from the Clinton and Bush camps used new media by providing satellite feeds that allowed the news departments of local television stations to have direct access to the candidates. This helped the candidates to be available for personal interviews by available anchors in pivot media markets from locations.39

**Perot Campaign:**

Almost everyone agrees that Ross Perot was a phenomenon in the 1992 elections. His entry and subsequent popularity left the political scientists, media and bureaucracy chuckling whether the election results would be a watershed in the political history of the US.

The strength of Perot’s candidacy complicated both parties’ strategies. For much of 1992, Perot’s influence on the election was impossible to predict. Perhaps he could win some states - as third-party candidate. George Wallace had done in 1968, as third party candidate with five states and forty-six electoral votes - Perot could have possibly deprived both major party candidates of an electoral vote majority and thrown the election into the House of Representatives. Failing that, if he drew his support mainly from voters who otherwise would have supported one of the major party candidates, he could have tipped the balance toward the other.40

Ross Perot’s candidacy was not taken seriously by the Republicans in the beginning. “He was not a factor in our lives. No one took him seriously”, according to Marry Matalin. But after he appeared on the Larry King Show, the media started talking about him. A private citizen financing his own run for President was unprecedented. In state runs, whenever candidates bought space or time for advertising, it was construed to as buying votes. At first the

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Republicans tried to spin it that way. “Buying an election” - but it was un-American. They learned quickly as the polls showed people rather had the opposite reaction, they offered Perot “credibility because he was not beholden to any special interests”. The Republicans misjudged the appeal from the beginning.  

Perot’s candidacy was a source of much amusement in Texas political circles. According to Matalin; “people who had worked with him first hand were astounded by the gross hypocrisy of his campaign rhetoric. The man running down and against Washington was a consummate insider, a wheeler-dealer, he was a creature of Congress, it was said, a creature of lobbyists. His wide business was everything in life that he was railing against in politics”.  

On the other hand the Democrats did not take Ross Perot lightly. To Clinton’s strategists, if someone was worth $3 billion as Perot, every one would take him seriously. The problem with such people however, was that that could not take a “no” for an answer.  

Going into Perot’s psyche, Carville analysed that the moment Perot said anything after standing for Presidency, somebody was going back and contradicting him or looking it up “Ross Perot could not remember that last time some body disagreed with him. You run for Presidency, everyday somebody is contradicting you or disagreeing with you. It is very irritating, and he did not like it”, commented Carville.  

Perot, according to analysts had the “temperamental problem”. Many people vouched that he blew up in mighty tantrums on various occasions and presumed he would blaze out when the focus of the national press were turned on him.  

When we analyse the media-candidate interface in the 1992 Election, Clinton clearly comes out as media-friendly and diplomatic. Bush’s discomfiture with media had become legendary. Perot was also erratic.

41 Mary Matalin et al., Ibid. n.10 p.148  
42 Ibid.  
43 Mary Matalin et al., Ibid. n.23, pp.371-372.  
44 Ibid.
Clinton, despite a lot of negative publicity in the media in the beginning never took up cudgels with them. The negative publicity in fact put him in public focus. Smart strategy and tactics turned the negative to positive, as also the timing and his good luck.

Ross Perot’s strategy in the beginning revolved round his attacking the functioning of Washington, the influence of various lobbies, and the indifference of the parties to people’s problems. After his re entry in the fray, his strategy focused on the budget deficit as the central issue of government’s failure. He tried to convince the electorate through his paid programmes especially the half hour infomercials that some one with a proven record of entrepreneurship could clear the mess, the economy was in. In these programmes, Perot generally spoke looking into the camera. Analysts feel, he deliberately, took on a certain amateurish quality as he often issued detailed charts and graphs to make his point.

Perot was appreciated by the media for innovating campaign tactics. Tom Steweret of the *Dallas Morning News* commented that Perot’s campaign used a caller recognition system on his toll free “800 number” to capture the telephone numbers of incoming data matching service that provided the company with names and addresses of callers plus demographic information that described the communities towards which the Perot campaign could turn to enlist other support.45

**Use of technology by media:**

The media persons also matched the candidates in the use of technology. A survey of 104 political journalists was undertaken by the **Media Study Center** to know how they covered the campaign and what role technology played in that. Ninety-nine per cent said, they used laptop computers while trailing candidates. Eighty per cent used modems for

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computer to computer communication. Seventy-five per cent had some kind of automated connection system. Sixty per cent of them were connected to the news room via data networks. Forty per cent used computer for research of electronic libraries through the news room computer. Fifty-six per cent had cellular phones. Fifty-five per cent used beepers. Eighty three per cent used fax machines on the road and forty-seven per cent used voice mail to communicate with the news room.46

Political advertising in the 1992 Presidential campaign

Presidential campaign advertisements made their first television appearance in 1952. With the change in technology, use of colour, special effects, wide reach and big money, political advertising has come a long way in the US.

Commercials tend not to create public opinion, but rather to summarize and reinforce “Public Impressions” of candidates and impressions that are generated by a variety of media sources, including print and electronic news coverage, debates, and paid broadcasts. At its most effective, a commercial can distill a candidate’s major campaign theme into a few powerful images, using the tools and techniques of the medium to elicit a lasting emotional reaction from the viewer.

The 1988 Presidential campaign is considered as the beginning of a new “low” in political advertising by analysts, by and large. The war of slander, character assassination went unabated through political advertising. Republicans are “credited” for initiating the move.47

In retrospect, Vice President - Bush in 1988 portrayed himself as the rightful heir to the Reagan revolution versus Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis, who offered a traditionally Democratic vision of increased government spending on health care, child care, education and housing. The Bush campaign used brutal advertising to portray Dukakis as an “ineffective

46 Based on data analysed from campaign 92, a survey conducted by the Freedom Forum, Media Studies Centre, NY. Columbia University, 1992.
47 Based on personal interview with Prof. James Carty, Ibid. n. 8.
liberal who would gut the country’s defense system and let convicted murderers out of prison”. Hoping voters would dismiss the attacks as unfair, Dukakis refused to counter attack until late in the campaign. It worked for Bush in 1988.48

The “Willie Hortan” advertisement, one of the most infamous political commercial ever made, blamed Michael Dukakis for the case of Horton, a black murderer who fled his weekend furlough from a Massachusetts prison, raped a white woman, and tortured her fiancee. The ad was produced not by the official Bush campaign but by an independent Political Action Committee. Although officially repudiated by the Bush campaign, the spot, which was only broadcast once, was widely reported in the media and caused immense damage to Dukakis. The Horton case, which Bush frequently referred to in campaign speeches was implicitly referred to in Bush’s “revolving door” ad which attacked the Massachusetts furlough programme in general.49

The disarray and confusion with the Dukakis campaign was reflected by a series of commercials known as “the handlers” opening with the title “The Packaging of George Bush”, a group of actors portrayed as media consultants for Bush. The strategy was to reveal Bush as a superficial candidate whose campaign was based more on image than substance, but the ads were confusing and seemed at a first glance pro-Bush. They were pulled off the air, but only after Dukakis had spent an estimated three million dollars to produce and air them.50

The trend continued in 1992. The Democrat’s advertising campaign focused on economy. The strategy was to create a credibility gap for the President. In one of its commercials, it juxtaposed clips of George Bush at earlier points with an announcer’s version of the fact. In one of these Bush quipped, “I am not prepared to say we are in recession. The narrator replied,

48 The present researcher had the opportunity to see and analyse political advertisement spanning 40 years i.e. from 1952-1992 at the American Museum of Moving Images in New York. The Foreign Press office at Manhattan had organised the visit and interview with the Museum Curate in New York on 11 November, 1996.
49 Ibid. n.36.
50 Ibid. n.36.
“March 1992, jobless rate hits a six year high. If George Bush does not understand the problem, how is he going to solve it?” Another advertisement referred to Bush’s promise to create 30 million jobs in eight years, his claim of being an environmentalist, his professed desire to be “educationist-President”. The announcer then reminded the viewers that more private sector jobs had been lost under Bush administration than created, that the Sierra Club had accused Bush of getting the clean air regulation and that Bush had tried to reduce college aid.51

The Institutional advertisements paid for by the Democratic National Committee were equally razor sharp, using opponent’s statements to deride him. A fifteen second snapshot featured Bush saying, “you will be better off four years from now than you are today”, to which the narrator questioned, “well, it is four years later, how are you doing today?”. In another advertisement, an “odometer” ticked away tallying the number of jobs lost as a result of years of Republican neglect.52

The Republican advertisements were also negative and hard hitting.

According to Bush’s strategist Clinton’s math was bad. For instance when they said they were going to raise $45 billion in revenues by taxing foreign companies doing business in America the highest number coming out of congressional committees that had considered the same revenue raising proposal - committees controlled by Democrats - was $1 billion. “It was not like he was diddling over a couple of bills, he was $44 billion off”, reasoned the strategists and came out with an advertisement. Clinton’s economic plan was ostensibly complicated, but “we all understood its failings and could state them clearly in a thirty second sound bite”, reasoned the Bush team.53

Another Republican ad. appeared in black and white featuring a buzzard sitting on a barren tree overlooking a wasteland. The voice over had narrated statistics about Clinton’s record in Arkansas closing with the

51 Ibid. n. 36.
52 Ibid. n. 36.
53 Mary Matalin et al. Ibid. n.10.

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statement "And now, Bill Clinton wants to do for Americans what he has done for Arkansas. America cannot take that risk". 54

Clinton's advertisement issuing an odometer and Bush's advertisement on Clinton's tax increase were criticised in the media, as misleading.55

Clinton's strategists came up with an advertisement which said. "George Bush is running attack ads, Misleading says Washington Post". Less than a week later, Bush's strategists did just the same. The adv.

had a photographic negative pulled back from the cover of the Time magazine under the headline “why voters don't trust Clinton”. The voice over rehearsed Clinton's shifting story about his effort to avoid the draft and concluded “Now for Bill Clinton, it is question of avoiding the truth”. The Time threatened to sue Bush and Quayle for infringement of its copy righted logo. Time Mirror Center for People and Press conducted a series of national surveys of voters' reactions to advertising.

Throughout the month of October, the researchers measured 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 ads. But for the most part few voters gave any advertisements very high grades for making a good case to vote for the candidate paying for the ads. In particular, the research found that 72 per cent of voters felt that they learned a lot from Ross Perot's half hour infomercials. However, only 40 per cent said the billionaire's commercials made them more likely to vote for him. 59 per cent voters saw commercials as "not too" or "not at all" helpful. When asked which candidate ran the most informative commercials, mention, of Perot (55 per cent) out numbered combined mentions of Bush (8 per cent) and Clinton (20 per cent) by nearly two to one.56

54 Ibid. n.36.
55 A focus group interviews conducted among New York Newsday found that the ad relating to economy. "If George Bush does not understand the problem, how can he solve it?", was the only negative advertisement that the viewers liked and believed. See William Busch and Harry Berkonioz's Bush Blitz Bombs in New York Times, 18 October, 1992.
Positive views of Perot’s infomercials apart, commercials received lower rating as an information source in the 1992 election than in the past. The percentage of voters saying they learned more about candidates’ position on issues from news reports than from campaign commercials rose to 74 per cent in 1992 from 63 per cent in 1990. In 1992, only 22 per cent said they learned more about a candidate’s position from commercials, compared to 28 per cent in 1990.57

The campaign of 1992 according to Philip Meyer deserves to be recalled as one that the media “resolved” to cover differently - and for once followed through and covered differently.58

Sue Greer in her unpublished paper “Evaluating an Alternative model for coverage of a Presidential Election: The case of the Charlotte Observer” documented the secondary analysis of USA Today polls, as in early September, 1988 and the other in the same period of the 1992 campaign. Both Polls contained scaleable items asking respondents to assess the candidates on personal or character dimension and on their policy direction. In 1988 personality explained two and a half times as much variance in voting preference as did policy issues But in the 1992 campaign, the difference was sharply reversed. The policy evaluation of the candidates explained seven times as much variance as did the personality dimension.59

**Media and 1992 election**

Media and Politics are inseparable. They need each other for survival and sustenance.

Scores of studies conducted in various democracies however, substantiate allegation by politicians, leaders, as also industry that they receive more negative coverage than positive. The coverage of Presidential

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57 Ibid. n. 44.
58 Philip Meyer, Ibid. n. 9.
59 From Sue Greer’s unpublished paper for the University of Carolina, as quoted by Philip Meyer, Ibid. n. 9.
election of 1992 was not any different. A study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs found that Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Ross Perot each received more bad press than good (63 per cent, 69 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively) on network covering newscasts during the general election. The figures excluded “horse race” judgments. However these included references to candidate’s clean, campaign conduct, personalities, job performance and the like.

Some of the negative coverage consisted reports of partisan attacks by one side against the other, as when Reuters quoted Clinton describing Bush as “out of ideas and out of time”. Statements by supposedly non partisan sources, including policy experts and voters but mainly reporters themselves, were 60 per cent negative.60

According to Thomas E. Patterson, professor of political science, “the US is the only democracy that organises its national election campaign around the news media”. It is an unworkable arrangement however, hints Patterson. The press is not equipped to give order and direction to a presidential campaign. “And when we expect it to do so, we set ourselves up for yet another turbulent election.”61

The Election coverage in 1992 felt the analysis was a marked improvement over 1988, and in a few respects the best coverage ever. The journalist, Carl Bernstein, reflecting the widely shared opinion among members of the press, declared that 1992 coverage “closely approximated the ideal of what good reporting has always been: the best obtainable version of the truth”.62

Yet “news and truth are not the same thing”.63 The news can be just a fraction of reality. The media magnifies certain aspects of politics while down playing others. For instance, during the last few weeks of the 1992 campaign,

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60 Clinton is the One, Media Monitor, (Washington D C: Centre for Media and Public Affairs, November 1992), p. 3.
61 Ibid.
the economy received a lot of attention from the press, but it still received less coverage than campaign trail controversies, including disputes over Clinton’s draft record, Perot’s entry withdrawal and again re-entry and Bush’s charges.64

Patterson argues that Press’s restless search for the riveting story work against its intention to provide voters with a reliable picture of the campaign. “It is a formidable job to present society’s problems in ways that voters can understand and act upon” opines Patterson.65

James Carville keeping a close watch on the media messages realised that media had a “collective mind”, and they followed a given path.66 This is also vindicated by Timothy Crouse who hints that press judgments acquire credibility because of “pack journalism” - the tendency of reporters to concentrate on the same development and interpret them in the same way.67

To cite the 1992 election case, Clinton was third behind Bush and Perot in opinion polls in June and reporters were ready to write him off. The Washington Post, in a front page story, said “on the morning after Bill Clinton clinched his party’s presidential nomination, words that he had often used to evoke the frustration of America’s middle class seemed more applicable to the candidate’s own predicament”.68 Clinton was almost sidelined by the press for a three week period in June, during which he switched to television appearances on call-in shows, MTV, and Arsino Hall. His coverage changed dramatically in July, when Ross Perot’s abrupt withdrawal, the continued weakness of the economy and a show of unity at the Democratic convention got him a 27 point lead over Bush.69 His “Slick Willy” (because of his evasive answers on use of marijuana, draft evasion) image was changed to admiration for his tireless campaigning. News Week called him “Clinton the Survivor”.

64 Thomas E. Patterson, Ibid. n.62, p.2.
65 Thomas E. Patterson, Ibid. n.63, p.29.
66 Mary Matalin et al. Ibid. n.23. For Carville’s views refer Chapter 1.
68 David Maraniss, “For Clinton, a Chance to Start Over”, Washington Post, 4 June, 1992
69 Thomas E. Patterson. Ibid. n.63, p.101.

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The Washington Post,\textsuperscript{70} The New York Times favourably commented on the Clinton-Gore bus tour across middle America. Conversely, Bush was doing nearly everything wrong in media’s perception. Bush’s strategy was considered inept.\textsuperscript{71} There were any number of instances to quote how media mind worked in promoting or sidelining different candidates.

What the media in general wrote about the third candidate Ross Perot has been aptly defined by Patterson as a ride of “roller coaster of news and polls”.\textsuperscript{72} Jeffery Katz’s portrayal of Perot also can be taken as the overall media impression about him when he describes him thus: “He (Perot) was a phenomenon when he had 30 per cent support in late spring, a joker when he dropped out of the race in July, an ego maniac when he returned in September, and paranoid when he searched for his base in October”.\textsuperscript{73}

Ross Perot once compared himself to a few grains of sand that caused an oyster to produce a pearl, saying “that’s what I am, an irritant. I stir things up”.\textsuperscript{74} And he did stir up the conscience of an average American, albeit for a short time.

Themes and issues in the 1994 Federal Election in Germany:

The four years that went by after unification of two Germanys can be said to be a period of teething for the country. While in 1990, the issues concerned the problems and possible solutions related to the unification, the intervening period between 1990 and 1994 was indeed a period of reflection on the part of every one who was a part of the electoral process. The political parties specially those in the opposition lost no time in propping up issues on which the Government had dithered or had done precious little, to gain a vote swing.

\textsuperscript{72} Thomas E. Patterson, n. 63, p.102.
\textsuperscript{73} Jeffery Katz, “Tilt? Did the Media favour Bill Clinton or Did George Bush Earn His Media Coverage?” Washington Journalism Review, January-February 1993,p.35.
When one closely looks at the proposed programme of various parties through their manifestos, publicity literature and campaign strategies, a number of central issues emerge. The incumbent government is generally at the receiving end from the opposition parties and also the electorate. The opposition parties get away from the criticism because they don’t have to prove. They survive on promises. This happened in Germany also. In the following paragraph some glimpses of various issues and themes propped up by various political parties are offered.35

Issues at a glance and the stand of various parties:

Industry and Labour:

Christian Democratic Union (CDU): In order to adopt a policy of safeguarding the country’s economic future and reestablishing its position as “one of the world’s leading trading nations”, the party pledged to systematically cut back bureaucracy, deregulate economy and encourage private sector. New areas of employment were proposed to be created in home care and nursing as well as social services.

Christian Social Union (CSU): Under the headline Industry and Agriculture, CDU election partner CSU laid stress on the social market economy. It also highlighted the importance of “an efficient independent farming sector to a modern industrial society and its basic and recreational needs”.

Social Democratic Party (SPD): The SPD promised to promote medium-sized companies, which, they felt “were increasingly neglected by the government”. The SPD, it said will make greater allowance for their legitimate


35 Following documents have been analysed to compare the position of various political parties on different issues: Manifestoes of the CDU, SPD, CSU, FDP, Alliance 90/Green, PDS and Special Election Report; Procedures, Programmes, Profiles (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1994).
interests. In eastern Germany, it pointed out, such companies provided more than half of available job and training places.

While there was no separate mention of the new states in the manifestoes of the CDU and CSU, the SPD underlined special “recovery programme” for eastern Germany which included “tax breaks and guarantees, government venture & holding capital and promote specific investment projects”.

**The Free Democratic Party (FDP):** The FDP’s “overriding aim” of its economic and financial policy was to “create more jobs through a more liberal market economy”. This, the manifesto claimed would include reduction of public debt, a simplified taxation system, lower tax rates (a switch of emphasis from tax on incomes and capital formation to the taxation of consumption); removal of excessive bureaucracy etc.

The FDP under the separate head spoke of the new states which it said, will receive “priority to job creation”, and promote small and medium sized businesses.

**The Alliance 90/Greens:** The party called for decentralization of production units; “Large combines”, it said, “should be broken up to comprehensible businesses”. It supported a regional specific mixed economy.

**Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS):** Mass employment said the manifesto could be overcome, if existing jobs were redistributed by introducing shorter and flexible working hours and developing new work-day models with adequate security under collective wage arrangements.

**Social Affairs:**

**CDU:** The manifesto spoke of what has been achieved by the party between 1990 to 1994. Its aim during the next legislative term, it said “must be to get the old-age care insurance scheme working efficiently as quickly as possible and to further improve the financial basis of the statutory health insurance funds.”

**CSU:** The party spoke of the introduction of income-related pensions as well as child-raising allowances and leave from work, which it was able to
introduce, while being involved in government decision making. It specifically spoke of the foreign employees who “should be assured of equal living conditions and be enabled to integrate with the community”.

**SPD:** The manifesto aimed at focusing attention on preventive medicine and the early detection of disease. It called for pension entitlements for women in old age. Women entitlements the document said would also include “greater allowance for child raising periods”. It hinted at people in regular work to pay regular contributions to the social insurance schemes. The SPD also called for equal status for women in academic sphere, research and culture.

**FDP:** The liberals, said the manifesto stood for a social policy which “leaves the individual maximum scope to make his own decisions. The FDP, it said believed that “old people who are still able to play a full part in community life should continue to do so since their experience is often indispensable”.

Apart from the statutory pension insurance scheme, and occupational pensions, people it said, should also be encouraged to take out some form of private insurance as a third support. “The fight against AIDs and drug abuse”, it said was high on the FDP’s list of priorities.

**Alliance 90/Greens:** The party, said the manifesto was “striving for a society in which everyone has the right to an existence worthy of mankind.” This entailed:

- a requirement - oriented basic social security;
- a radical reduction of working hours; a six hour day - with lower wages, if necessary.
- a quota system; at least half of all training and work place
  “preferentially offered to and occupied by women”.

The party advocated the “democratization of labour relations and more flexible working conditions, extensive training programmes, and a child-raising leave of up to three years for young or single parents”.

**PDS:** In Germany, felt the PDS, social isolation and degradation was increasing. It aimed at basic pension for all age groups depending on requirements. “It should not supersede the traditional social benefits, but
supplement them with benefits financed from tax revenues”, suggested the manifesto.

**Internal Security:**

**CDU:** The manifesto spoke of introduction of a number of statutory instruments and organizational measures for combating “increased crime, political extremism and terrorism”. The CDU, it said, wanted improved domestic security within the overall ambit of the European Union. To establish a European Police Organisation, cooperation with the nations in the Eastern... The manifesto did not have any specific information about party’s programme on the matter of internal security.

**SPD** Europe, would be intensified, reiterated the manifesto.

**CSU:** The party under the heading “combating organised crime” mentioned about the spread of organised crime in Germany which needed to be combated on both the national and international levels, said the manifesto. “The SPD promised to strike where the effect was the greatest - “at the money acquired by criminal means”. The gains from illicit activities, it said, must be confiscated.

The party, said the manifesto, would adopt a new drug policy based on the principle of “Life without addiction”

**FDP:** The FDP, claimed the manifesto supported those measures that were “most likely to prove successful in combating crime” in its various forms. This also applied to the alarming increase in petty crime and the dangers resulting from the “removal of controls at Europe’s internal borders”. Under a separate head “the fight against radical violence”, the party voiced concerned about “the violence perpetrated by right-wing and left-wing extremist groups is test of our liberal democracy”. All means, available to the democratic state, it said, must be used to stop the further spread of neo-Nazi and inflammatory literature.

**Alliance 90/Greens:** The party did not make a separate mention of internal security in its manifesto, but spoke of overall domestic and international security in the wake of European Union.
PDS: The party under the heading “stopping the swing to the right and racism” spoke of PDS’s opposition to extreme right wing tendencies which began with the criticism of the conservative - Liberal government. To combat that, the party called for “emancipated and anti racist youth” and an effective education policy which could equip young people for the task of actively and independently coping with fascist ideology, coupled with the banning and dissolution of anti-Semitic, racist and fascist organizations.

*Foreign Policy and External Security:*

CDU: The party desired that Germany like all of its partners in the European Union must participate in the defense of Europe and in the accomplishment of common tasks within the NATO alliance and be able to do justice to the rights and obligations it assumed, on joining the United Nations.

The aim of the CDU’s policy for Europe was to complete the European Union in the form of a federation based on “freedom, democracy and the principle of subsidiarity”.

CSU: The CSU expected Germany to assume greater international responsibility, especially in relation to the developing countries, and to widen its own scope for action. In the opinion of the CSU, the nations of Europe would only continue to live in peace and freedom, if they found the energy to unite, the CSU, therefore wanted the integration process to continue, with the preservation of national identities and regional self-governments.

SPD: Germany’s stability and security rested on two supports - NATO and the European Union, said SPD’s manifesto. Within these larger organizations, relations with the US and France carried exceptional weight. Stability and security in Europe, said the manifesto, were inseparable. Hence in order to bring closer the aim of creating a European area of collective security, the SPD advocated the merging of the existing European security systems and organizations (NATO, NATO cooperation Council, WEU and CSCE). The SPD reiterated its stand on compulsory military service. It believed that *Bundeswehr*, German armed forces, should not become “a freely available intervention army and that it should not be involved in any wars”.

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The SPD, would promote programmes designed to convert the armaments industry and was in favour of restrictive controls of European exports of arms, said the manifesto.

**FDP:** The World of the future was "one World" said FDP's manifesto. The traditional North-South policy must gradually be developed into a world domestic policy sustained by the concept of a global partnership for development and the environment. "All assistance", the manifesto said, "was pointless and a waste of money unless we give the developing countries a chance to sell their products in our markets". Merely by transferring money from North to South, the industrial countries, reiterated the document, will fail to meet their responsibility for development in the Third World.

**Alliance 90/Greens:** The party's policy aimed at "demilitarizing relations between states" and hence it called for dissolution of the NATO. It called for giving fair prices for the raw materials of the developing countries, in order to stop the "exploitative relations between industrialized and developing countries". The party championed for a democratic Europe.

**PDS:** The answer to wars raging in many parts of the world, said the PDS manifesto could not be settled by rapid deployment of forces or new weapon systems. What was required were political efforts to avoid conflict.

War and the use of military force, it said, should be outlawed. It aimed at disbanding all armed forces. It wanted NATO and WEU to be dissolved and replaced by global, pan-European systems of cooperative security and especially by a democratic reform of NATO and further development of the CSCE process. It did not want Germany to have a seat in the Security Council.

The PDS wanted a Europe which guaranteed peace and security through disarmament and demilitarization.

Speaking of the Third World, the PDS strongly urged a break in the "present attitudes and way of life of the Industrial Nations". Development assistance, it said should be regarded as a task for society as a whole and not left to individual government departments. Germany must remit the "debts of
the countries described by the United Nations as low-income countries", said
the party manifesto.

Publicity campaign analysis

The publicity campaigns of various political parties were basically the
extension of thoughts and planks taken from the manifestoes. The two parties
most visible undoubtedly were the CDU and the SPD. Content analysis of
various campaign literature and advertisements for television brought out by
the two major players reveal that each party tried to put its best foot forward.
Mud-slinging and character assassinations are quite alien to the German
Society. Hence not much negative advertising was visible. This could be
ascribed to the German Society being traditional. Whenever little digs were
aimed at by different political parties against their adversaries, people did not
appreciate them. On policies and planks, the parties however did criticise each
other. For instance in one of the brochures of the CDU, under the headline
"what would happen if SPD is voted to power it highlighted the following
against the SPD:
• The party was not clear about the defense dimensions of the country.
• The party had isolated Germany by not supporting the West European
  Union and NATO.
• SPD in one of its brochure titled: The change. The chances for Germany,
  it spoke of the shortcomings of the Kohl era of four years.
• One of the car stickers brought out by the SPD said “stand against right”.
  Another brochure headlined “Critique on Kohl’s administration”,
  highlighted loss of resources in the new states after the installation of right
  winged government.

Large sized posters with less copy, big visual were the hall marks of
SPD literature.

76 Content analysis of the publicity literature and video cassettes procured from party offices
while on a visit to Germany in October 1995.

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SPD literature highlighted family values, caring for children and providing equal opportunity to women (in fact in one large size poster 23”X36”, colour pictures of all their women candidates were printed). Other themes included, caring for environment, Scharping’s programme around the countryside etc..

Commercials meant for television were short, crisp spanning mostly 30 seconds were based on the same themes as the printed literature. In fact in most of them the models were also the same for continuity and better recall of the campaign. One of the commercial entitled the “Troika” had the three leaders namely Rudolf Scharping, Oskar Lafontaine and Gerhard Schroder walking together, discussing in order to project unity and consolidation.

CDU’s campaign highlighted more about their Foreign Policy (a number of brochures had the picture of Helmut Kohl with world dignitaries), European Union, Free enterprise etc. The films also carried the same theme. The models in most of the commercials were by and large senior citizens in contrast with SPD’s films which had children and more often young people.

On the whole, SPD’s campaign looked colourful, vibrant and more professional.

One of FDP’s folder titled: FDP’s position, spoke about a strong partner. Among the issues, it laid stress on market economy, ecology and conservation.

When one looks at the issues raised by various political parties and focused by the opinion poll surveys and media, three major ones stand out viz., the issues relating to economy, employment, and social security.

Glimpses of issues around the October 1994 election in Germany and media focus

Media in Germany as in any democracy were active around the election time, trailing the candidates, analysing their campaign promises and sponsoring pre poll opinions. An analysis of media messages around the election time provides some interesting insights about the mind of the
electorate. Studies of media content in German national election campaigns, according to researchers Holli A. Semetko and Klaus Schoenbach are "relatively rare", what probably has been done is gauging the question of balance and how it was applied in news reporting. This has been addressed using different types of content analytic categories ranging on the one hand, from the amount of time or space devoted to a party in the news to, on the other, the type of camera angles used to depict politicians. A "visibility bonus", however, did not necessarily translate into positive coverage. A party or politician could be seen frequently in the news, but not necessarily favourably. 77

*Infratest Burke* @ Berlin, a leading poll agency conducted a number of early opinion polls to gauge opinions on various issues. Some glimpses are given below: 78

Table 4.2 Voters' Response to various Issues (In Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>March 1994</th>
<th>August 1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joblessness</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing radicalism</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal unity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal security</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum seekers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Infratest Burke*


78 Wahl-Zeit '94 ( Berlin: Infratest Burke, September, 1994 ), procured from the polling agency while on a field trip to Berlin in 10 October, 1996.
Against a question of an event in which they got the chance to elect the Chancellor directly, who would they prefer viz. Scharping or Kohl, the following responses emerged over a period of few months.

Table: 4.3 Voters’ Response to Chancellor Candidates (In Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scharping</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohl</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the two</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not decided</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Infratest Burke

As may be seen, Kohl progressively improved his tally as the election time neared. Against a question as to which party seemed more convincing, some very interesting responses emerged, again favouring the incumbent party.

Table: 4.4 Voters’ Preference of Parties’ (in Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDU/CSU</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP coalition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All.90/Greens</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the parties</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Infratest Burke

Against a question as to which party’s promises seemed more lucrative, the responses were as follows:

Graph: 4.1
On the issue of social security, the parties scored the following response emerged:

Graph: 4.2

On employment the responses were favourable to the incumbent Union parties. Except for the SPD, other parties almost drew negligible response:

Graph: 4.3
On *Internal Security*, the incumbent party again outscored its rivals:

**Analysis**

Despite an obvious bias of the people against any incumbent government, Kohl picked up early signals and improved his campaign tactics. The SPD though riding the crest of popularity, in the initial months, went
down in the esteem of the electorate over the months. Against 29 per cent popularity rating of the SPD vis-à-vis 23 per cent of the CDU/CSU, the later improved its tally between July and August tremendously. Union’s popularity rose to 35 per cent.

Only the previous winter, at the beginning of the year, it appeared as if for the first time the voters seemed to pay attention to the economic policies of the SPD and considered them more efficient than those of the CDU’s.

On the issue of social security, SPD generally did better than the union (40 per cent against 27 per cent), but when it came to the issue of arresting unemployment, the union seemed to be more favoured than the SPD’s with 35 per cent respondents supporting its policies on the issue against SPD’s 29 per cent. Analysts felt that SPD’s decision to conduct their election campaign with the slogan “work, work, work”, must have frozen the blood of the campaign planners, looking at people’s perception. Forty-nine per cent voters trusted CDU against 24 per cent supporting the SPD, for bringing the German economy back on the track. This trend seemed to wonder many analysts. On the issue of joblessness which was on top priority list of the themes, the issue seemed to lose its earlier urgency to an extent. From 65 per cent in March to 51 per cent in August. The analysts feel that this was not because the unemployment problem had eased but due to the prevailing optimistic environment which encouraged the people to shed their fear of losing jobs.

Similarly, the popularity rating between the incumbent Chancellor Kohl and Scharping also changed, the former becoming more acceptable with time.

Eastern Germany revealed interesting trends. In 1990, the year of German unification, Kohl received 53 per cent rating which rather increased by another seven per cent in 1994. Scharping’s rating fell from 26 per cent to 13 per cent during the period under reference. The reason for the upswing of Chancellor Kohl’s in the east seemed puzzling to the political analysts. beyond a pure comparison between Kohl and Scharping. They wondered, if it was the decision of shifting authority and government in the East? Or was it because of
the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the left-wing SPD for unification initially.

Die Zeit in its issue of 7 October in an article titled “Die Politik unweht ein Hauch Von Kalte”, (“Politics is showing cold shoulder”) asked a few established experts whether the questions on social justification were adequately handled in the election campaign?79

Dieter Sengling, Chairman of the Paritatischen Wohlfahrtsverbandes (Welfare Union) opined that neither joblessness and poverty nor housing problems and difficult living conditions of a large number of families were discussed adequately by any party. He was disgusted at the negative campaigning of the parties against each other. He expected family compensation to be provided and social housing problem dealt with, immediately. To Sengling, the most important challenge was sociable distribution of work. He expected a commission to be set up which could work out on advice for a basic reform of the social security system under a clear political recognition for a Welfare state.80

Rupert Neudeck, Chairman of the Notarztekomotes Cap Anamur (Emergency Doctors’ Committee) asked the Chancellor, if he knew what it meant to be a pensioner. When one had to shell out DM 12 for a movie ticket or DM 5 in the tube from Troisderf (where he lived) to Koln main station? The problems facing the development were taken as “pure fate”. Millions who did not have roof on their head did not have rent to pay for rented accommodation. He lamented.

He expressed his anxiety about the increasing apathy and unkindness towards elderly people which he felt was on the rise. The traffic was rising in the states and cities he said had no heart and place for the elderly people.81

The politician he voted for, lamented Neudeck, probably had not told the bureaucracy that they (the bureaucrats) were for the citizens and not the other way.

79 Die Zeit, 7 October, 1994
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.

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Walter Riester, Deputy Chairperson of *der I G Metall* criticised the election campaigns which in his view had degenerated into “gigantic campaign management”. The parties and politicians in order to “sell” themselves more often changed facts to suit themselves. Who, he said, would admit that “unemployment under the present regime had reached the unimaginable heights or a poor man with education was without any future?” To him the most persevering problem was unemployment. The Government he said did take steps in this direction, but at what cost? By cutting down the social benefits and job promotion to the employed. The unification, he said, tried to unite people, but given the circumstances, Germany was in danger of being divided into two classes - the Rich and the Poor. The increasing number of people who lived on social security benefits and an increasing number of people who lived without shelter was “disgraceful for a rich country”. It must change, he exhorted.82

Hellmut Puschmann, President of *Deutschen Caritativerbandes* though not very satisfied with the issues propped up by the parties said it was still satisfying to find that besides the question of family policies, family benefits and private nursing insurance; some of the major parties had also raised the issues of job market policy, even if in their own way.

His expectation from the next government was that it “does a strenuous effort towards creating jobs”. It expected the government to solve the social and economic tasks by creating posts that were financed mainly by other sources, which needed expanding.

About election campaigns, he said what was said had little value even for those who said it. The hour of reality came only after the elections.83

To Karl Heinz Neukamm, President of *Diakonischen Werkes*, the problem in times of election was, too much media coverage. There were too few public discussions in which the common man, as a voter could participate. The excuse was always lack of time for a real discussion on relevant issue. He

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
wished there was a dialogue on the benefits of unification so that people felt involved.

His expectations from the new federal government was that it would succeed in making the citizens to share responsibilities. One who used the franchise had the responsibilities to make his/her contribution to share the burden of the government. The Government, he said, should have the courage to inform this to the people.84

W. Schmidt, another eminent person spoke of government's responsibility towards children who, he said must get a minimum of DM 250 each every month; reasonable housing facilities, sufficient seats in the kindergarten and good schooling for children. Equally important to him was family- friendly environment in the country.

Walter Haneseh, joint editor of "Armut in Deutschland" (Rowohlt Verlag), and professor at the University for Applied Sciences. spoke of the German society being characterised by deep rooted division in the living conditions. The fact that six to seven million qualified Germans were jobless and more than seven million people lived in abject poverty did not give the government the right to call Germany a welfare state, he lamented.85

Ralf Golinski, Chief Spokesman of the CDU, when asked about the major issues in the 1994 election vis-à-vis the previous election said that both the elections were very different from each other. In 1990, the over-riding issue was unification. "The euphoria eclipsed all other issues", said Golinski. CDU as a party also had to take on the issue of unification to both the east and western electorate. The electorate on the eastern side however had to be convinced about democracy at large, though a majority of them obviously were for unification. In 1994, the party had to speak about reinforcement. The issue from the public's point of view, according to Golinski probably were economic and social security.86 Gunter Schwadhlem of the SPD also felt that

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Interview with Ralf Golinski, Chief spokesperson of the CDU, was held in Bonn on 8 October, 1996.
the major issues bothering the electorate, in 1994 were economic. The electorate of the western side were also worried about the possible drain on their economy due to the new states. According to Radio correspondent, Christoph Mestmacher the major issues around the 1994 elections were (1) how to finance unification; (2) Joblessness/social security and abuse of supplementary benefits; (3) Immigration; (4) Defense politics and the question: “should we allow the Bundeswehr (German Army) to take part in mission out-of-area of the NATO countries (Somalia, former Yugoslavia).

The 1994 election, according to Mestmacher was dominated by 19 elections. Bundestag, European Parliament and 17 Landtag and Kommuna elections. A number of elections, he writes accumulated on October 16 “for which is why it was called Super Sunday”.

Prof. Harmut Elsenhans of the Leipzig University feels the issue of unemployment was the central one around the 1994 election, especially in the east German states. When one looks at the media reports however, the eastern German media highlighted it more than their counterparts in the west. opined Prof. Elsenhans.

An analysis of various issues of September-October 1994 of the liberal paper Die Zeit provides interesting insights into the strategies and tactics of various parties and the media mind in general.

Columnist Grunenbezrg feels that incumbent Chancellor Kohl was squarely lucky in the campaign because of the economic boom which happened as was predicted. If the economy was bad there could have been no chance of his winning.

SPD’s mistakes, the columnist feels helped Kohl. The party’s alignment with the PDS, brought the issue of fear of communism. Kohl

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87 Interview with Gunter Schwedhelm, spokesman for the SPD, was held in Bonn on 8 October, 1996.
88 Based on the response received vide a questionnaire left by the present researcher for Mr. christoph Mestmacher, as he was not available when I visited Hamburg on 8 October, 1995.
89 Response received against a questionnaire sent by the present researcher to Prof. Harmut Elsenhans. I also had the occasion to meet him and discuss various issues during my visit to the University of Leipzig, on 15 October, 1995.
90 Nina Grunenberg, Ichbin ein Uralterfuchs (I am an old fox), Die Zeit, 14 October, 1994.
probably had no tangible plank but this provided him one which worked like a magic in shaping the communication strategy of the union parties. Kohl’s towering personality also helped him a great deal. Media, he opined was magnanimous on Kohl.91

The columnist also wrote that Kohl fixed his own appointments (inferring that he had personal rapport with the people and that he did not depend on assistants or sycophants), kept scribbling in his diary, writing about his programme and meetings for the day. It was written of Kohl that he was sharp to gauge the changing moods and perceptions of the people. Once he uttered that he should retire around 1996, and people in general and some of his party colleagues stopped taking him seriously, realising that quickly, he put his act together to make people believe that he was a serious contender for the 1994 election.92

The departure of the allied forces from Berlin, withdrawal of the Russian troops from Germany, participation of the Elysees invitation of the French President elevated Kohl’s status and helped him in his strategic moves. In fact “Herald Tribune” criticised his campaign as a “barren” shameless cult of personality. Kohl, it was alleged, hand-picked journalists on his campaigning tour which made the opposition and analysts criticise him for treating media men as his personal staff.

“Kohl is like a rocking horse” said Anke Funchus, a member of the shadow cabinet of the SPD chancellor candidate Rudolf Scharping, “he moves a lot but not from his place”.93

Die Zeit commented that Kohl’s campaign speeches did not try to “convince” but rather “tempted”. He presented himself as a truly caring father, wrote the paper about Kohl, who did not expect anything incomprehensible from his fellow citizens.

His position was invincible in foreign affairs. Calling him a “born international politician”, Peter Goltz, an SPD politician commented thus: “at

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91 Guntur Hoffman, Die Zeit, 14 September, 1994
92 Die Zeit, 14 October, 1994
93 Anke Funchus’s quote reflected in Nina Grunenberg’s article, Ibid. n. 78.
the end of his (Kohl’s) political life, the major contribution of this born international politician would only be in field of foreign policy.  

Despite his age, people found him agile and untiring at his hustings. His ability to fall asleep in standing even during a campaign, wrote Die Zeit enabled Kohl to remain in the same mood. His psyche according to his colleagues suffered only when he addressed people in rain. He felt he was addressing thousands of umbrellas and when it was dark at the market place when he was not able to see the faces clearly and make out peoples’ expressions and reactions.

Once camera shy, he soon learnt the ropes of the medium and enjoyed being interviewed exuding confidence. He seemed to have taken the tips from his friend Mitterrand who performed so well. He asked his colleagues once “I don’t, but I can do it”.

The Chancellor chatted naturally on Sat. I channel unfiltered in front of the camera in St. Gilgen with German holiday makers when some tourists from Mallorca also joined the conversation. The journalists served only as accessories, commented the Paper. A few days later, Erich Bohume talked over the same channel about the “phenomenon Kohl” in a talk show programme.

Gunter Hoffmann commented that in the election year it had become very obvious how the political journalism together with media landscape had changed itself. The infotainment world was primarily either about the winners or losers and the biggest parties get the maximum attention.” said the columnist.

Rudolf Scharping, before going on a short summer vacation had planned his strategy. The rallying point of the SPD’s strategy was not in any way to project the party or to give an appearance that it had the chances of winning the election. At the end of his vacation he seemed to find his mission nearing accomplishment. The CDU and his chancellor candidate plummeted in

94 Die Zeit, 14 September, 1994
95 Die Zeit, 14 October, 1994
96 Die Zeit, 2 September, 1994

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popularity while SPD’s rating went up from 20 to 23 per cent. The SPD always scored higher in the arena of providing social security. It’s Achilles’ heel however had been the foreign policy which did not go well with the electorate.

Speaking in favour of the CDU, Hoffmann in a later issue spoke about the classical solution of Adenauer’s democracy (1987) which said “No experiments”. This appealed to the German masses’ desire for continuity and at the same time to establish a trustworthy father figure. The election was Adenauer’s greatest success. The party did just the same for Kohl. In the posters, the text less pictures showed a well built Kohl surrounded by admirers. The slogan “No experiments” appeared many a time in the election year.

“Glasses” seemed to be in focus. In 1978, Kohl’s media advisor Gerd Bacher had made him have a new pair of glasses with a new frame. It was aimed against Schmidt. Journalist Andreas Werde, suggested to Scharping to have a new frame as well. The election campaign concentrated on key accessories and public management, commented the media columnist.

Werner Butler, advertising advisor to Scharping termed the on-going advertising as “noise” so he advised “peace” to Scharping in answer to the “Noise”. The strategist tried to project Scharping as such. Butler was severely criticised for that, after the defeat, wrote Hoffmann. “It always happened with the politicians”, commented Hoffmann “when something went wrong with them, they found scapegoats”.

Commenting on FDP, columnist Robert Leicht observed that the FDP had no major plan in its hand or in mind. There was no talk of any burning point or change of chancellor as their strategy. They simply wanted to remain where they were. They were being voted out from one land tag to another like Hamburg, Weiderschsen, Schsen-Auhalt. In Bradenburg, they received 2.2 per cent, in Sachsen the low of 1.7 per cent. No wonder some FDP politicians

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97 Ibid.
98 Hoffman Guntur, Die Zeit, 14 October, 1994
99 Robert Leicht, Branches via noch eine Liberale partei?, Die Zeit, 16 September, 1994
reckoned it to death sentence. Despite that, Leicht thought, the FDP needed support for more reasons than one. Germany needed more than just one liberal party. The downfall of communist dictatorship should have meant a victory of the open society to demonstrate that reasonable individualism was not identical with egoism, - that market economy was directly in conflict with a poor economy. Neither the Union nor the SPD were for liberalization, lamented the columnist.100

The present FDP, a shadow of a liberal party needed a pause outside parliament. Whether the 94 election would put an end to its political career or brought about a regeneration depended on the liberals themselves. Liberalism would sun-shine, even without FDP, commented Leicht.101

This was the first election year when the media had heard so much of criticism for underplaying their role. “Politicians are no longer pure politicians” commented Hoffmann, “they have reduced the journalists to public relations managers for the better part of their work, since they have to take the sphere of communications branch also into consideration”. Whether Walter Lippmann’s theory that there was dependence of politics and journalism on each other held true in this region or not, needed serious focus. commented the columnist.102

Political parties in Germany, according to Semetko and Schoenbach, use a variety of channels for communicating to voters during election campaigns, including farm meetings, canvassing, informal on stalls as markets, and posters and billboards in cities and towns, as well as advertising in newspapers and magazines. Politicians, according to them plan their activities with “news values” in mind and often design “pseudo events” to solve journalists needs. However explicit endorsements of parties or candidates by the media are almost always avoided, despite the fact that a number of newspapers have party alignments. The electronic media according to the researchers are legally obligated to provide politically balanced news

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
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coverage, although the law and court judgments are often not clear as to what constitutes “balance”.

In West Germany, political debates among the top candidates featured as key events from the 1972 to the 1987 election campaigns. Schrott’s analysis in 1990 of the electoral impact of the 1972, 1976, 1980 and 1983 debates suggests that debates did make difference to electoral outcomes. Winning debates, argued Schrott, improved not only the candidates’ images but also their chance of getting elected. Perhaps concerned about the possible negative impact of debates, incumbent Chancellor Kohl refused to participate in a debate in the 1990 national election campaign, therefore none were held.103

**Themes and issues in the 1991 General Election in India:**

As reflected in chapter II, India faced the mid-term poll in less than two years after the 1989 General election. The 1989 verdict did not bring a clear winner.

The issues for the 1991 hustings were decided by the circumstances. Besides the *Mandal* (reservation), *Masjid* (Babri) Vs *Mandir* (Ramjanam Bhoomi), the issues of *price rise, stability and unity* of the country in the wake of secessionist activities in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam occupied the centre stage. Corruption, a major issue barely one and a half years ago did not get much attention during the mid term poll.104

In the following paragraphs, we shall have a look at the issues propped up by various political parties through their manifestoes, political advertising and campaigns and the role played by the media in highlighting certain issues.

**Issues raised by various political parties: an analysis of the manifestoes** 105


105 Based on content analysis of the manifestoes of the following political parties.
**Economy:**

**Congress I [Cong(I)]**

The party aimed at promoting “re-investment of profits”, suitable exemptions in areas where there was crying need for massive investment such as low and middle income group housing, highways, roads and bridges, non-conventional energy, school building and supply of drinking water.

It spoke of implementing “effective policies to tackle the menace of black money”.

The manifesto also mentioned about “prudent debt management policies so as to avoid India “falling into a debt trap; improving working of nationalised banks which would include allowing them to raise offshore funds.

The party promised creating “10 million new jobs in the first year and 100 million by the turn of the century”.

**Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)**

The industries, according to the manifesto were expected not only to produce more but be imaginative so that they could generate more employment and render a helping hand to the agriculture sector. This industrial policy also included promotion to handicrafts (which included free publicity on TV), arrest of price rise, guaranteed employment, “contributory pension” to daily-wage workers, and establishment of “Employee Welfare Board” for government employees.

**National Front (NF):**

The manifesto aimed at implementing a “long term fiscal policy which will further simplify and raise taxation structure that will ensure higher tax revenues from affluent sections and relief to low income groups”. It spoke of

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(i) Congress (I), Election Manifesto, General Election 1991, INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (I)


(iv) Janata Dal (Samajvadi), Chalees Saal Banam Char Muhene, Faisla Aapka (Forty Years vs Four months. It’s your decision)

(v) Communist Party of India (Marxist), Election Manifesto of CPI(M) *Defeat Cong(I) and BJP *Vote for CPI(M), Left and National Government.

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incentives, indirect taxation to promote savings and for curbing conspicuous consumption.

In order to improve the balance of payment it suggested curbing of “unnecessary imports” and augmentation of exports. On Industrial Policy, the National Front emphasised maximum employment.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)]

The manifesto called for the reversal of “IMF-World Bank dictated economic policies”, preservation of economic independence and self reliance, increase in direct taxes, curbing black money, taxing the rich, nationalisation of Jute and Cotton textile industries, introduction of workers’ participation with equal status in management in all concerns to run industries efficiently.

Janata Dal (Samajvadi)

The manifesto did not contain any plank or issue but a compilation of the speeches of Mr. Chander Shekhar, the incumbent Prime Minister of four months. Full of rhetoric, the manifesto made scathing attacks on former prime minister V.P. Singh.\textsuperscript{106}

On Minorities:

Cong (I)

A long list of measures to ameliorate the lot of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes was enumerated. The existing reservation pattern was promised to be maintained. Mention of Mandal Commission was conspicuously avoided. Some of the programmes for the SCs/STs included, creation of a SC/ST Commission with statutory powers of enforcement; setting up of the (with 110 Crore investment) Dr. Ambedkar University in Lucknow, to provide electricity to Harijan and Adivasi areas, setting up of a Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation, set up as a multi-state cooperative society to provide remunerative prices to tribal for minor forest produce, etc.

BJP

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.

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The party manifesto included following programmes for the SCs and STs; a law against untouchability, the members of the SC and ST to get free legal advice for cases on untouchability; village wells to open to members of all communities; credit facilities through special banks. jobs reserved for SC/STs, lying vacant would be filled in immediately; to name the Parliament House, Parliament Street and the residence of Lok Sabha Speaker after Dr. Ambedkar.

NF

The NF manifesto aimed at implementing reservation policy resorting to special recruitment drives so as to fulfill the quotas for SCs/STs “in the shortest possible time”. It called for an expert committee to recommend steps to provide equal rights for Dalit converts. The other plans included the plan allocation for the welfare of SCs/STs to correspond to their share in population, scavenging to be eliminated by providing alternative employment and rehabilitation, a Baba Sahib Ambedkar Memorial Library-cum-Reservation Centre to be set up at the national level.

On reservation policy, it underlined the decision to implement 27 per cent reservation of jobs for the socially and educationally backward classes in central government and central undertakings. In addition, said the manifesto, 5 to 10 per cent jobs “shall be similarly reserved for the economically backward section not covered by the Mandal Commission’s recommendations or any other Reservation Schemes”.

CPI(M)

Under the heading “Defense of Social Justice”, the CPI(M) manifesto said, it supported the implementation of the Mandal Commission report for reservation of jobs in central service for the backward classes. While supporting the reservation, the Party wished to “stress that the mass of rural poor in the backward communities will find their basic problems addressed to only through radical and land reforms and the elimination of feudal relations in the villages by speedy industrialisation of the country”.

107 Ibid.
Secularism:

Cong (I)

Secularism, said the manifesto was the “essence of the Congress creed”. It spoke of the loss of “two of the most valuable lives of India at the alter of secularism: Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi”. On the disputed Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid issue, the Party said it was committed to finding a negotiated settlement which “fully respects the sentiments of both communities involved”. The Congress it said, was “for the construction of the Temple without dismantling the Mosque”. It reiterated its firm view on status quo in respect of all places of workshop as on 15th August.

BJP

While there was no separate column for Secularism, under the headline “it is our belief” - among other issues, the manifesto said the Hindus and the Muslims were like real brothers, but due to the partition of the country there were not even friends. The BJP it said, will endeavour to bring about brotherhood and friendship among both the communities. At the same time, it reiterated its stand of building the Ram temple at the site of the disputed structure.

NF

The Party, said the manifesto, stood by the position that the status of all religious monuments and places of worship, as on 15 August, 1947 would be maintained. On the Ramjanma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, said the party, needed to be resolved “through a negotiated settlement or by due process of law”.

CPI(M)

Under the columns “Protection of Minorities” and “Resolve Ayodhya Dispute”, the manifesto said, the party stood for the protection of minority rights, full freedom of conscience and equal opportunities. It expressed its deep concern and sympathy for the “minority Muslim people who have been worst victims of the recent riots”.

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On the Babri Masjid-Ramjanma Bhoomi issue, the Party stood for a negotiated settlement acceptable to both sides, failing which, by a court verdict. The Party was for the adoption of a law by “parliament which will maintain the status quo of all places of religion and worship under dispute as on 15th August 1947”.

**Information and Media:**

**Cong (I)**

“Freedom of information” said the Party manifesto, “is another precious right”. The Congress it said would make a law in this behalf. Without elaborating, the manifesto said, the Congress would offer to public corporations “which conform to parameters to be laid down by law, broadcasting and telecasting rights”. Such corporations, it said, will be allowed to function in competition with Prasar Bharati.

**BJP**

There was no mention of the issue.

**NF**

Under the headings “The Media” and “Press Freedom”, the NF, reaffirmed its pledge “to inscribe the people’s right to information as a fundamental right in the Constitution”. It pledged its commitment to replace the present Official Secrets Act by such legislation as shall protect confidentiality in “matters of national security in conformity with the adherence to the principle of open government”. It promised to implement the Prasar Bharati Act immediately.

The manifesto promised to ensure that “neither the supply of newsprint nor official advertising is used as an instrument of government influence on the Media”.

**CPI(M)**

The Party took credit for passing legislation for ensuring autonomy for Doordarshan and All India Radio, when in alignment with the Left Front.

**Electoral Reforms:**

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[iii] Ibid.
Cong (I)

The manifesto mentioned the key issues that needed resolution were:

a) Election related violence;
b) Use of money power; and
c) Caste and Communal considerations;

The Congress, said the manifesto, would support the adoption of electronic voting machines for all future elections and supported the introduction of identity cards to voters.

BJP

The Party aimed at:

a) introducing public expenditure on elections;
b) issue of identity cards;
c) electronic voting machines against ballot boxes;
d) vote by mail to non-resident Indians;
e) till such time an Election Fund by the states was created, the party would allow corporate funding to different political parties;
f) expenditure on the election commission to be borne from the Consolidated Fund of India as in the case of high courts and supreme court, to ensure the independence of the body;
g) As far as possible to avoid mid-term polls and simultaneously hold parliamentary and assembly elections;
h) To empower the Election Commission so that it could ensure that the government controlled Radio and TV were not misused by any party.

NF

The manifesto spoke of the Bill for comprehensive electoral reforms that were introduced in Parliament. The Bill, among other things, provided for state funding of elections, and dealt with “mal practices militating against a free and fair election”.

CP I(M)
Under the head “Election Programme”, it only spoke of proportional representation in the electoral system, and strengthening of the Parliamentary Democratic System.¹⁰⁹

Political advertising around the mid-term poll - an analysis

Elections in India have been like a big fair with a lot of noise and din. The whole country suddenly comes alive to the beat of drums, microphones blurring out from vehicles, rallies organised by party supporters, padyatras, rath yatras undertaken by party supremos and the Indian media doing exactly what they are accused of - obsession with politics. Hundreds of columns are devoted in the newspapers and magazines on various issues relating to elections. The blitzkrieg goes on. The Congress (I) specially its youthful prime minister Rajiv Gandhi can be credited for bringing in professionalism in election campaigning, adding a lot of glitz and glamour to it. In retrospect, the 1984 elections were held after the gruesome murder of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, which brought a shy and reticent man to the centre stage of Indian politics. The fall out of Operation Bluestar (which had flushed out militants from the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Sikh faith, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the death of Bhinderanwalle which was avenged with the killing of Mrs. Indira Gandhi by her own body guards), the secessionist activities in the J&K and the increasing ultra activities in some of the north eastern states had shaken an average Indian. The 1984 campaign of the Congress (I) was conceived with this background. The creative route was through the emotion of fear. One of the press advertisements had the visual of barbed wire (signifying the Indian border) and the headline read “Will the country’s border finally be moved to your door step?” The sub-head read “India could be a vote away. From unity to separatism”. The mission statement was “Give Unity a hand” (the word hand was used as a metaphor as the election symbol of the Congress

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.
party is “Hand”). Another advertisement included the visual of knives, daggers and iron rods. The headline said, “Will your groceries list in future include acid bulbs, iron rods and daggers”?

_India could be a vote away from order to chaos. Give order a hand_.

Congress repeated the same advertising agency, viz. Ridifussion for the 1989 election also. Its CEO Mr. Arun Nanda, a childhood pal of Rajiv Gandhi had direct access to the Prime Minister’s office, as reported in the media.111

Like the previous campaign, the 1989 campaign also evoked negative feelings. It had the theme of opposition disunity secessionism, opportunism _et al_ as major strategic planks. The mission statement “My heart beats for India”, was however more user-friendly against the mission statement of the previous campaign, “Give unity a hand”. The opposition parties especially the right wing Bhartiya Janata Party, the National Front headed by former cabinet colleague Mr. V.P. Singh, an avowed adversary of Gandhi at the time of last hustings, chiseled their political weaponry. Corruption at high places. Bofors Guns’ case became the rallying point of the 1989 campaign. The strategy worked like magic against the once clean image of Rajiv Gandhi. His image was sullied thanks to the Bofors Gun scandal. The very word was used to deride him, convincing the masses that he was not so “clean” after all.

The professionalism and high-tech approach of the Congress campaign seemed to fail in 1989. Congress lost the election.112

After taking stock of the situation, the strengths and weaknesses of their party during the intervening period, the Party was in a position to give a new fillip to their campaign during the 1991 election, the plank however remained the same viz. STABILITY and UNITY of the country. The strategy and tactics, however changed. The advertising agency was also changed. The mission statement of the campaign this time was “Vote Stability. Vote Congress (I)”. Common men and women were used to model in the campaign

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110 Jaishri Jethwaney, Ibid. n.91, p. 6 (Based on content analysis of press advertisements and other publicity literature).
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
as spokespersons for a large mass of people. In one of the ads a young woman clutching on to her child said, "I want stability. I want my children safe". Another ad said "I want my family's life and property secure". The visual comprised a tailor who looked a Muslim thus emphasising the secular credentials of the party. In order to cover all the segments of the society one of the ads had the visual of a sarpanch, the headline read, "I want funds for my panchayat. I want autonomy." For a large mass of Indian electorate who understood their respective mother tongue, the campaign was carried in different languages.\(^{113}\)

The strategy this time was clear cut. For the city bred, suave English knowing people, the campaign was positive, seeking straight response. The campaign spoke about the prevailing circumstances but it did not make any overt reference to any political party. For the Hindi speaking audience at the grass root level in villages where newspapers are generally read in groups, the campaign was satirical, hitting hard on V P Singh, who in the perception of the Party had done irreparable damage to the image of Congress, or so it seemed. The visuals were caricatures and headlines all proverbs. To cite a few examples, one of the ads read, "Andher nagri chaupat Raja" (In a dark country, the king sleeps). The visual had a dozing king perched on a throne. The headline of another was, "Nau din chale adai kaus" (it takes them nine days to drag just a mile). The visual had a crowd pulling a hand cart in all directions. The copy of the third ad read, "Kanagali mein atta gila" (In poverty everything works adverse). Commenting on the opposition unity, the copy of an advertisement said "Kahin ki itt kahan ka gara Bhanumati ne kunba joda" (the visual had a dis-shaped chair, under repair with a person saddled atop, whose caricature resembled Shri V P Singh). High on rhetoric, the copy was hard-hitting and critical of the policies of the Front government. The mission statement in all the advertisements was same viz. "Isthrta ko vote dein. Congress (I) ko vote dein". (Vote stability. Vote Congress).

\(^{113}\) Ibid.
There was a second phase to the campaign. The elections were postponed midway due to the assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on 21 May, 1991 by a human bomb, sending shock waves all over the world. The Party came out with three advertisements with the headline, "We will keep his dream alive". The mission statement was, "Vote to fulfill Rajiv’s dream. Vote Congress (I)".114

Besides the congress the other party which went in for a full fledged campaign was the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The 1989 election, for the first time had brought forth the BJP as a national party. Their strategy last time round was to project the party as a non-corrupt party in the face of the Bofors scandal. It was however, during the mid-term polls that the party thought it could provide a national alternative to the electorate. The campaign delineated Party’s philosophy and future course of action. The headlines used in the advertisements were powerful and expected from the reader to give a pause and think. "Ramrajya is your birth right", "Freedom from fear", "Enough is Enough", were some of the few headlines. Though one felt the under current of religion in the entire BJP campaign, the party tried hard to convince the masses of its secular credentials. The party also tried to project team spirit. On the whole the messages were direct, negative, satirical and hard hitting.115

Ostensibly, separate but integrally linked with the BJP campaign was the Vishwa Hindu Parishad’s (VHP) publicity drive. The brand positioning of the VHP was akin to a wounded tiger. Lots of figures and facts were added to make the advertisements look credible. One of the ads mocked "The wonderful ways of Indian democracy". The body copy read "Hindus are a majority, divide them". "Hindus are peaceful, take them for granted", "Hindus are tolerant, dominate them", "Hindus oppose violence, rule them" “Hindus are awakened, brand them communal”, “Hindus demand Ramjanam Bhoomi, massacre them”, “Hindu ask for equality, deprive them”, “Hindus unite, brand them separatist". The mission statement

114 Ibid.
115 Based on analyses of the political advertising of the party done by the present researcher while working on the study - 10th General Election - a study, 1991, Ibid.1
exhorted "Hindus unite and act as one. Not against anyone but in defense of our motherland". The BJP received a lot of criticism from the media for the VHP campaign. No other party came out with press advertisements. 116

All the parties, however, brought out video and audio cassettes which were used extensively in the makeshift party offices which had sprung up in different neighbourhoods. These were also used through the video vans. Public transport like tempos, three wheelers and taxies were hired which played the audio cassettes using loudspeakers. Most of such material was loud and garish using folksy and film tunes, and went highly critical of the opposition parties' stand or performance. Similarly the outdoor medium which comprised hoardings, bill boards, kiosks, posters and wall writings literally painted the whole of India including the countryside. Of all the media of communication, a number of studies suggest that the outdoor media had the maximum recall. 117

The graph reflects the access of Delhi voters to various media around the 1991 election:

Graph: 4.5

Source: JB, Ibid. n.1

116 Ibid.
117 Ibid. n.91, pp.5-26
or performance. Similarly the outdoor medium which comprised hoardings, billboards, kiosks, posters and wall writings literally painted the whole of India including the countryside. Of all the media of communication, a number of studies suggest that the outdoor media had the maximum recall. 118

Crores of rupees were spent during the 10th General Election to woo a 500 million strong electorate. Varying messages from stability to Ram Rajya, from fighting communalism to electing matured leader jostled with each other through the multimedia blitzkrieg. Did the messages reach the target audience? Were the target audience able to decipher the messages from the cluster, noise and din of electioneering and which issues in the perception of the electorate needed addressing?

**Voters perception on various issues - Glimpses**

In order to know the voter perception, a small random survey comprising a universe of 350 voters in the capital was conducted by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication. Though it cannot be said to be representative of the whole country, but Delhi being a city which has a representation of people from all over the country, and being a hub of political activity and with a vast mass media reach and access, some interesting insights did emerge. 119

As reflected in the graph above a question whether the respondents had seen or attended to the messages since the election was announced? About 72 per cent males and 71 per cent female respondents had seen political messages in the newspapers, magazines and advertisements. Only two parties viz. the Congress (I) and the BJP had made use of the print advertising in a big way. Interestingly 78 per cent of men above the age of 40 were exposed, while 83 per cent women in the age group of 18-25 were exposed to the messages.

About 40 per cent men and 54 per cent women had heard messages from the audio cassettes brought out by various political parties. Only 26 per

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118 Ibid. n.91, pp.5-26
119 Ibid. n.91, pp.30-32 “Voters’ perception of the campaign”.
cent men and 11 per cent women had watched video films of various political parties. A very limited number of respondents had seen election films in theaters. While the women drew a blank, only about 7 per cent men were exposed to this closed door medium.

Women scored better than men as far as watching the telecast on national network television was concerned. The responses accounted for 60 per cent women and 38 per cent men. Of the women, 62 per cent were graduates.

The radio with an access in almost 100 per cent homes in urban areas seemed to interest the voters only marginally. Only 12 per cent women and five per cent men listened to election based programmes on radio. Thirty per cent men and 23 per cent women had read the party manifestoes or their reference in newspapers. Forty two per cent men and 34 per cent women among those who knew about the manifestoes were graduates and above. Forty seven per cent men and 38 per cent women were exposed to pamphlets and handouts. Thirty two per cent men and 23 per cent women had attended to some public meetings. Interestingly most of those who attended public meetings were school drop-outs. Twenty five per cent men and 29 per cent women were visited by party workers during their door to door campaigning. Of all the media posters had the maximum exposure. About 96 per cent men and 86 per cent women had seen posters of different political parties.

Against an open ended question asking the respondents about their views on major arguments, thoughts and appeals being extended by various contesting parties, 13 major responses occurred viz. stability, unemployment, price rise, caste-ism, religion, reservation etc. being the major ones.

Sixty three per cent men and 36 per cent women felt that stability was the main issue with the Congress (I).

Over 80 per cent men and 79 per cent women were convinced that religion was the main thrust of BJP’s campaign. Interestingly, this view was held by graduates and above as well as school drop-outs. About four per cent
men and women each felt that by taking up BJP’s stand on religion, Congress too had made it an issue.

About 46 per cent men and 51 per cent women felt that the reservation for OBC’s (Mandal) was an overwhelming issue with the Janata Dal (JD). Over 23 per cent men and 18 per cent women felt that JD believed in the upliftment of the backward classes.

About 22 per cent women and 5 per cent men felt, short tenure in office vis-à-vis performance was the issue with the Samajvadi Janata Party. Very few respondents were aware of the campaign of the Communist Party.

To a question as to what extent the respondents felt the appeals put forward by political parties were convincing, over 25 per cent women and 15 per cent men felt the campaign would benefit the Congress to a great extent. About 32 per cent men and 28 per cent women felt it may help them only to a small extent.

Over 37 per cent women and 28 per cent men felt the BJP campaign would help the party to a great extent while 37 per cent men and 27 per cent women felt the party would benefit only to some extent. About two per cent men and one per cent women felt the campaign may be counter-productive to the party.

Interestingly, 75 per cent women with urban tilt and 29 per cent men felt that the JD campaign may help the party to a very less extent. About eight per cent men and two per cent felt it may be counter-productive.

Exposure to SJP and CPI(M) campaigns was not very high. Nearly 33 per cent women and 26 per cent men felt that the SJP campaign would not help the party at all. Similarly 23 per cent women and 15 per cent men felt the efforts of CPI(M), if there were only, would only go waste.\textsuperscript{120}

\textbf{Media’s response to issues and thrusts put forward by various players:}

There is a general criticism leveled against the Indian media, press in particular that it is obsessed with politics. Political news, political personalities

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
interest the media more than other developmental issues. While this could have been a general trend in decades between 50s and 80s, things are looking up in the 90s with business news almost upstaging political news except around the election times. Elections in democracies become almost festive seasons. Media generally take on themselves the role of “agenda setting”, of a watchdog and critic et al. A number of daily newspapers and some magazines were flipped through from the time the election was announced in March 1991 to the conduct of election in May/June to analyse what interested the media and columnists. Here are few random glimpses:

In his regular column Counterview, in Sunday, senior journalist Vinod Mehta spoke about India’s political scenario “for the next couple of months”. “At the moment”, he wrote, “the bookies and tipsters were gloomy about Congress prospects. The forecasters saw V.P. Singh led Janata Dal emerging as the largest party followed by the BJP and the Congress, a close third.”

“I would advise a pause”, he suggested, “before putting any money on V.P. Singh. Public mood presently is angry and unsettled with a large sections of the voting public still to make up its mind”.121 “I have a feeling”, he went on, “that many responsible citizens have an instinct of supporting Rajiv Gandhi”.

In the same column in the month of April, when most of the political parties had released their manifestoes, Mehta expressed his dismay. Headlined “Words, words, words”, he wrote disgustedly that party manifestoes were written “not to spread enlightenment, but to promote ignorance”.122 The Marxists were the first off the mark, he lamented, “because they enjoyed a unique advantage of not rethinking at all. They merely retyped the documents released in 1989”.

The electorate, he said, was indifferent not on account of laziness or disinterest in election blueprints, but because there was an unholy conspiracy hatched by the combatants to keep the voter in the dark. It would be revealing, he said, if the pollsters included a question in their research on the extent of

121 Vinod Mehta, Counterview, Sunday, 24-30 March, 1991
122 Vinod Mehta, Counterview, Sunday, 24-30 April, 1991
manifesto reading among the General Public. “If more than five per cent say they read the stuff, I will retire from column writing”, he challenged.\textsuperscript{123}

“Manifestoes are masterpieces of gobbledygook. They are written not to spread enlightenment but promote ignorance”, wrote Mehta. The language, he felt was deliberately “turgid, imprecise and convoluted” composed in the “style of lawyers practicing in the lower courts”.\textsuperscript{124}

Another trick, he felt was “overkill”. Promise the electorate the impossible, so everyone knows from the beginning that the manifesto is not to be taken seriously. It just needs to “sound good”.\textsuperscript{125}

Columnist Seema Goswami and Rajiv Shukla in the cover story in \textit{Sunday} spoke about various themes propped up by the players. Social justice and stability were taken as fresh planks by V.P. Singh, giving reservations to OBCs a back seat in election themes. Rajiv Gandhi also held on to stability and inflation in all his speeches. BJP spoke of “a peaceful Hindu India”, promising economic betterment and playing the moderate card.\textsuperscript{126}

\textit{India Today}, in its editorial “Politics of Economics” commented thus: “The whiff of electoral battles addles political minds. In the last few weeks, little has been spoken by politicians that made economic sense, with the possible exception of Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha who has been proclaiming that the country is living beyond its means and cannot afford any more economic populism”.\textsuperscript{127}

It added “...the problem is not the economic crisis itself. Rather it has to do with the way issues are posed to the electorate”. Commenting on the task at hand for the Congress (I) Bhadhwar and Chawla spoke of the change in mood which in his view had made the task of the Congress a formidable one. If they could not make it, a second defeat in 18 months could well be “beginning of the end of the 106 year old party”.\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{126} Seema Goswami and Rajiv Shukla. Cover story in \textit{Sunday}, 24-30 April, 1991  \\
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{India Today}, Editorial comment, 30 April, 1991  \\
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Writing on the content of the Congress campaign, columnist Madhu Jain commented, “once bitten twice shy. The Congress (I)’s publicity campaign for the coming Lok Sabha election is a 180 degree turn away from the 1985 Blitzkrieg...those scorpions had a sting in their tails and ended up biting the hand which made the ad.”

In yet another column: “Policy stands Rajiv’s Zigzag”, Anuradha Awasthi compiled the quotes of Rajiv Gandhi at different times on policy issues such as economy, reservation, press, communalism and Punjab. “Consistency is the least of former Prime Minister’s virtue”, commented the journalist.

“Flexing its muscles,” felt columnist Shahnaz Anklesaria Aiyer, “the VHP, the conscience keeper of the BJP was gaining strength with each passing day and was poised to play a key role in the election. By cadre mobilisation, playing the Ayodhya Card and enticing voters to gamble on an united party, the BJP hoped to dramatically improve its Lok Sabha strength. or so thought the columnist.

The slogans are shrill, loud and clear. The strategy is purposeful and single minded. The campaign is on four-wheel drive. And in Lal Krishan Advani, the party, for the first time has a national-level Prime-Ministerial candidate”, said Aiyer. This was not the BJP of 1989 “plagued with self doubt, looking for alliances,” commented the columnist, the party “smells blood”.

Indian Express which is long known to be a sort of anti-establishment and anti-Congress paper, covered the call of the Sikh Fronts urging the Sikhs to vote against the Congress (I), what it termed it as the “totally undemocratic and anti minority, particularly anti-Sikh attitude”. They pledged support for the Janata Dal and the SJP.

Commenting on the mid-term polls, Pradeep Nayak of the daily Patriot felt the tenth General Election was going to be one of the watersheds in the Indian politics on many grounds. The pre election scenario showed that the
election was going to be the most unpredictable as no political party was in a position to mobilise the heterogeneous voters on a broad spectrum of issues for which it stood. The major issues, felt the scribe, that would play a decisive role related to political stability, social justice and equality.

A people’s movement group representing various groups released a “people’s manifesto” in New Delhi, taking up the issues that they felt should have been taken up “by those trying to represent the people but did not do so”. The agenda included decentralisation of power and autonomy to the states, right to life, right to struggle and right to command over the natural resources. The groups that endorsed the issues included the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the All-Jharkhand Students’ Union, the Manipur Jan Vikas Andolan and others. The manifesto called for all radical restructuring of the political and administrative system. The story was covered by the Statesman, in detail.

Jitender Sharma of Tribune on a constituency watch, felt the slogans failed to inspire voters. He opined that “there was this air of disdain and indifference about politics”. When some of the voters were asked about the ensuing election, the replies revolved round “Waqt aya, dekh lenge” (we will see when the time arrives). This vindicates various research studies in the USA which confirm that a lot of voters take decision about who they would vote for in the last few days of an election.

Though women were being increasingly treated as a vote bank, there still was great reluctance to field them as candidates for the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections. “The political parties which do not give women adequate representation in legislative bodies do not hesitate to make the promise to secure equality and justice for them besides greater representation in India’s administrative and political structure”, opined columnist Yashwarddhan, in the National Herald.

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134 Pradeep Nayak, Stability as Election Issue, Patriot, 15 May, 1991
135 Statesman, 3 May, 1991
136 Jitender Sharma, Tribune, 6 May, 1991
137 Yasho Vardhan, Polls and Pledges to Women, National Herald, 13 May, 1991
In its special supplement on media research, the *Economic Times* felt the BJP was the only party with a clear game plan for the future. It was however, unlikely, commented the paper “that the BJP will be able to form a government on its own this time”.

Whether or not the BJP managed to put a sizable number of its members in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, Nitayan Mukhopadhyay felt, it was clear that the issues raised by the Party in the past few months would have to be grappled by any party that came to power at the Center. “There is no way”, opined the scribe, “the nation can exorcise the ghost of Ram, Communism and pseudo secularism. In that lies the danger for both the Congress (I) and the National Front. The game is being played and the BJP has so far succeeded in framing the rules.”

In a column entitled “Wave eludes parties, despite Mandal, Mandir”, *Patriot* wrote about the first round of elections just two weeks away, opining that there was still no evidence of a wave in favour of any major party. The voters, felt the paper, would have to choose from among a multiplicity of candidates and issues.

When one analyses the media messages one finds that media by and large considered a direct fight between the Congress (I) and the BJP of more importance than between other players like the Janata Party or the SJP. BJP’s media strategy was sharper than any other contenders. They treated journalists with a lot of travel junkets whenever their leaders went around. Obviously on return there was coverage. Through their all-pervasive publicity campaign, and an extensive media coverage, the atmosphere that prevailed gave a feeling as if the party was going to sweep polls.

Rajiv Gandhi, the blue eyed boy of the media during the 1984 campaign, fell from grace in 1989. He almost became a *persona non-grata*. The trend however, changed around the election time in 1991. Though the media

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139 *Patriot*, 6 May, 1991
were by and large skeptical about a clear majority for the Congress, but the party was certainly not considered a “spent force” which could be dismissed.

When we analyse the strategies and tactics employed by candidates and political parties in the three different democracies, the same spirit, the same thought process and similar bottom line was used i.e. to cash on your strengths and focus on the weaknesses of your adversaries. Despite the fact that India is a poor country, resources hardly seemed a constraint, if the extent of campaigning by political parties especially the front runners was any indication.

The over enthusiastic and cunning campaign managers and publicists, according to analysts take pride in “manipulating” the media in covering the activities of their candidates in a positive vein. Where does all this leave a voter? Social scientists, intellectuals, political scientists the world over have been feeling concerned about the magic of professional advertising, marketing and public relations techniques in launching candidates in the fray as products in a market place.

“The Candidate”, a movie made in 1970 in America is an abject lesson in the advertising dimensions of political persuasion. The film is about an intelligent and energetic social activist who on being approached by a professional campaign manager agrees to run for public office. The manager with his expert team of campaigners, film makers and press agents moulds, packages and sells the candidate through a technically sophisticated mass advertising campaign. The worst fear of critics of contemporary political campaigns that unknown candidates can be sold to an unsophisticated and gullible mass of electorate like soaps and toothpaste in a market place through aggressive advertising are confirmed in the closing scene as the victorious candidate is bewildered, wondering whether he is actually qualified for public office. He turns to his campaign manager, a hired professional, already looking for a new face to sell and say “but what do we do now”.

Today we live in an age of information. An average person is more exposed about the world around him. Is he really gullible to the influence that
he is not able to use his mind? Does he find himself sandwiched between the propaganda of various political parties and the media new stories, both not allowing him to use his discretion? While it is difficult to find definitive answers when one has to analyse the domain of mind, which is influenced by varying forces, the forces which may not have the same impact on people at different times but a careful analysis of elections in three different democracies suggest that despite the varying demographic profiles of the masses, economic disparities and different social milieu, the people as an electorate do share a lot in common. Increasingly, there is a disgust with politics and political parties. The voters in the three countries by and large have a feeling that it is because of the short-sighted policies of political parties that result in chaos in the societies. Interestingly, when it comes to issues which bothered the voters in the three countries, economic issues including price rise and unemployment topped the list, geographic location, economic and social status, notwithstanding.

While it was expected that the campaigning in the US and Germany will be high tech. ones, using the latest in communication technology, some of the Indian political parties also did not lag behind in matching their counterparts in the developed nations. Use of computers, modems, faxes, electronic mail and cell phones was a normal thing with the front runners. At the same time, it was interesting to find that the presidential candidates in the US and Chancellor aspirants in Germany trying their utmost to reach out to the masses through the interpersonal communication route, taking bus tours, cycle rides, appearing on talk shows, and charity dinners etc.

Modern day elections have become cost intensive, mostly on account of sky rocketing media tariffs. In Germany, the elections to a large extent are funded by the Government, in the USA a part of election expense is meted out of the Federal funding, in India the candidates and parties have to generate their own resources to contest elections. How are the resources organised, what impact do they have on the free and fair elections, has been an issue bothering the societies for quite some time, but is in sharp focus in the 1990s. The voter looks for accountability.