

**Politics and Governance in India (MA Seminar)**  
**Winter Semester 2017-18**

Venue: SAI Room 316

Tuesday 1400 Hrs – 1600Hrs

Department of political science / Politische Wissenschaft- South Asia Institute  
Heidelberg University

Instructor:

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How do we make sense of contemporary India? How will we understand its existing complexities and inherent paradoxes? This seminar introduces the students to different aspects of Indian politics and governance, such as: the state and society, the party system, Indian elections, politics of welfare (the rights based legislations), coalition politics, politics of caste, judicial activism, structure of governance and Indian federal system. India has presented a paradox for the social scientists, that despite rampant poverty, country still has strong and vibrant democratic institutions and political processes for the last seventy years. The Indian case challenges the argument that a state needs to achieve a certain level of economic affluence to be a functional democracy. India continues on a path of substantial political, economic and social change negating the prophecies of doom articulated in earlier scholarships such as the *India: the Most Dangerous Decades* (Harrison 1960) which raised serious doubts about the survival of democracy in India. Politics in India is inextricably linked to these changes. At the same time India faces challenges of governance and development on many fronts. This seminar will enable the students to understand the workings of Indian state and society and encourage them to critically examine the linkages between Indian politics and existing political, social and economic realities.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On completion of this course the students will:

1. Know the intricacies of Indian Politics
2. Acquire knowledge about democratic institutions, social, political and economic issues in India
3. Understand and critically examine the linkages between politics and governance
4. Analyse the working of Indian state and society
5. Be able to link the theoretical concepts to the empirical material
6. And develop pedagogical tools and knowledge to undertake comparative research

The seminar is thematically divided into four parts:

- Part I provides an introduction to this seminar by discussing the broader issues in Indian politics and democracy in India.

- In Part II institutions of democracy such as the parliament, the judiciary and the executive will be discussed. We will also examine the workings of Indian federalism in all its forms.
- Part III will cover democratic politics in India by exploring party system, Indian state and society, institutional change and coalition politics.
- Part IV will focus on the governance and development in India.

### **Prerequisite**

No prior knowledge of Indian politics is required for this class. However, students taking this course need commitment to the area while being rooted in the discipline of social science. Some amount of sensitivity to the issues covered in this seminar will enrich the discussions.

### **Organization**

I will initiate the weekly sessions by giving an introduction to the assigned topic in that week. After my intervention, for each session, students will make a 15-minutes presentation based on the readings followed by class discussion. Students can choose their presentation slots according to their interests. These slots will be assigned on the principle of first come first serve, so, please inform me of your preferred presentation slot at the earliest.

Presentations should address the issues raised in the session brief (provided in the course outline) for that week. They can take shape of a debate as well as a reflection on the readings. Presenters will provide some leading questions to initiate the discussions. Please send in your reading questions at least two days prior to your presentation day. Presentations and class discussions can be a good starting point to start thinking about the paper which I will expect by the end of this semester.

The essential readings will be uploaded on Moodle. It is necessary for the students to engage with the essential readings to meaningfully participate in this class. I will happily recommend additional readings (beyond the supplementary readings).

The **Moodle password** for this course is: **India1718**

### **Assessment**

I will evaluate students on the basis of: 1. Final Term Paper; 2. Book review and 3. Presentation and Participation

**Final Term paper (50%):** Students are expected to write a term paper on a topic of their choice by the end of this seminar. Term papers are to be 5000 -6000 words in length (3000-4000 words for BA students) including footnotes and references. **Term papers are due by 31 March 2018.**

**Book Review (30%):** Students will review a book from the reading list which will be provided by me. Students are also free to choose a book of their own choice. Please note that the books chosen should be relevant to the subject covered in this course. Students will take my prior approval before choosing the book for reviewing. Book reviews are to be 1000-1200 words in length.

**Class Presentation, Participation and Attendance (20%):** Evaluation will be based on student's engagement with the topic and demonstrated understanding of the assigned readings. Since, this is a seminar style class, discussions and engagement with the topic assigned will be appreciated. Based on the readings (and perhaps beyond) it is also encouraged to think deeply about the issues assigned each week.

Students are expected to attend the seminar regularly and are encouraged to actively participate in the discussions. They will be evaluated on the basis of their preparation for this seminar. It is pertinent for the students to come prepared in the class which necessitates engagement with the essential readings provided in the course outline.

## **I. Introduction and the Puzzle of India's Democracy**

### **Week 1 (17 October 2017)**

#### **Introduction**

This is an introductory session where historical background and context will be provided to the course. Additionally, we will discuss the contemporary social, political and economic trends. An overview, the scope of this module, elaboration on the weekly themes and key readings will also be discussed. This session is important for students, as it will introduce the context, meaning of the key terms, broader arguments made in the readings. Prior to starting the discussions on specific topics, this session will familiarize the students with the lay of the land or state of the art. Students should also express their expectations from this module and can discuss the content and orientation of the topics covered, clarify the teaching and learning arrangements.

#### **Readings**

To familiarize themselves with the area studies and topic of this course students are advised to read the following:

Sumit Ganguly and Rahul Mukherji. 2011. *India Since 1980*. Cambridge University Press. Read Chapter 1:1-18 and Chapter 4:109-141.

Stuart Corbridge, John Harris and Craig Jeffery .2013. *India Today: Economy, Politics and Society*. Cambridge, UK.: Polity Press. Read: Part II: 121-197

### **Week 2 (24 October 2017)**

#### **Puzzle of India's Democracy**

India's democracy has survived despite being poor and populous. This presents a puzzle for the social scientists, who argue that a nation has to achieve a certain level of economic affluence to achieve a functional democracy. How does democracy survive in India?

## Essential Readings

A. Varshney. 1998. Why Democracy Survives (Special issue on India defies the odds). *Journal of Democracy* 9 (3) :36-50

A. Lijphart. 1996. The Puzzle of Indian democracy: A Consociational Interpretation. *American Political Science Review* 90(2): 258-268

## Supplementary Readings

Philip Oldenburg. 2010. *India, Pakistan and Democracy: Solving the Puzzle of Divergent Paths*. London and New York: Routledge. Read Introduction:1-15; chapters 2&3: 15-73.

S. Khilnani. 1997. *The Idea of India*. Hamilton.

## Public Holiday Week 3 (31 October 2017)

### II. Democracy and its Institutions

#### Week 4 (7 November 2017)

#### **Institutions: The Parliament, the Judiciary and the Executive**

Institutions play an important role in carrying forward the national governance agenda. In this session we will discuss three key institutions, namely the Parliament, the judiciary and the executive. Parliament is an arena where the legislators engage with the policy discussions. How does this work and how effective is Indian Parliament in this role? Constitution provides the basis for Indian Democracy and development. Judiciary has interpreted the Indian Constitution in ways that had positive repercussions on the development agenda of this country. We will discuss some of these cases. Executive is responsible for implementing the policy? We will discuss the role of the executive and why it is called a “steel frame” in the Indian context.

#### Essential Readings

M.P.Singh.2015. The Decline of Indian Parliament. *India Review* 14 (3): 352-376

Nick Robinson. 2009. Expanding Judiciaries: India and the Rise of the Good Governance Court. *Washington University Global Studies Law Review* 8(1)

Milan Vaishnav and Saksham Khosla. 2016. The Indian Administrative Service Meets Big Data. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

#### Week 5 (14 November 2017)

#### **Indian Federalism: Centre State Relations**

The Indian Constitution provides mechanism of power sharing between the Centre and the

states. This means that Indian polity is federal in nature where some legislative and executive powers are vested with the central government, while some others fall exclusively within the state's purview. Hence, the government is multi-level, one at the central level, while another which is at the state level. What does this federal arrangement mean for the centre-state relations? What are the tensions between different levels of government? How does India manage to strike a balance between the unitary aspects and the diversity within the country? Indeed, Indian federalism has to be 'cooperative' and at the same time 'competitive'. These are some pertinent questions that we would discuss this week.

### **Essential Readings**

Ashutosh Varshney. 2013. How has Indian Federalism Done? *Studies in Indian Politics* 1: 43-63.

Himanshu Jha. 2008. Policy as Instrument for Reconciling Diversity: Experience of the Indian federal System. In *Policy Issues in Federalism: International Perspectives* by John Kinciad and Rupak Chattopadhyay (Ed.). Forum of Federations, Canada: Viva Books :14-28.

### **Supplementary Reading**

Daniel, J Elazar. 1987. *Exploring Federalism*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Rasheeduddin Khan. 1992. *Federal India: A Design for Change*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

## **Week 6 (21 November 2017)**

### **Decentralization: Local Governance**

The topic of decentralization in many senses would flow from our discussions on federalism in the previous week. Decentralization is devolution of administrative, political and fiscal powers further down from the state level to the city and village level. 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the Indian Constitution provided for the democratic decentralization. What are the institutional arrangements of this devolution? How has this helped in deepening the democratic institutions in India? What is the implication of democratic decentralization on the delivery and implementation of the public policy programmes at the grassroots? These are some of the questions to consider during our discussions on decentralization.

### **Essential Readings**

Patrick Heller (et.al). 2007. Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India. *World Development* 35 (4): 626–648.

René Véron (et.al). 2006. Decentralized Corruption or Corrupt Decentralization? Community Monitoring of Poverty-Alleviation Schemes in Eastern India. *World Development* 34 (11): 1922-1941

### **Supplementary Readings**

M.A. Oomen. 1999. Panchayat Finance and Issues Relating to Inter-Governmental Transfers. In, *Decentralization and Local Politics*, by S.N.Jha and P.C. Mathur (eds.). Sage, New Delhi: 142-172.

S.N.Jha and P.C.Mathur (Ed.). 1999. *Decentralization and Local Politics*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. Read Introduction, Chapter 1 (Rajni Kothari), Chapter 4 (P.C.Mathur) .

### **III. Democratic Politics**

#### **Week 7 (28 November 2017)**

##### **Politics and Parties in India: Continuity and Change**

Politics in India was experiencing continuity since independence in the context of political parties. However, from the 60's onwards one can see a break in this continuity. In this session we will learn about these trends. What were these shifts? Does Indian politics represent continuity with change? What did it mean for a country like India and where is it heading? We will discuss the readings and try to identify some of these changes.

##### **Essential Readings**

Rajni Kothari. 1964. The Congress System in India. *Asian Survey* 4 (12): 1161-1173.

Christophe Jaffrelot. 2000. The Rise of the other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt. *Journal of Asian Studies* 59 (1): 86-108.

##### **Supplementary Readings**

P.R.Dsouza and E.Sridharan. 2007. *India's Political Parties*. Sage Publications.

E.Sridharan. 2017. India's Democracy at 70: The Shifting Party Balance. *Journal of Democracy* 28 (3): 76-85

#### **Week 8 (5 December 2017)**

##### **Coalition Politics**

The first three decades of Indian politics in the post-independence period was characterized by single party domination. However, signs of smaller regional parties challenging this domination were visible from the late 60's onwards. The first coalition government was formed at the national level in 1977. Since 1989 till 2014, no single party has got the majority in the national elections, recently held 2014 elections being an exception to this trend. This has resulted in a 'coalition' of multiple parties forging alliances to form government. At the same time regional parties have emerged at the national level, playing a greater role in national politics and policy making. What does this mean for India? What are the pros and cons of multiple parties claiming a stake in the national policy making? How does it impact the policy formulation, implementation and the working of institutions? Through the readings we will try to answer some of these questions and also understand the dynamics of coalition politics in India.

##### **Essential Readings**

Sanjay Ruparelia. 2015. *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. Oxford:

Oxford University Press. (Read Introduction:1-15; Chapter 1:45:103; Conclusion:319-344.

E.Sridharan. 2012. Why are multi-party minority governments viable in India? Theory and Comparison. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 50(3): 314-343

### **Supplementary Readings**

E. Sridharan. 2014. Coalition Politics in India: Selected Issues at the Centre and the States. India: Academic Foundation. Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 9.

K.C.Suri and Suhas Palshikar. 2014. "Critical Shifts in the Long Term, Caution in the Short Term", *Economic and Political Weekly* 49(39).

## **Week 9 (12 December 2017)**

### **Rise of the elite parties**

The path of progress and development of democracy in India has seen various phases accompanied by institutions emerging at different stages. On the one hand there has been ascendance of different groups in society and the development of political parties that are direct participants in electoral competition. This interaction has brought in the ups and downs of political parties in the last 70 years of Indian democracy. In this backdrop we will examine the rise of Hindu nationalist right wing party and also explore the explanations for voters preference towards elite parties.

### **Essential Readings**

Suhas Palshikar. 2016. The BJP and Hindu Nationalism: Centrist Politics and Majoritarian Impulse. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38 (4):719-735

Tariq Thachil. 2014. Elite Parties and Poor voters: Theory and Evidence from India. *American Political Science Review* 108 (2):454-477

### **Supplementary Readings**

C. Jaffrelot (Ed.). (2007). *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press. (Read Introduction Part I)

Tariq Thachil. 2014. *Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **Week 10 (19 December 2017)**

### **New and Emerging Politics**

In the recent years new forms of politics have emerged on the Indian political landscape. For example, a widespread citizens movement against corruption has resulted in the formation of a political party called Aam Aadmi Party (Party of Common Man - AAP). They signify a departure from the elite parties at the national level both in terms of political mobilization and their operations. Changes can be seen at the sub-national and local level as well where one

finds the emergence of alternative forms of politics. In this backdrop we will discuss these emerging political trends, which are new, and still evolving.

### **Essential Readings**

Srirupa Roy. 2014. Being the Change: The Aam Aadmi Party and the Politics of Extraordinary in Indian Democracy. *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. XLIS (15)

Himanshu Jha. 2017. Institutional Progression of the Right to Information Act: Emerging Politics of Accountability. *Economic and Political Weekly* (Forthcoming)

### **Supplementary Reading**

Suhas Palshikar. 2016. Who is Delhi's Common Man? *New Left Review* 98.

## **Winter Break (23 December 2017- 7 January 2018)**

### **IV. Governance and Development**

#### **Week 11 (9 January 2018)**

#### **What Makes Governance Effective?**

There is considerable variation in the development outcomes at the sub-national level. Why some states in India are better governed than others? What explains this variation? Alternate explanations are provided to explain such variations. In this session we will discuss one strand of scholarly work which provides class based explanations. This argument sees an active role of elite agents and social networks in the local governance.

### **Essential Readings**

Krishna, A. (2014). The Naya Netas: Informal Mediators of Government Services in Rural North India. In Cammett M. and Maclean (Eds.), *The Politics of Non-State Welfare* (pp. 175-192). Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press.

Subrata K Mitra. 1991. Room to Maneuver in the Middle: Local Elites, Political Action, and the State in India. *World Politics* 43 (3). 390-413.

### **Supplementary Reading**

Prerena Singh. 2015. *How Solidarity Works for Welfare: Sub-Nationalism and Social Development in India*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Read Chapters 1& 2:1-60 and Chapters 4 &5: 112-193.

#### **Week 12 (16 January 2018)**

### **State and Bureaucratic Culture**

What about the role of state? Does bureaucracy have a role to play in governance? After all, bureaucracy is responsible for implementing the policies and executes the governance in the field. Flowing from the previous session, we will discuss an alternate viewpoint by examining the role of 'bureaucratic culture' in governance.

### **Essential Readings**

Akshay Mangla. 2015. Bureaucratic Norms and State Capacity in India: Implementing Primary Education in the Himalayan Region. *Asian Survey* 55 (5): 882-908.

Rahul Mukherji and Himanshu Jha. 2017. Bureaucratic Rationality, Political Will and State Capacity: The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in Andhra Pradesh. *Economic and Political Weekly* (Forthcoming).

### **Week 13 (23 January 2018)**

#### **State and Society**

Indian state is penetrated deeply by social actors and interests compared to the traditional developmental states. Hence, the model of governance and development has to be carefully negotiated between the state and society. Developmental change in India can be understood as a gradual slow moving process. Often we also see a synergy between the state and society working mutually and in tandem shaping the ideas about a specific policy choice.

#### **Essential Readings**

Rahul Mukherji. 2009. The State, Economic Growth and Development in India. *India Review* 8 (1): 81-106.

Deepta Chopra. 2011. Policy Making in India: A Dynamic Process of Statecraft. *Pacific Affairs* 84 (1): 89-107

#### **Supplementary Readings**

Stuart Corbridge (et.al). 2005. *Seeing the State: Governance and Governmentality in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Pages: 1-87 and 121-151.

Joel.S.Migdal. 2001. *State in Society: Studying How State and Societies Transform and Constitute one Another*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Introduction and Chapters 6, 7 and 8

### **Week 14 (30 January 2018)**

#### **Interests Vs Ideas**

It is argued that politics and interests are deeply intertwined and have an impact on the development outcomes. In this session we will engage with the arguments of 'mass politics' or 'elite politics'. Does the Indian state operate independently or is impacted by prevailing interests in the society? There is a counter argument, which is challenging these interest-based

arguments. This view stresses on the role of ideas rather than interests in affecting change. State is not viewed as an extension of society's interests but can think independently and has a mind of its own. In this session we will examine this aspect of Indian politics, which has been often seen as both hindering or facilitating governance and development in India.

### **Essential Readings**

Pranab Bardhan. 1984. *The Political Economy of Development in India* (Read Introduction). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Ashutosh Varshney. 1998. Mass Politics or Elite Politics? India's Economic Reforms in Comparative Perspective. *The Journal of Policy Reform* 4 (2) :301-335

Rahul Mukherji. 2014. *Globalization of Deregulation: Ideas, Interests, and the Tipping Point*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Introduction and Conclusion.

Himanshu Jha. 2016. State Processes, Ideas and Institutional Change: Case of Right to Information Act in India (Unpublished).

### **Supplementary Readings**

Stuart Corbridge and John Harris. 2000. *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu National and Popular Democracy*. Read Introduction and Chapter 6.

Rob Jenkins. 1999. *Democratic Politics and Economic Reform in India*. Cambridge University Press. Read Introduction and Chapter 4.

Hall, P.A and Taylor, Rosemary, C.R. 1996. "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms", *Political Studies* 44 (4) : 936-57

Peter. A. Hall. 1993. "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain", *Comparative Politics* 25: 275–276.

### **Week 15 (6 February 2018) Wrapping up**

No new topic will be taken up this week. We will reflect on some of the topics and debates emerging from our previous discussions.