

Politics in India (BA Seminar)

Venue: Room E 11 SAI
Wednesday 1600 Hrs – 1800Hrs

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

Instructor:

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Aim

This seminar introduces the students to different aspects of Indian Politics, 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, Indian Federalism and Globalization. How do we make sense of contemporary India? How will we understand its existing complexities and inherent paradoxes? For many years India has presented a paradox for the social scientists, that despite being poor, India still has strong and vibrant democratic institutions and political processes. The Indian case directly challenges the notion that a nation needs to achieve a certain level of economic affluence to be a functional democracy. Yet India continues on a path of substantial political, economic and social change. Politics in India is inextricably linked to these changes.

The seminar is thematically divided into five parts:

- Part1 provides an introduction to this seminar by discussing the broader issues in Indian politics and democracy in India.
- In Part 2 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 3 will cover democratic politics in India by exploring party system, state and society, institutional change, coalition politics and the political mobilization of caste.
- Part 4 will focus on the governance and development by looking at the recent rights based legislations in India.
- And part 5 will examine the origin and processes of the political economy of globalization in India and India's economic rise.

This seminar will help students 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 in India.

Assessment

Final Term paper (34%): 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 3500 -4000 words in length (5000-6000 words for the Masters students), including footnotes and references. Presentations and class discussions can be a good starting point to start thinking about the papers. **Term papers are due on 31 March 2017 by 5 pm.**

Attendance and Preparation (33%): Students are expected to regularly attend the seminar. They will also be evaluated on the basis of their preparation for this seminar. It is pertinent for the students to come prepared for the class on the basis of the essential readings provided in the course outline. Students are encouraged to actively participate in the discussions.

Class Presentation and Participation (33%): For each session, the students will make a 40-minute presentation based on the readings. The presentation will try to address the issues raised in the session brief (provided in the course outline) for that week. Presentations can take the shape of a debate or a reflection on the readings. 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.

Course Outline

I. Introduction and the Puzzle of India's Democracy

Week 1 (26 October 2016)

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:

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

Mitra, Subrata.K. 2011. *Politics in India: Structure, Process and Policy*. Routledge. Read Introduction: 1-34; Chapter 1:34-65; Conclusion:213-234.

Week 2 (2 November 2016)

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

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

Lijphart A. 1996 "The Puzzle of Indian democracy", *American Political Science Review* 90(2)

Supplementary Readings

Oldenburg, Philip. 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.

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

II. Democracy and Institutions

Week 3 (9 November 2016)

Institutions: The Parliament, the Judiciary and the Executive

Institutions play an important role in carrying forward the governance agenda of the country. This session we will discuss three key institutions, namely the Parliament, the judiciary and the executive. Parliament is an arena where most of the policy discussions are held by the legislators. 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.

Shankar, B.L and Valerian Rodrigues. 2014. *The Indian Parliament: A Democracy at Work* (Read Introduction) Oxford University Press.

Sathe, S.P. 2004. *Judicial Activism in India: Transgressing Borders and Enforcing Limits* (Read Introduction). Oxford University Press.

Mukherji, Rahul and Himanshu Jha. 2014. *The Roots of Citizen Concern and Welfare in India: The Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Andhra Pradesh*. The World Bank. (Unpublished manuscript).

Week 4 (16 November 2016)

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 falls 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

Bagchi , Amaresh. 2005. Rethinking Federalism: Changing Power Relations Between the Centre and the States. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 33 (4): 21-42

Jha, Himanshu. 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 2008:14-28.

Supplementary Readings

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

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

Week 5 (23 November 2016)

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. 73rd and the 74th 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

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

Mitra, Subrata,K. 2001. Making Local Government work: local elites, panchayati raj and governance in India. In , *The Success of India's Democracy*, by Atul Kohli (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Supplementary Readings

Oomen, M.A. 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, pp. 142-172.

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

III. Democratic Politics

Week 6 (30 November 2016)

Politics and Parties in India: Change and Continuity

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.

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

Supplementary Readings

Herring,Ronald.J. 1999. Embedded Particularism: India's Failed Developmental State. In *The Development State* by Meredith Woo-Cummings (ed.). Ithaca: Cornell University Press: Pp. 306-304.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. 2010. *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas*. India: Permanent Black. Introduction, Chapters 1, 5, 7 and the conclusion.

Week 7 (7 December 2016)

'Interests' Based Arguments: State and Society

Politics and interests are deeply intertwined and has 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 of the prevailing interests in the society? Or do these interests govern them? Is there a middle ground between these two extremes? In this session we will examine this aspect of Indian politics, which has been often seen as both has a hindering or a facilitating governance and development in India.

Essential Readings

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

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

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

Supplementary Readings

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

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

Week 8 (14 December 2016)

Ideas and Institutional Change

There is counter argument, which is challenging the 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 engage with some of this literature. We will learn about how institutions change and contextualize these arguments in case of Indian Political and Social Institutions. Students are encouraged to think critically and discuss about contrary viewpoints and debates regarding institutional change .

Essential Readings

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

Jha, Himanshu. 2014. *State Processes, Ideas and Institutional Change: Case of Right to Information Act in India*. Governance (Forthcoming).

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

Supplementary Readings

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

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

Week 9 (21 December 2016)

Political Mobilization of Caste

Caste has been an enduring feature of the Indian social landscape. It was argued that the democratic politics would ameliorate this discriminatory institution. Instead, we see that caste is inextricably linked in a two-way relation with the democratic politics. What are the patterns of this relationship? How does it connect with the emerging politics and social mobilization at the state and the national level? It is also observed that the Political and social mobilization in India has empowered the backward castes. Is this good for India? This week we will examine these dimensions of caste and politics in India. The readings will facilitate our thinking towards providing answers to some of the questions raised.

Essential Readings

Weiner, Myron. 2001. The Struggle for Equality. In, *The Success of India's Democracy* by Atul Kohli (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 8 Pp.193-225.

Shah, Ghanshyam (Ed.). 2002. *Caste and Democratic Politics in India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black. Introduction:1-27, Chapter 13-New Phase in backward Caste Politics in Bihar 1990-2000:235-269

Supplementary Readings

Chandra, Kanchan. 2004. *Why do Ethnic Parties Succeed?* New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 7 & 9.

Jaffrelot, Christophe. 2002. *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India*. New York: Columbia University Press. In Part 1 Chapters-1, 4 and 5 ; In Part 2 Chapters 1,2 and 4.

Jodhka, Surendra, S. 2012. *Caste-* Oxford India Short Introduction. New Delhi: Oxford

University Press. Chapters 1,2 and 4.

Christmas Break December 24, 2016 to January 8, 2017

Week 10 (11 January 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

Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph.2008. Congress learns to Lose. In *Political Transitions in Dominant Party Systems: Learning to Lose*. By Edward Friedman and Joseph Wong, (Ed). New York, Routledge, 2008. Pp: 15-39

Ruparelia, Sanjay. 2015. *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Read Introduction:1-15;Chapter 1 :45:103;Conclusion:319-344.

Supplementary Readings

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

Suri, K.C and Suhas Palshikar. 2014. Critical Shifts in the Long Term, Caution in the Short Term . *Economic and Political Weekly* 49(39). Special Issue on India's 2014 Lok Sabha Elections

IV. Governance and Development: Social Change

Week 11 (18 January 2017)

Governance and Development: Rights, Citizenship and Welfare

Since 2004 state has reaffirmed its commitment towards "rights based development" granted legal rights to the citizens by enacting laws such as Right to Information (Transparency and Accountability), National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Right to Food and Work), Right to Education and Forest Rights Act (for the tribal citizens living in forest areas). This is also illustrated in the change in government lexicon from

‘needs based logic’ towards a more rights based approach marking a shift from policy/programmatic approach to what is known as “social citizenship” (Marshall 1950). In this session we will discuss the social-political and economic context these rights based legislations.

Essential Readings

Ruparelia, Sanjay. 2013. India’s New Rights Agenda: Genesis, Promises, Risks . *Pacific Affairs* 86 (3): 569-590.

Das, S.K. 2013. *India's Rights Revolution: Has It Worked for the Poor?*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. (Read Introduction, also see Chapters 1,2 and 3).

Supplementary Readings

Dreze Jean, “Employment Guarantee and the Right to Work,” in Niraja G Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010): 510-520.

Week 12 (25 January 2016)

Rights Based legislations- Cases of Right to Information Act (RTIA) and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

In continuation of the previous session we will examine two specific right in this session, namely, RTI and MGNREGS. We will discuss about what do these rights mean? What were the processes behind enacting these rights based legislations? And most importantly how are they implemented in India and what do they mean for the poor citizens of the country where more than 40% still live in poverty?

Essential Readings

Naib, Sidhir. 2013. *The Right to Information in India*. Oxford India Short Introductions. India: Oxford University Press. Chapters 2 and 3: 32-60

Reetika, Khera.2011. *The Battle for Employment Guarantee*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press: 43-80.

Supplementary Readings

Singh, Shekhar. 2011. The Genesis and Evolution of the Right to Information Regime in India. *Transparent Governance in South Asia*, ed. by Shekhar Singh et al. India: Indian Institute of Public Administration.

Dutta Puja, Rinku Murgai, Martin Ravallion and Dominique Van De Walle (2012), ‘Does India’s Employment Guarantee Scheme Guarantee Employment?’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVII (16): 55-64.

V. Economic Change

Week 13 (1 February 2017)

India's Economic Transition

In this session we will discuss India's economic rise. India recorded a growth rate greater than 7% for the last few years—a rate that surpasses all the major economies of the world including China. India is now the third largest country in terms of the purchasing power parity (PPP). We will discuss India's transition from a closed economy to the one where the economy has become substantially engaged with the global economy. Why did a growth that grew very slowly for a long time begin to grow much more rapidly in the recent times? This is both a political and economic process that has involved the state & entrepreneurs.

Essential Readings

Mukherji, Rahul. 2014. *Globalization of Deregulation: Ideas, Interests, and the Tipping Point*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Chapters 2 & 3: 38-63.

Nayar, Baldev.R (Ed.). 2007. *Globalization and Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press (Introduction and Chapter 2).

Panagariya, Arvind. 2008. *India: The Emerging Giant*. New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction, Chapters 5 & 6: 95-110.

Supplementary Readings

Kumar, Nirmalya. 2013. *India's Global Powerhouses: How are they Taking on the World*. Harvard: Harvard Business Press.

Kapur, Devesh. 2010. *Diaspora, Development, and Democracy: The Domestic Impact of International Migration from India*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 & 4: 1-23 & 84-124

Damodaran, Harish. 2008. *India's New Capitalists: Caste, Business and Industry in Modern Nation*. India: Palgrave MacMillan.

Week 14 (8 February 2017)

Wrapping up

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

