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The Indian Members of Parliament and Legislative Assemblies

Project conducted by Christophe Jaffrelot, Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales (CERI)

This project has become a part of a larger project: From Identity to Interest? Quantitative and Qualitative Explanations of Electoral Change in Rural and Urban India which is funded by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR, France), the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR, India) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, UK).

[More details](#)

Short description

This project aims at developing a database of the Indian Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs), the assemblies elected at the state level throughout the Indian Union. This database is bound to become a reference for the quantitative/qualitative research on Indian political personnel.

Five dimensions will be explored:

1. Gender and religion belonging of elected representatives
2. The emergence of political dynasties
3. The local networks
4. The impact of the positive discrimination policy
5. Corruption and criminalisation

It is intended to build on the results of the collaborative work that has already been accomplished by researchers of the CSDS (New Delhi), CSH (New Delhi), CERI-Sciences Po (Paris) and the CDSP-Sciences Po (Paris) in the years 1999-2008. This team of researchers has collected socio-demographic data regarding the Members of the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian Parliament) who have been elected in the Hindi-speaking states and the Members of the Legislative Assemblies of 16 of the largest Indian states between 1952 and 2007.

The caste background of these elected representatives has been the key variable of this first phase of data collection. Consequently, the edited volume that has resulted from this collective endeavour has focused on caste issues. This book has been published in the prestigious series of Mukulika Banerjee, "Exploring the Political in South Asia". After the book came out, the data have been processed by the CSDS and the CDSP, two institutions which are gradually making them available to the public.



Detailed objectives

The new Indian MPs and MLAs project aims to update and to enlarge this database. The data pertaining to caste need to be updated because elections have been held in most of the states we dealt with in the book mentioned above. But the new research team that has been reconstituted for this new project will also explore other dimensions of the social profile and modus operandi of the Indian MPs and MLAs. The aim is to cross a series of socio-political variables for inter-states comparative thematic analysis.

1/ The social profile of elected representatives needs to be analysed beyond their caste background. Gender and religion need to be factored in and to be put into perspective with other variables such as education and professional trajectories. For years, India has debated the opportunity of a women quota in parliament. We shall be able to throw some light on this debate by presenting a sociology of the women MPs and MLAs of India and its evolution in the course of time.

Similarly, the political representation of the religious minorities has become an issue by the turn of the 1990s when the rise of Hindu nationalism has furthered the marginalization of religious minorities, including the Muslims. We intend to study the evolution of the religious minorities' (and more especially of the Muslims') representation in the Indian Parliament and in the Legislative assemblies from a quantitative as well as qualitative viewpoint.

2/ The emergence of political dynasties has become a major subject in the Indian public sphere. According to many commentators, this phenomenon puts the democratic quality of the Indian political system into question, not only because of the resilience of the Nehru/Gandhis at the top, but also because of the multiplication of political lineages at the local level. If the dynasties at the helm of major political parties are a well-known phenomenon, regional and local dynasties have been largely ignored by the specialised literature. We intend to measure the importance of this phenomenon in quantitative terms at both levels – MPs and MLAs –, in different states, and its evolution in the course of time.

We shall also establish types of political families after coding different configurations, including the political lineages which have not taken place, and which « should » have happened given the local influence of one politician whose son(s) or daughter(s) have tried (or could have tried) to take over from his father or mother.

3/ The local networks explaining the re-election of many MPs and MLAs will be a third entry point, especially in rural contexts which remain more opaque than the urban ones. Two hypotheses will be tested regarding the changing role of the cooperatives and the Mandi Samitis (agricultural markets) as political resources in the framework of clientelistic arrangements. Quantitative and qualitative work on the relation between the social profile of MPs and MLAs and indicators of political competitiveness at the constituency level will also be undertaken.

4/ The Indian democracy has been the framework of an exceptionally ambitious programme of positive discrimination since 1950: the Scheduled Castes (ex-Untouchables) being 15% of the population according to the Census of India, an equal percentage of seats has been reserved to these castes in the Lok Sabha and in the Legislative Assemblies. We shall analyse the specificity of the MPs and MLAs who have been elected in the reserved constituencies and study these constituencies after they have been dereserved. Do former Scheduled Castes MPs and MLAs manage to be reelected after dereservation takes place? If not, do the successful candidates have a specific profile?



5/ Last but not least, we will pay a special attention to another topical subject: corruption and criminalisation of politics in India. To measure the evolution of these two phenomena, the political scientists can now rely on the affidavits that each candidate to an MP or an MLA seat needs to fill. Crossed with the other variables coded in the database, we should be able to draw for the first time patterns of personal enrichment of elected representatives by groups (castes, parties, governments) and regions. Beyond the quantification of the politicians-criminals network, we shall try to understand the functionality of criminals in India's political systems and why voters continue to support tainted candidates, when they do.

The collected data will be processed by the CSDS and the CDSP, pooled together and made available to the public after the book resulting from this research project will be out. A similar modus operandi has been followed before and after the publication of *Rise of the Plebeians?*

Participants:

The team of researchers involved in this project comprises senior and junior scholars (including a large number of doctoral students) from India, the United States and France. It relies on a solid network of institutions which have already worked together: CSDS (New Delhi), CSH (New Delhi), New York University (New York), Columbia University (New York), LSE (London), CERI-Sciences Po (Paris) and CDSP (Paris).

Sciences Po-related scholars involved

- Christophe Jaffrelot (Sciences Po - CERI)
- Anne-Sophie Cousteaux (Sciences Po - CDSP)
- Romain Carlevan (PhD Student)
- Virginie Dutoya (PhD student)
- Juliette Galonnier (PhD student)
- Gayatri Rathore (PhD student)
- Gilles Verniers (PhD student)

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From Identity to Interests? Quantitative and Qualitative Explanations of Electoral Change in Rural and Urban India

The network intends to compare politics in Indian cities and villages by studying state and local elections, quantitatively as well as qualitatively. It hypothesizes that the voters are moving from identity-related to issue-based motivations - in cities if not in villages - and that the changing profile of the elected representatives – including the MLAs – reflect an ongoing social democratization process in spite of the development of local dynasties and the resilience of patronage. The network will bring in conversation researchers combining different social sciences and different methodologies to demonstrate the complementarity of survey-based and ethnographic approaches in the study of elections.



- 1 - Jawaharlal Nehru University (Centre for Political Studies): Prof Pralay Kamungo (lead)
- 2 - London School of Economics and Political Science: Dr Mukulika Banerjee (lead)
- 3 - Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar (Central) University (Department of Political Science): Dr Narendra Kumar (lead)
- 4 - Sciences Po (CERI and CDSP): Professor Christophe Jaffrelot (lead)
- 5 - King's College (King's India Institute): Dr Louise Tillin (lead)
- 6 - Janagraaha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy: Unna Govindarajan (lead)

This network intends to compare politics in Indian cities and villages by studying state and local elections over three years, quantitatively as well as qualitatively, with special references to the voters' motivations and the elected representatives' profiles. Though it remains predominantly rural, India's society is becoming more urban. By 2030, it is predicted that over 40% of Indians will live in towns and cities. Does this development transform politics at the state and local level? Have the performance of government and the economy become more important factors in explaining voting patterns and election outcomes or do ethnic identity and clientelistic relationships between political representatives and groups of voters remain critical? Is issue-based politics more prominent in the urban context and identity-politics more resilient in rural India? What is the nature of caste- and religion-based politics in urban electoral spaces as compared to rural areas? As democratic participation has deepened in India since the 1980s, the key arenas of political contestation have become more local. Village, district and state governments are central to the political imaginary, yet the central government remains a prime mover in many welfare programmes and in macro-economic policy. How do voters approach elections to different tiers of government? These are the sets of questions that the network will tackle by combining methodological approaches which are usually mutually exclusive: questionnaire-based surveys and ethnographic fieldworks, since this multidisciplinary network is keen to demonstrate the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative methods.

The network contains six research groups in France, India and the UK who are collectively engaged in world-renowned research on political representation and institutions, voting behaviour, citizenship and governance in India. The network aims to develop existing research programmes and bring them into conversation in order to frame and address emergent issues in India's democracy. The network has three major thematic foci: 1) the social profile of political representatives in India's states; 2) voters and voting behaviour in state and local elections; and 3) urban and rural politics compared. Across each of these themes, activities organised by the network will explore the relationship between 'issues' and 'identities' in electoral politics. The network convenes some of the most established scholars in this field, early career researchers and a research-oriented NGO. The group is explicitly inter-disciplinary and seeks to harness the complementarities between political science, sociology and anthropology – at the intersection between quantitative and qualitative methods – to examine political practice in India.