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Source: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 34/35 (Aug. 21 - Sep. 3, 1999), pp. 2434-2439

Published by: [Economic and Political Weekly](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4408338>

Accessed: 29-05-2015 05:46 UTC

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Pragmatic Politics in Goa, 1987-99

Peter Ronald deSouza

The past two assembly terms in Goa were dominated by defections when MLAs left one party and joined another without facing the electorate again. This politics of pragmatism makes party ideology almost irrelevant. But voters do support parties on the basis of their policies. The MGP has not been able to translate its 'bahujan' ideology into votes and seats. The BJP has offered a softer version of hindutva than elsewhere in the country, but has not found many takers. The Congress is in a relatively strong position, but voters are unhappy with its unashamed practice of 'pragmatic' politics.

A review of the past 12 years of politics in Goa will allow us to move beyond the tumult of the moment to a study of the patterns which emerge, to a deeper evaluation of political events, issues, trends, and personalities. When these 12 years are read not as a series of moments but as the *longue duree* of a society, some interesting questions concerning the politics of democracies emerge. In this essay I shall stand back from the tumult of these 12 years and try and find, amidst the din and dust, something of significance.

I Introduction

The story begins with the attainment of statehood on May 30, 1987. From a union territory with an assembly comprising of 30 members the new state has now an enlarged assembly of 40 members, a change in numbers symptomatic of the increasing power of the state. This shift has consequences for the different domains of social life. In the economic domain, for example, the state has now to be fiscally more independent since it is less able and eligible for grants from the centre. This has resulted in a decline in state development expenditure [D'Souza 1997:17]. The shift has also had symbolic consequences, in that now the citizens of Goa are on par with the citizens of other states in their ability to select their president and to decide their own futures. It has also had political consequences in that statehood has given greater autonomy to the political leaders thereby reducing the *de jure* power of the central bureaucracy and of the lieutenant governor. Decisions concerning items on the state list can now be taken in Goa and do not need the approval of the bureaucracy in Delhi as had been the case earlier under union territory status [Rubinoff 1998: Ch 5]. These consequences – economic, symbolic, political – have taken place during a period of dramatic changes in national politics; changes which, when read together with changes at the state level, present a picture of politics in Goa that is fairly complex. Let me elaborate.

In addition to the usual issues of agriculture, mining, transport, industry, unemployment, etc, that impact upon politics, the issues that need to be noted, if not analysed, with respect to their significance for state politics in the years 1987-99 are the following: (i) the transformation of land from a tool in the production process into an alienable commodity in an emerging market in and for land; (ii) the growing role of tourism in expanding the contribution of the services sector in the economy [Sawkar et al 1998], and in its effects on identity politics; (iii) the demographic changes brought about by immigration and emigration and the consequences of this migration for political and social life; (iv) the controversies centring around large development projects such as the Konkan Railway and the proposal for a free port, with respect to their irreversible impacts on Goa; and (v) the expansion in the size of the state bureaucracy as a result of which there is one government official for approximately every 26 citizens, making the state a rent-seeking rather than just an enabling state. I have thought it fit to foreground these five issues here because the dynamics of party and electoral politics in Goa have in considerable measure been influenced by them.

However, before I get into an analysis of the politics of the period, let me say something especially about the market in land because of the enormous impact it has had on the politics of this period. My comments will be in the nature of a series of propositions, a potential research agenda perhaps, since unfortunately there is little systematic study on this issue on which I can draw. I should like to begin by stating that the most significant factor in this decade of politics is the dramatic change in the status of land. Whereas earlier the value of land was assessed in terms of its contribution to agriculture now it is assessed in terms of its worth as a tradable commodity. A new group of players has emerged in this market in and for land, the most significant of which is the political

class of bureaucrats and elected representatives. The growth in this market has been because of the role of many actors eg, builders, landlords, tenants, politicians, each of whom has a stake in the network of transactions. The dynamics of this market has as yet not been mapped in terms of (i) the interests and strategies of each actor; (ii) the monetary volume of the transactions in the sector; and (iii) its contribution to the economy. But suffice it to say that it is very large as can be gauged from the changing physical landscape of the towns and beaches of Goa.

These transactions are further strengthened by the expansion of the tourism industry. Some of the instruments that the industry has developed for raising capital, such as the 'rent-back facility', where builder, hotelier, house-owner, and regulatory agency collude to create large properties in tourist sites, strengthen this market in land. Since all these activities involve getting many government permissions, covering the whole range from planning permissions to occupancy certificates, to loans from the Goa Economic Development Corporation, a state owned entity, the politician and bureaucrat become key figures in the various transactions involved. Further, since these transactions involve large sums of money, and since they constitute one of the major economic activities in the state, the political economy of government in Goa has begun to be constituted around this market in land. Goa has also emerged as a society with a significant middle class who bring new meanings to politics. They like to see politics as spectacle. I have made mention of this class here because its internal dynamics has significance for politics, particularly democratic politics.¹

The foregoing is a profile of a society undergoing change at many levels, and as a result of many forces, some of which are government induced, some of which are because of other agencies. The parameters of this change is vigorously contested on every plane, cultural [Angley

1999], environmental,² economic,³ social and of course political. This last is the theme of this paper which I shall examine a little later. Before I do so, however, I need to locate this reading of politics in Goa within the larger frame of Indian politics. Doing so is necessary because the process of linking up with the larger Indian polity shows impacts of the larger on the smaller which are both, direct and delayed, superficial and more enduring.

Three aspects of these linkages could perhaps be mentioned here to illustrate the point. The first is the culture of party politics in Goa. Party politics has acquired the same internal logic, perhaps through imitation, as party politics at the central level in terms of palace intrigue, factions, the authority status of the high command, the etiquette of subservience and sycophancy, and most significantly the blurring of the distinction between the personal and the public. The second is the centrality of politics to daily life. not just in a removed sense of 'everything is effected by politics', but in a more immediate sense of politics as spectacle, of a curiosity to know about the latest episodes in the long running and popular political drama. A measure of this centrality is the fact that Goa supports eight daily newspapers in three languages. The third aspect is the political cultural impact of the mobilisation around the demolition of the Babri masjid. This mobilisation has affected the way the

communities have constituted themselves, an observation that will become more apparent when we look at election results of the last decade particularly the rise of the BJP and the decline of the MGP.

The preceding elaborate prefatory note is intended to provide the perspective within which the high stakes that parties and politicians play for and that will be discussed in the following pages can be understood. The market in land is the text within which the actions and choices of political agents can be understood. This must be borne in mind when I discuss the politics of the period. My reading of the changes at the surface level of politics must be seen in terms of its base in the political economy of land. I will discuss the politics of the state in three sections: (i) the changes in the institutions of the polity; (ii) the trends within party organisations and the party system; and (iii) the emerging electoral landscape. Since elections are a sort of diagnostic tool for examining the state of the polity, this last section will help us understand better the consequences of the interaction between the domain of society and that of politics.

II

Changes in political institutions

An analysis of the experiences of political institutions in these twelve years establishes one clear fact, that an aggressive and aspiring political class, made up of different

segments, has emerged which has taken possession of political institutions and begun to fashion them after its own interests. The extent of this fashioning will depend upon the tension between the flexibility and resilience of the institution, flexibility to accommodate interests/directives, and resilience deriving from the logic of its rules beyond which it cannot go. The agency of this political class, brought in through individuals such as faction or party leaders, eg, Churchill Alemao, Ravi Naik, Ramakant Khalap, Manohar Parrikar, Wilfred D'Souza, Luizinho Faleiro, or through groups such as Bahujan Samaj, Kshatriya Bhandari Samaj, the Catholic Church, and through the cultural perspectives within which they are located, begins to cause a strain on institutions which now have to negotiate a balance between the 'public interest', ostensibly expressed through their impersonality, and the 'particular interests' represented by the interventions of the political class. The outcomes of this struggle between the two interests can be seen as the episodes and events that make up the history of our institutions, in this case those of Goa during the years 1987-99. Let me illustrate with a few cases.

Let me begin with the institution of the legislature. Let me draw attention to some of the significant events that occurred during the period under review when the assembly completed two terms (1989-94

TABLE 1: DEFECTIONS AND THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

Speaker	Period	Political Party	Date of Defection/ Split	Petitioner	Against Defection/	Petition filed	Judgment given	No of Months	Verdict
Luis P Barbosa	22/1/90-14/4/90	Cong
K J Jhalmi member 10th sch	29/3/90 to 14/12/90	MGP	24/3/90	Luizinho Faleiro (Cong)	L P Barbosa	17/3/90	14/12/90	91/2	Barbosa disqualified
Surendra Sirsat (speaker)	26/4/90 to 4/4/91	MGP	(i) 24/3/90 (ii) ... (iii) 24/3/90 (iv) 3/1/91	(i) D Fernandes (Cong) (ii) V Naik (MGP) (iii) M Amshekhar (MGP) (iv) K J Jhalmi (MGP)	(i) 6 memb (GPP) (ii) C Pegado (Ind) (iii) 7 memb (GPP) (iv) Ravi Naik (Cong)	(i) 28/3/90 (ii) 30/11/90 (iii) 22/11/90 (iv) 25/1/91	(i) 13/12/90 (ii) 7/2/91 (iii) 6/2/91 (iv) 15/2/91	(i) 91/2 (ii) 2 1/2 (iii) 21/2 (iv) 22 days	(i), (ii), (iii) petition dismissed (iv) Naik disqualified
Simon D'Souza (Acting Speaker)	5/4/91 to 25/7/91	Cong	Review Petition	(i) Ravi Naik (Cong) (ii) Bandekar/ Chopdekar (Cong)	Speaker Sirsat's decision	(i) 4/3/91 (ii) 4/3/91	(i) 8/3/91 (ii) 8/3/91	(i) 4 days (ii) 4 days	(i), (ii) speaker's decision overturned
Haroon Shaik Hassan (Speaker)	26/7/91 till 1994	Cong	(i) 24/3/91	(i) Victor Gonsalves (ii) Raut	(i) 6 GPP members (ii) D Chodankar	(i) 4/1/92 (ii) ...	(i) 15/9/94 (ii) ...	(i) 21/2 Years	Petition dismissed
Tomazinho Cardoso (Speaker)	16/1/95 till 10/2/99	Cong	27/7/98	Pratapsingh Rane	Wilfred D.Souza and 4 others	27/7/98	Interim 28/7/98 Final 29/7/98	24 hours 48 hours	Interim disqualification (ex parte)

and 1994-99), the third just begun in June 1999. The most repetitive aspect of this period was the act of defection when MLAs left one party and joined another without resigning and facing the electorate. Regardless of the constraints of the 52nd amendment, members, after elections, saw politics only in terms of their personal short-term interests and, therefore, unconstrained by party ideology changed sides quite often establishing firmly the politics of pragmatism [deSouza 1998]. Such pragmatism appears to have a considerable elasticity.

The data in Table 1 give us a synoptic account of the movement between parties of defectors, the role of the speaker, the time taken to pronounce judgment during which the defector continued to enjoy parliamentary privileges and in some cases even the exercise of power. It is a picture of the new culture of pragmatic politics that is emerging.

The next interesting aspect of the period is the 10 changes in government in these two terms indicating that the assembly developed an autonomy of its own with its 40 members willing and able to work out, short-term coalition combinations arrived at through constructed legislative majorities. Election opponents became allies and allies traitors [Fernandes 1997]. The frequent changing of coalition partners, and the lingual acrobatics that were employed to provide justifications for it, has resulted in the moral cement of society suffering severe erosion. The domain of public morality lost its ability to deter public men and women from transgressing the limits that underlay the ethics of representation, that constituted the evolved codes of political behaviour in a representative democracy. Not one MLA, during these 12 years, thought fit to get an endorsement from his voters for these shifts in association. Nobody resigned and sought re-election. While the initial defections caused some outrage, resulting in the voters punishing defectors in the 1994 elections, its continued occurrence dulled public morality with most of the habitual defectors returning in the 1999 elections. The only democratic code that seems to have retained some force is majority rule within the assembly. All else was negotiable. During this period seven governments lasted for less than one year, one less than two years, and two more than two years. One government lasted two days (Table 2).

These changes in government in some cases also involved changes of speakers who, empowered by the 52nd amendment to the Constitution, the Anti-Defection

Act, acted in a blatantly partisan manner deciding on the legality or illegality of defections on the basis of whether the defectors were changing over to the speaker's party. In some cases these decisions were taken in a matter of days in some cases months (Table 1) making a mockery of the spirit of the Act [deSouza 1998a]. In one case a member (Kashinath Jhalmi) appointed under the 52nd amendment to decide on the legality of the speaker who defected to become chief minister, served, during the period of the decision, as the law minister of the very same chief minister. The office of the speaker lost its high status as an office impartially regulating the discursive dynamics of the polity. It came to be seen as an office that is purchasable not earned. These defections resulted in jumbo cabinets with the number of ministers growing to 14 in a house of 40 members.⁴ Since members from the opposition, in alliance with factions from the ruling group, formed new governments, one could reasonably argue that during an assembly term, particularly 1989-94, many members in the legislature, because of jumbo cabinets and repeated defections, became members of the executive thereby undermining the doctrine of separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, an important principle of a democracy [deSouza 1998b:8]. The principle of collective responsibility also faced erosion since members from an earlier cabinet joined the following cabinet, which was formed through defections, and in their justifications challenged the integrity of the cabinets they had just left. These happenings in the assembly have shown (and no political party is exempt from this charge) that the moral force of the concept of the 'laxmanrekha', the limiting codes constraining behaviour in a democracy, is very weak in Goa.

During this period the institution of the governor also came under a cloud. Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh had to resign because of his dismissal of the Wilfred D'Souza government without consulting either the president or the majority group in the legislative assembly thereby violating the letter and spirit of article 16(4) of the Constitution. Further, this political competitiveness between groups brought the courts into the picture requiring them to now resolve issues of defection within the legislature. This is an undesirable development since it weakens the doctrine of separation of powers and sovereignty of jurisdiction. Now matters of defection, and the decisions of the speaker, because of the slovenly way in which they have been handled, have got linked to issues

of 'due process' and 'natural justice' [D'Mello 1994] making them thereby eligible for judicial review.

In contrast to these negative trends, however, the institutional topography of Goa also witnessed some positive developments. Since the 73rd amendment gave the third tier of government constitutional status. The Conformity Act in Goa also incorporated some of the provisions. As a result one-third of the seats in the 182 panchayats were reserved for women. Many new faces entered the political system generating a new dynamism and extending the range of representation. The panchayati raj institutions are in their early learning and have exhibited characteristics of collusion and competition with vested interests and dominant groups.

III

Trends within Party Organisations

There are five major players in the party system. The first is the Congress which I will call the 'dominant party', in a sense akin to Rajni Kothari's classification, since it sets the terms of party competition and since all the other parties develop their strategies in relation to it, or owe their existence to it. The second, in terms of its salience (although declining) during this period, is the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) which has developed a peculiar master-slave relationship with the Congress. The third is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has grown by cannibalising the MGP with which it once had a relationship, converting a vote bank that was rooted in a strong bahunjan ideology into one that can perhaps best be described as soft hindutva. The fourth and not insignificant group is the small, local, personality based parties such as the United Goans Democratic Party (UGDP) and the Goa Rajiv Congress Party (GRCP)⁵ who have the ability to win a few seats in the assembly and who, again to borrow Rajni Kothari's terms, can be described as parties

TABLE 2: DURATION OF CABINET GOVERNMENT

Chief Minister	Period	Duration
Churchill		
Alemao	March-April 1990	17 days
Barbosa	April-Dec 1990	9 months
Ravi Naik	Jan 1991-May 1993	28 months
Willie	May 1993-April 1994	16 months
Ravi Naik	April-April 1994	2 days
Willie	April-Dec 1994	8 months
Rane	Dec 1994-July 1998	48 months
Willie	July 1998-Nov 1998	4 months
Luizinho		
Faleiro	Nov 1998-Feb 1999	3 months
Luizinho	since June 1999	since June 9

of pressure with respect to the Congress. The fifth significant group is the independents who have, as in the 1989-94 assembly, sometimes held the balance of power. It is the dynamics between these five players which sets the character of the party system.

Of all the above it is the Congress that best exemplifies politics of pragmatism. This is evident in its success in accommodating opposed factions, in its converting into a fine art the practice of expelling and re-admitting politicians who had left the party bringing down its government on several occasions,⁶ in its stressing winnability rather than venality, in its manipulation of the election of the speaker,⁷ in its splitting of opposition parties especially the MGP and the UGDP,⁸ in its expansion of the cabinet and appointment of MLAs to 'lucrative' posts such as the chairmanships of the two planning authorities and of the Economic Development Corporation, etc. These are just some of the practices of the Congress which have ensured its dominance during the decade, except for brief periods when large sections left to form GPP (Alemao and others 1990) or GRCP (Willie and others 1998) (see Table 1). More than any other party the Congress has demonstrated an ability to manage dissidence in that it has even got implacable enemies to work together. In the 1999 cabinet, for example, Faleiro has managed to have both Ravi Naik and Churchill Alemao in the cabinet even though it was Naik who had imprisoned Alemao and proceeded against him when he (Naik) was chief minister. This success is because of a dual strategy of invoking the 'mind' of the high command, which few ambitious Congressmen would like to go against, and of tactically being one step ahead of the dissidents. Faleiro in 1999 has succeeded so far in curbing open revolt by having Rane as speaker, thereby holding the threat of disqualification over any dissidents, by accommodating major faction leaders within the cabinet, and by making regular trips to meet Sonia.

The MGP is a party with its eyes on the past. Unlike the Congress it had a mass base across most of Goa, based on its bahun ideology, (I will discuss this later when I discuss the vote) and a fairly strong network of local leaders and followers which it has succeeded in frittering away. Unlike the Congress, the MGP has not had the capacity to manage factions and hence has bled regularly. Factions have left and joined the Congress. Ravi Naik, Narvenker, Wilfred Misquita, all felt that it would be better for their interest, and that of their

constituency, if they bargained their way into the Congress. The time horizon of most of these politicians is just one assembly and hence, when they saw themselves in the opposition, they strove to become members of the ruling party by defecting from the MGP to the Congress. As a result the politics of the palace replaced the politics of social classes, within which the MGP was earlier rooted because of its bahun ideology. The MGP has also suffered because of poor organisation skills, because of a paucity of funds (unlike the Congress) since it has been in opposition for too long and dominant interests which depend on the goodwill of the state such as the mining lobby, or the industrialists and builders do not contribute in large numbers to its coffers. Another factor that has probably led to an erosion of the MGP social base is the immigration from other parts of India, a demographic change that favours national parties especially since this migrant population is concentrated in certain constituencies. It is estimated to be over 20 of the total population. The final factor that has compounded the MGP's woes is the cannibalising of its mass base by the BJP with which it had aligned in the 1994 assembly elections when it tried to consolidate what it perceived to be a cohesive Hindu vote. The strategy did not succeed (Table 4).

The BJP is a new party in Goa and has grown significantly from 0.47 of the assembly vote in 1989 to 26.19 in 1999. The BJP has succeeded by presenting itself in multiple ways (i) as an alternative to Congress – a picture which has found some appeal especially among the middle class disgusted by the politics of defection and pragmatism represented by the Congress (even Catholics in some constituencies voted for the BJP); (ii) as a soft hindutva party which has enabled it to poach on the MGP vote bank and to attract those who have a communal ideology; and (iii) as the state representative of the government at the centre. It has benefited from the Vajpayee and the Kargil factor where the BJP has got considerable media mileage. Its organisational strength

comes from its close links with the Sangh combine particularly the secretive RSS. These have so far been inadequately probed and so the extent of control by this extra-constitutional authority, the remote control mechanism, is not properly understood. Its leader Parrikar has been able to portray himself as an alert and aggressive 'leader of the opposition', a title which the party has now wrested from the MGP. When I disaggregate the votes of the last three assembly elections, I shall comment on the character of its social base and on its potential to challenge the Congress as the party of governance.

The smaller parties such as the UGDP, GPP, GRCP came into existence because of the political manoeuvrings of their leaders – Alemao, Barbosa, Willie, etc. They have no ideology, no potential to dethrone the Congress. They apply pressure on the Congress since they draw their support from the Congress vote base. Most of them are located in areas where the Congress is strong and have no potential to threaten the BJP or MGP. In fact they have formed governments by forging alliances with the MGP and BJP (Table 2). They achieve as groups what independents achieve as individuals which is to apply pressure on the Congress and to create the conditions for their merger or admittance into the Congress. The vote base of this

TABLE 4: REGIONWISE VOTES POLLED IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

		(Per cent)			
Year	Region	Congress	BJP	MGP	IND
1989	NN	34.43	0.81	53.72	11.04
	NO	40.59	0.49	40.30	18.63
	SN	38.17	0	54.54	7.29
	SO	49.04	0.30	13.00	37.66
	Total	40.52	0.47	39.52	19.50
1994	NN	31.64	11.95	34.11	22.30
	NO	44.02	10.91	20.05	25.02
	SN	36.75	0	24.56	38.69
	SO	35.28	8.15	4.99	51.57
	Total	36.90	8.89	20.74	33.46
1999	NN	36.97	31.09	23.3	8.64
	NO	34.31	25.09	10.22	30.38
	SN	31.80	29.33	19.39	19.47
	SO	49.43	19.75	4.25	26.58
	Total	38.55	26.19	14.03	21.21

TABLE 3: PARTY SEATS AND VOTING PERCENTAGE 1989-99

Year	Congress		MGP		BJP		Independents and Others	
	Per Cent	Seats	Per Cent	Seats	Per Cent	Seats	Per Cent	seats
1989- A	40.52	18	39.52	18	0.47	0	19.50	4
1989- P	46.18	1	27.13	1	0.68	0	23.34	0
1991- P	57.65	2	20.57	0	15.61	0	6.15	0
1994- A	36.90	18	20.74	12	8.89	4	33.46	6
1996- P	34.36	0	26.77	1	13.75	0	25.1	1
1998- P	31.59	2	13.17	0	30.04	0	29.19	0
1999- A	38.55	21	14.03	4	26.19	10	21.21	5

Note: P= Parliament; A= Assembly.

group is sizeable since it contains the protest vote against the politics of Congress which through the period has been in excess of 19 per cent of the vote (Table 3). These broad trends that I have identified do not convey (i) the importance of powerbrokers; (ii) the intensity of constituency level competition; (iii) the role of personal charisma; or (iv) the differences in voter preferences between new and old voters, men and women, urban and rural, educated and illiterate, etc. It does not illustrate the social profile of the vote. Table 3 presents a summary of aggregate votes polled and seats won by each party and gives a sense of the strengths of each group. The small parties and independents have been clubbed together.

IV Electoral Landscape

During this decade the most significant aspect of the electoral landscape has been the rise of the BJP, the decline of the MGP, and the spirited continuance of the Congress. In this section I shall not do a dissection of each assembly and each parliamentary election, since there are too many particularities to each and these do not lead up to or contribute towards a trend [for details see Fernandes 1997]. For example the 1994 assembly election was a protest vote against the politics of defection when 19 new members, many independents, and some small parties, were elected in the place of many stalwarts such as Ravi Naik, Sardinha, Sheik Haroon Hasan and Khalap [deSouza 1996]; or the 1996 parliamentary elections when the Congress lost both seats one to the MGP and one to the UGDP; or the 1998 parliamentary elections where they won both back. There were too many contingent factors unique to each election for us to be able to derive a trend by focusing on them. The significant feature of the 1989 election was the tie of 18 seats for both Congress and MGP, that of 1994 the alliance of BJP-MGP to consolidate the Hindu vote⁹ which instead got further fragmented since the MGP got less than it had in 1989, and that of 1999 the return of many of the party stalwarts who had been punished in the 1994 elections. Instead of looking at episodes or contingencies I shall look at aggregate voting figures to see if there are any significant trends emerging that have implications for the polity.

I shall divide Goa into four regions north new conquests (NN), north old conquests (NO), south old conquests (SO), and south new conquests (SN) which were impacted differently by Portuguese rule. In the old

conquests, Portuguese rule extended to over four centuries whereas in the new conquests it was for less than two centuries. This resulted in a demographic concentration of the Catholics in the old conquest areas. These are also the more developed regions where the population is more mixed and in which most of the big towns are located. This means that singular appeals are unlikely to produce results since the interests of one group are unlikely to harmonise with the interests of another group. The ideological politics of the BJP is likely to exclude groups which the pragmatic politics of the Congress is likely to accommodate. Hence the Congress, seen as a party of factions, always under internal stress, in contrast to the BJP, whose internal politics remains largely unreported and hence unknown, has a greater chance of forging a electoral majority. In these regions the division of assembly seats are as follows: NN – 12, NO – 11, SO – 11, and SN – 6. Table 4 gives the regional profile over the three assembly elections.

A study of Table 4 reveals three interesting trends. The first is the obvious one of the BJP's growth at the expense of the MGP, a shift in the ideology of the social base from strong bahujan to soft hindutva. The BJP has gained because of the vote against Congress misrule; because the MGP has been unable to present itself as an alternative to Congress, since its important leaders have, post-election, gone and joined the Congress; because of the absence of any alternative to Congress; and because of the Vajpayee factor. This growth has been remarkable in all regions even SO, and strongest in NN which had been the bastion of the MGP in 1989. The MGP has declined in all regions dropping from an aggregate of 39.52 per cent in 1989 to 14.03 per cent in 1999. It remains to be seen whether this is a terminal trend, and whether soft hindutva can replace strong bahujan the former being only a community based ideology whereas the latter ideology has characteristics of both class and caste. It also shows that the hindutva line has made inroads into the strong bahujan, social base even though only in a soft form because its more strident version, espoused by members of the RSS combine such as the Bajranj Dal and VHP after the demolition of the Babri masjid, has few takers in Goa. Alternatively one could ask whether the failure of the MGP lies more at the level of logistics, such as party organisation, poor campaign, inadequate resources, a failure which can be remedied through new leadership restating the bahujan ideology which has

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81-7304-158-X, 1997, 244p. Rs. 375

MANOHAR PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS

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an independent existence and which is experiencing a resurgence in other parts of India. The future of the MGP will be decided by the vision of its leaders.

The second important trend is the bargaining position of the independents and the other smaller parties. The vote of 19.5 per cent in 1989 going up to a high of 33.46 per cent in 1994 and steadying at 21.21 per cent in 1999, shows that there are some leaders who have localised support and who can and have used it to gain positional advantage for themselves either as ministers or as chairpersons of corporations. This is where the GRCP and UGDP, and some independents have the power to be spoilers. They are largely located in the old conquest areas especially SO. They have little influence in NN. This sizeable vote shows that there is a large floating voter group which is searching for a new practice of politics. It gets focused either through a charismatic leader such as Churchill Alemao in 1996, or a localised party such as the UGDP in 1994, to register their disaffection with the Congress. This floating voter represents the search for 'good governance' which the Congress is not seen as providing, and which the electoral system does not seem to offer either. The consequence hence is to apply pressure on the Congress by voting for what I referred to earlier as the 'parties of pressure'. This is not a vote that will go to the MGP or the BJP since it is essentially a secular vote.

The third important factor, paradoxically, is the continuing consolidation equally in all the regions of the Congress. While the defection factor may have benefited the BJP, in that a population that believes that the voting calculus should be driven by principles voted for it in disgust against the Congress, it also helped the Congress in that it gained new supporters brought in by those who had defected to it. The Congress seems to have maintained a steady support base across all three assembly elections and in all the four regions. This is significant because if it can retain its hold over SO and NO, as it appears to have done, because of the anti-communal and thereby anti-BJP vote, and because of the more mixed populations of these areas, then it can continue to be the party of governance because these regions may have been willing to vote for the MGP because of its bahujan ideology but not for the BJP because of its hindutva ideology. The BJP therefore faces a glass ceiling beyond which it cannot rise. Defections therefore have a double impact on the Congress, depleting and replenishing its support base. It helps the Congress

to retain its mixed, secular character. So even though Congress rule has meant instability, because of defections, during election time the Congress benefits because the alternatives appear less desirable especially to populations in SO and NO. In addition to this the Congress benefits from political leaders who have considerable skill in managing elections and who have large war chests. Politics is good business for the Congress, in some cases a family one. The Congress dominance shows that pragmatic politics gives better dividends than ideological politics.

The foregoing has shown that politics in Goa seems to have developed a considerable autonomy in that the actions and decisions of groups and leaders are hardly constrained by either the rules that govern institutions or the moral codes that underlie democratic politics. The mechanisms of accountability which is democracy's chief virtue also do not seem to deter this class of political leaders since, in the decade under review, they seem to have worked out strategies to overcome them. The examples of defections, of the role of the speaker, of winnability in elections are cases in point. The managing of elections and of defections has become the key to ensuring a continued capacity to govern. The Congress leads in this capacity. This is still a long way off from democratic governance. The Congress, and the others, lack this capacity.

Notes

[I should like to thank Adi H Doctor for comments and Alito Siquiera, Aureliano Fernandes, Venecia Cardoso, Santosh Vernekar, Mohan Mangueshkar for assistance with data.]

- 1 Some data on Goa:
 - (i) per capita net state domestic product at current prices in 1998 Rs 19,719;
 - (ii) per capita bank deposits in 1998 Rs 41,380;
 - (iii) birth rate per 1,000 of population in 1998, 17.97;
 - (iv) death rate per 1000 of population in 1998, 7.54;
 - (v) literacy in per cent in 1998, males 83.64, females in 1998, 67.09;
 - (vi) roads per 1,000 sq km of area in 1998, 2038;
 - (vii) urban population to total population growth (per cent) 1987=32.03 to 1998=41.01;
 - (viii) agricultural workers to total workers (per cent) in 1998, 23.94;
 - (ix) per capita domestic consumption of electricity 1987= 77.39 to 1998= 208;
 - (x) motor vehicles per lakh of population 1987=7,876 to 1998=22,483;
 - (xi) population served per hospital in 1998, 10,662.
- 2 The discussion on the Konkan Railway is a case in point. See the note prepared by the Citizen's Committee titled 'Summary of Main

Issues/ Arguments Related to the Konkan Railway Route Alternatives', (May 19, 1993) where the pros and cons of the three routes are presented in terms of costs, environmental impacts, safety, and development consequences.

- 3 The proposal to convert Goa into a free port raised a host of issues. The presentation 'Understanding the Environmental Implications of a Free Port for Goa', January 10, 1998 by Ligia Noronha at the International Centre, Goa sets clearly the agenda for such a debate.
- 4 Jumbo cabinets became an election issue in 1999 resulting in the Congress giving an assurance that the cabinet size would not exceed eight.
- 5 Some other parties are: (now defunct) Goan People's Party (GPP) and Gomant Lok Poxx (GLP).
- 6 Narvenker, Alemao, Shirodkar, Willie, Mauvin are just some of the regulars.
- 7 In 1994 the Congress had the speaker protest manipulate the secret ballot to declare a tie and then cancel it and use the method of a voice vote to elect the speaker Tomazinho Cardozo.
- 8 There are many instances of this in the last decade in 1994 Wilfred Misquita and some others left the MGP and joined the Congress; in 1999 Parulekar and Jose Philip left the UGDP to align with the Congress.
- 9 Since the MGP has its base in the bahujan Hindu vote and the BJP in the saraswat Hindu vote it was felt that an alliance would consolidate the Hindu vote, an argument that overlooks the internal contradictions of caste and class within the Hindu community.

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