

POLITICAL STRATEGIES AND IDEOLOGICAL POSTURES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE BJP IN UTTAR PRADESH AND GUJARAT

ABSTRACT

The emergence of the BJP as the most influential party in India at the national level is primarily due to the party's ascendancy in northern and western India and particularly in UP and Gujarat. Both states show remarkable resemblances in their political development from the late 1980s through most of the 1990s, but at the same time witnessed a significantly different development in the BJP state units' predominant ideological positioning, with the BJP in Gujarat seen as espousing a radical version of Hindu majoritarianism/communalism and the BJP in Uttar Pradesh adopting a cautious course of Hindu nationalism not unlike the 'soft Hindutva' stance generally associated with the conservative wing of the Congress party. This paper attempts to trace the origin of this divergence to strategic shifts necessitated by the distinctive structures of political competition in the respective states.

INTRODUCTION

The resounding victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the elections to the Legislative Assembly of Gujarat in 2004 following the anti-Muslim pogrom in the state led to intense speculation in the Indian media about the 'replicability' of 'Gujarat'. The question of replicability has since been relegated first by the BJP's later posturing as a development-orientated centre-right party and more recently by its losses in the national elections in 2004. Nevertheless, it remains valid. If the BJP was able to turn Gujarat into its own 'model state' and achieve a state of ideological dominance surpassed in contemporary India only by the Left Front in West Bengal, why was it unable to repeat this performance in other Indian states? This paper wants to contribute to this question by offering a comparative analysis of the BJP in two Indian states, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Gujarat, and the strategic factors underlying its ideological positioning there.

The emergence of the BJP as the most influential party of India at the national level between the late 1990s and 2004 is primarily due to the party's ascendancy in northern and western India and (before 2002) particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. Both states show remarkable similarities in their political development from the late 1980s through most of the 1990s, but at the same time witnessed a significantly different evolution in the BJP state units' predominant ideological stances. The BJP in Gujarat is generally depicted as espousing a radical version of Hindu majoritarianism/communalism while the party's state unit in Uttar Pradesh has adopted a cautious course of Hindu nationalism not unlike the 'soft hindutva' stance generally associated with the conservative wing of the Congress party.¹ Based on an analysis of the political actors' strategic compulsions in the respective states, this paper aims

¹ In this paper the terms 'moderate' and 'hard line' are used relative to the ideological discourse within the BJP and do not intend to judge individual commitment to the overall 'hindutva' ideology.

at identifying factors affecting the ideological positioning of right-wing political parties in India between political conservatism and radical communalism. It concludes that the divergence in the BJP state units' ideological postures is to a large degree due to the different challenges faced by these in the respective states that correspond to different strategies adopted for mobilisation: In UP the BJP is compelled by the predominant focus of party politics on the transfer of patronage to specific supportive communities to create and maintain an electoral coalition that is necessarily less inclusive regarding the entire spectrum of Hindu communities. In Gujarat the prevailing bipolarity between the BJP and the Congress forces political actors to develop and maintain electoral bases of support approaching absolute majorities and thus enables political parties to periodically mobilise majoritarian sentiments.

IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONING IN THE ERA OF STATE-CENTRED POLITICAL COMPETITION

Within the national parties in India, the articulation of party ideology remains officially the prerogative of the parties' national organisations. At the same time, electoral competition has become increasingly centred on state-level political compulsions.² The resulting paradox can be seen by the attempts of the communist parties to explain their regionally inconsistent approaches to the Congress party. The coalition governments at the centre since 1996 have taken recourse to so-called Common Minimum Programmes, which tended to exclude contested issues and were sufficiently vague to accommodate conflicting interests. In the recently concluded general elections, the BJP issued a 'Vision Document' instead of a clear ideological programme. While the resultant ideological vagueness is to a large degree due to the compulsions of alliance formation, it also offers a way to escape demands for ideological or programmatic consistency cutting across state-wise political compulsions.

This rather pragmatic approach to defer ideological consistency to local or regional political compulsions is not a new phenomenon in Indian politics. It has long been recognized as a central part of the 'Congress system' that characterized Indian politics.³ Theoretically, the correlation of ideology and strategy in Indian politics is most clearly formulated by Ram Manohar Lohia, a leading socialist politician of Northern India in the first decades after independence. Lohiaite politics were designed as a response to the one-party dominance by the Indian National Congress (INC) that characterized the 1950s and most of the 1960s. As opposed to other socialist political theory in India (e.g. J.P. Narayan's or Vinoba Bhave's Gandhian Socialism) Lohia stressed the importance of tactical/strategic short-term political

² The increasing importance of state-level political compulsions even at the national level has been stressed for example by Hansen and Jaffrelot (eds.) 1998 and Pai 2000.

³ See for example Brass (1965), Kochanek 1968, Chhibber and Petrocik (1990),

gains vis-à-vis ideological or moral correctness and in this way contributed significantly to the emergence of “anti-Congressism”, a term used to categorize repeated attempts to cooperate between right-wing and left-wing political organisations, in order to counter the dominance of the centrist Congress party.⁴

Consequently, the issue of ideological positioning at various levels in Indian politics has always been opaque. In the case of the BJP, this is confounded by the presence and influence of its ideological affiliates in the Sangh Parivar, whose precise influence on the BJP at any given time (and place) is almost impossible to ascertain. State level leaders of the BJP have at times been able to manoeuvre quite freely and even take on the national leadership on issues of ideological or programmatic positioning. In Gujarat this is exemplified by the conflict between Chief Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during the Gujarat pogrom in early 2002, in which Modi was able to continue his policies despite publicly announced displeasure by Vajpayee.⁵ On the other hand, Vajpayee had in early 2000 forced the former Chief Minister of Gujarat Keshubhai Patel to reimpose the ban on activities of state government employees in the RSS.⁶ In Uttar Pradesh, the almost constant shifts in the BJP’s positioning vis-à-vis the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the issue of Dalit empowerment between 1995 and 1999 was to a large extent due to strategic differences between the state party’s dominant faction led by Kalyan Singh and the national party leadership.⁷

IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONING OF THE BJP IN UTTAR PRADESH AND GUJARAT

Because of this pragmatic approach to ideological positioning by many Indian parties and a general lack of transparency in the process of ideology articulation, exact ideological positions are almost impossible to ascertain, especially concerning a national party’s state units. However, there are a number of factors that can be taken into account in order to substantiate the general impression of a divergence in the ideological postures adopted by the BJP in UP and Gujarat. These include the formation of alliances, the significance of caste in comparison to communal issues as an instrument of mobilisation and of intra-party conflicts, the organisation of or participation in campaigns centred around communal issues and the

⁴ Evidence of this cooperation is found in the constitution of Samyukta Vidhayak Dal governments in various states from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. Lohiaite politics played a significant role in the formation of the Janata Party in 1977, the National Front-BJP alliance in 1989 and even in the formation of the NDA alliance in 1999. For a detailed discussion on the Indian socialist tradition compare Omvedt 1993.

⁵ The incident has been reported widely in the Indian media, e.g. in Frontline Vol. 19 No.8, April 13-26, 2002.

⁶ Cf. Basu 2001. Prime Minister Vajpayee acted in this case under considerable pressure from the opposition and the BJP’s allies.

⁷ For a detailed analysis of the factors underlying the BJP state unit’s approach to the BSP cf. Schwecke 2003.

reactions of the respective state party units to communal agitations organised by the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) or other organisations known for an especially militant Hindu nationalist stance.

Alliance formation is generally indicative of a more moderate ideological stance, especially for the BJP, since few parties in India can be considered ideologically close to it. On the other hand, a comparison between the BJP's state units in UP and Gujarat is only partially rewarding, since the BJP in Gujarat from the early 1990s onwards has not needed to form or maintain alliances in order to win elections in the state. The only indication towards its stance on alliance formation can be drawn from the refusal to accommodate parties allied to the BJP at the centre in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) during the Assembly elections in 2002 and the parliamentary elections in 2004.⁸ In contrast, the BJP in Uttar Pradesh has been allied to the BSP three times and has formed alliances with several small parties and breakaway factions of larger parties, most importantly the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) and the National Loktantrik Congress Party (NLC). Moreover, it has accommodated influential politicians from outside the party and its ideological fraternity like Maneka Gandhi.

In both states the BJP expanded its base primarily through a combination of communal and caste politics linking the Ayodhya agitations with an ambiguous stance on the 'Mandal' issue.⁹ The BJP thus relied heavily on support from specific castes, in UP mainly from Thakurs, Brahmins, Kurmis and Lodhs and in Gujarat from Patels and (prior to the defection of Shankersinh Waghela) Kshatriyas. In general, the mode of mobilisation does not appear to be considerably different between the party's state units in the two states until the substitution of Keshubhai Patel by Narendra Modi as Chief Minister, i.e. apart from the last two elections, where communal appeals transcended caste issues in Gujarat.

On the other hand, significant divergences with regard to the importance of caste can be noticed in intra-party conflicts. Both state units have a remarkable record of factional infighting, which led to the defection of two of the BJP's most important state leaders (Shankersinh Waghela in Gujarat and Kalyan Singh in Uttar Pradesh) and the formation of a non-BJP government in Gujarat between late 1996 and early 1998. In Gujarat the conflicts between the groups led by Waghela and Patel (supported by Modi) and between the Patel- and Modi-led groups later on can be ascertained as the major factional cleavages from the early 1990s onwards. In Uttar Pradesh the major factional conflicts were between the groups led by

⁸ It has to be noted that this unaccommodative stance can just as easily be interpreted as a sign of self-confidence in the party's electoral victory.

⁹ Compare e.g. Basu 1996, Hasan 1998.

Kalyan Singh, Rajnath Singh, Kalraj Mishra and Lalji Tandon respectively. In the latter case intra-party conflicts centred almost exclusively around caste issues with upper caste-Other Backward Classes (OBC)- and Brahmin-Thakur-rivalry and (related to these) the party's approach to the issue of Dalit assertion most prominent. Similarly, the Waghela-Patel conflict in Gujarat can be classified as a caste-centred conflict. But while in UP communal issues were largely kept out of factional infighting, they are central to the Patel-Modi conflict in Gujarat. The exclusion of communal issues from factional conflicts in Uttar Pradesh is certainly indicative of the relative small importance attributed to these in the period analysed here (from 1994 onwards).

The organisation of or participation in agitations and campaigns centred on communal issues is the major available indicator of the respective state units' ideological postures. Nevertheless it has to be noted, that it is not generally possible to ascertain whether participation of the BJP state units represents a consensus within the party or is for example confined to some factions or takes place under direction of the national party leadership or under pressure by the Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh (RSS). In order to minimize these limitations, the reaction of the BJP state units to communal agitations and campaigns in their respective states has been measured here by using the reaction of the BJP's respective state leaderships as reported in the Indian fortnightly news magazine *Frontline*.¹⁰ The following table gives details of the state leaderships' reactions in the period between December 1994, when the central government lifted the ban on the VHP, and the present.

¹⁰ It has to be noted that *Frontline* is a left-leaning, heavily anti-BJP news magazine. This increases the utility of its reportage for the purpose of this paper, because trends of moderation reported within the BJP's state units are expected to be reliable, since these reports do not follow the anti-communal editorial stance of the news magazine.

Table 1: Reactions of the BJP's State Leaderships to Communal Campaigns and Agitations¹¹

	Gujarat	Uttar Pradesh
Dec. 1994		UP BJP leadership takes part in VHP celebrations on central government's decision to lift the ban on the organisation
Aug. 1995		UP BJP leadership supportive of VHP's Kashi/Mathura campaign
Sept.-Oct. 1995	Both Gujarat and UP BJP leadership distracted by own problems (Waghela and BSP respectively) during VHP's Ekatmata Yatras	
March 1997		UP BJP leadership supportive of VHP's Mathura campaign, in contrast to the party's national leadership
Dec. 1997		UP BJP leadership keeps away from VHP's Shaurya Divas celebrations at Ayodhya
Dec. 1998-Jan. 1999	Guj. BJP leadership quietly supports agitations against Christians by VHP and Bajrang Dal cadres	
July 1999	Guj. BJP leadership divided on factional lines (Patel vs. Modi) vis-à-vis anti-Muslim violence in Ahmedabad	
June 2000		UP BJP leadership unsupportive to VHP's plan of a Shoba Yatra to Ayodhya
Oct. 2001		UP BJP leadership supportive after VHP activists storm makeshift temple at Ayodhya
Feb. 2002		UP BJP leadership keeps a low profile during VHP gathering at Ayodhya
Feb.-May 2002	Guj. BJP leadership supports pogrom in Gujarat, Modi even takes on moderates in national leadership	
Sept. 2002	Guj. BJP organises Gujarat Gaurav Yatra	
Nov. 2002	Guj. BJP leadership supports VHP's Vijay Yatra until ordered to stop it by the Election Commission	
Oct. 2003		UP BJP leadership keeps away from VHP Sankalp Sammelan at Ayodhya

¹¹ Table 1 features only major communal agitations and campaigns. Agitations and campaigns where Frontline fails to report the BJP's state leaderships' reactions are omitted.

Table 1 shows a clear tendency by the state leadership of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh to keep a distance to hard line communal agitations at least from mid-1997 onwards. In contrast, the BJP leadership in Gujarat is, unsurprisingly, depicted as increasingly militant, corresponding to the rise of Narendra Modi as the predominant political leader in Gujarat. Altogether, there appears to be enough evidence to support the general impression of a continuing hard line ideological positioning by the BJP in Gujarat and an increasing moderation by the BJP in Uttar Pradesh.

THE ARGUMENT

The main argument of this paper uses the Rational Choice concept of minimal winning coalitions¹² and can be summarized as follows: In UP, political competition is centred almost exclusively on the allocation of patronage. All major political parties in the highly fragmented, but at the same time comparatively stable system of party competition in Uttar Pradesh can expect to win elections in a single constituency by mobilising the support of just above one third of the voters (less than one fifth of the total electorate). In these circumstances, strategic voting by several politically influential groups and communities assumes an electorally decisive character. At the same time, the inherent flexibility of these voting blocks in switching their support to a competitor compels parties in UP to try to ensure optimal utility maximization for its coalition's members. In the context of scarce public resources and an increasingly demanding population parties in Uttar Pradesh are thus locked in a contest to downsize their respective minimal winning coalitions. Parties trying to ensure domination by extending their support base above this level (like the BJP in the late 1990s) face severe instability and eventually the exit of groups from its electoral coalition.

In contrast, Gujarat is characterised by a stable bipolar system of party competition, where electoral mobilisation can be expected to follow the lines expected by western Rational Choice-based party system theories, leading to the establishment of two competing political parties trying to approach absolute majorities. The numerical size of minimal winning coalitions acts here as an impediment to a system of electoral mobilisation centred on conflicting demands of patronage allocation. Furthermore, the success of Gujarat's economy (compared to relatively less developed Uttar Pradesh) and its high integration in supra-regional economic systems reduce both the relative importance of patronage and particularly

¹² Cf. Riker 1962. Riker argues that following the principle of utility maximization political parties generally try to gain electoral support of the smallest possible number of voters that can be expected to win an election. These so-called minimal winning coalitions thus offer their respective members the nearest possible approximation to optimal utility maximization.

public sector employment for social upward mobility and the capacity of the local state to influence rent allocation.

Parties in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat thus have to develop different techniques of mobilization, which then affect the process of ideological positioning. In case of the BJP, its UP unit acts in a strategic context, where ideological consistency (especially of the hindutva kind) by evoking principled opposition restricts the party's chances to gain support from groups shifting their political allegiances for a better bargaining position. At the same time, a Hindu majoritarian agenda is unlikely to yield significant electoral gains as long as the process of competitive downsizing minimal winning coalitions by the major parties continues, unless local circumstances vary considerably from the state-wise mainstream. The BJP in Uttar Pradesh is thus compelled to tone down its ideological commitments to an extent where ideology articulation fades as an effective instrument of mass mobilisation and is reduced to an additional tool among others that can be relied on to energize the party cadre and maybe attract some additional votes from a comparatively small militant part of society.

In Gujarat, however, the BJP's state unit has to aim at mobilising large majorities of the electorate in order to secure its position as the principle ruling party. While patronage allocation plays a major role here as well, electoral mobilisation through emotive issues supplants the former as the major political instrument for a variety of reasons: Gujarat, as most Indian states, faces an acute financial crisis. With the process of downsizing minimally winning coalitions (as in UP) remaining a political impossibility due to the state's stable bipolar party system, competitive patronage allocation by the major political parties can only be done in a limited way.¹³ By taking recourse to a hard line ideological stand the BJP is able to mobilise a large part of the electorate against marginal communities (Muslims and to some degree Christians as well), whose political clout remains small compared to Muslims in Uttar Pradesh. This kind of mobilisation has the added advantage of placing the opposition in a dilemma: Both the typical ways in Indian politics to counter majoritarian appeals, a mobilisation based on patronage allocation (in the form of 'casteism') in order to fragment the majority community's vote and mobilising the minority votes, are electorally ineffective. Faced with these prospects, the oppositional Congress party has tried to diminish the efficacy of majoritarian campaigns by adopting a moderate right-wing posture ('soft hindutva'). While this appears to be a rational political reaction under the mentioned circumstances, it ensures the BJP's predominant position in the ideational and ideological discourse in Gujarati politics.

¹³ This is not to say that the state of Uttar Pradesh can afford competitive patronage allocation by its major political parties better than Gujarat. Instead, deviating from this process has become increasingly impossible for political parties in UP in spite of the financial crisis facing the state.

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONING BY THE BJP IN UTTAR PRADESH AND GUJARAT

The above mentioned process of competitive downsizing minimal winning coalitions in Uttar Pradesh is best shown by the average vote percentages of winning candidates in successive elections. Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections are treated separately here, since due to the increased participation of small subregional parties and independent candidates in state level elections the Vidhan Sabha elections generally show a lesser average than elections at the national level. The data establishes a trend of very low average vote percentages for winning candidates in Uttar Pradesh. In Gujarat the percentages remain significantly higher than in UP throughout the period analysed here.

Table 2: Average Vote Percentages of Winning Candidates in Uttar Pradesh¹⁴

Lok Sabha elections

1996	38.09 %
1998	39.68 %
1999	36.55 %
2004	37.37 %

Vidhan Sabha elections

1996	40.56 %
2002	35.01 %

It is important to note, that the decrease in the average vote percentage of winning candidates in UP is not the result of a corresponding increase of the second (or even third) candidates' competitiveness. In fact, these candidates show a similar trend of reduced average vote percentages, while the average combined percentages of all other candidates increased from 7.92% in the 1996 Vidhan Sabha elections to 19.54% in 2002. The corresponding data for Gujarat is shown in table 3:

¹⁴ The data on candidates' vote percentages used in this paper is provided by the Election Commission of India on the internet at <http://www.eci.gov.in>.

Table 3: Average Vote Percentages of Winning Candidates in Gujarat

Lok Sabha elections

1996	52.45 %
1998	49.97 %
1999	54.66 %
2004	51.17 %

Vidhan Sabha elections

1995	47.15 %
1998	49.63 %
2002	51.90 %

At its peak the difference between the average vote percentage needed to win the elections in a constituency in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat thus amounted to a considerable 16.89% of the total vote in the 2002 state assembly elections and 18.11% in the parliamentary elections in 1999. In order to win the elections, parties in UP were thus mobilising proportionally around one third voters less than in Gujarat.

Chhibber and Nooruddin use average vote percentages of winning candidates in their paper on the importance of party systems for governance. The all-India average in Lok Sabha elections between 1957 and 1991 is given as 55% for two-party constituencies and 38% for multi-party constituencies, while in Vidhan Sabha elections between 1967 and 1997 it is given as 45% and 32% respectively (Chhibber and Nooruddin 2004: 162). Since Chhibber and Nooruddin are concerned primarily with party systems and thus do not present their data state-wise, but arranged by constituency categorized by the respective constituency's effective number of parties. Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh can thus be described almost as model cases of party systems with two and more than three effective parties respectively. This overall picture is accentuated by the presence of several exceptional constituencies in the respective states.¹⁵ Chhibber and Nooruddin argue that the formation of broad electoral support bases gets increasingly risky, if a party faces two or more competitors in a constituency. Moreover, they note that party competition in systems with two effective parties is more likely to be public good orientated than in systems with three or more effective parties, because they have to

¹⁵ In the case of Uttar Pradesh average vote percentages of winning candidates of more than 60% are not uncommon, especially in constituencies with strong local candidates or VIP candidates. In the recent Lok Sabha elections, for example, several VIP candidates contested in UP and won with very high vote percentages, including the incumbent Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee, the Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi, the Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and his son Akhilesh Singh Yadav and the former Prime Minister Chandra Shekar. Correspondingly, vote percentages of winning candidates around 30% are not uncommon in Gujarat, despite the state's much higher average.

mobilise absolute majorities and thus have to build electoral alliances cutting across cleavages (Chhibber and Nooruddin 2004: 162-163).

However much the argument about the correlation between party systems and the public good orientation of state governments in UP and Gujarat fits, it does not explain the shift to the Hindu nationalist right in the public discourse in Gujarat that has become a major feature of the electoral process in the state, nor does it explain the relative moderation of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. In fact, most political scientists concerned with systems of party competition would expect the opposite result.¹⁶ To explain this discrepancy between the theoretical expectation and the actual outcome, it is therefore necessary to ascertain the consequences of the strategic environment described above for the BJP in Gujarat and UP.

There are two major consequences of the respective strategic contexts characterized by the average vote percentages of winning candidates for the BJP state units' electoral strategies: (1) The ratio between the minority (especially Muslim) population in the state and the average vote percentage needed to win an election is much higher in Uttar Pradesh than in Gujarat. This means that the capacity of the Muslim community in UP to influence the electoral results decisively, if it votes as a block, is much higher there than in Gujarat. The ratio between the size of the Muslim population and the average vote percentage of winning candidates thus gives an indication of the relative value of Muslim votes in deciding electoral outcomes in the respective states.

Table 4: The Relative Value of the 'Muslim Vote' in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat¹⁷

Uttar Pradesh

1999	.474
2002	.495

Gujarat

1999	.160
2002	.168

¹⁶ The moderating tendencies of two-party systems have been discussed in detail by several authors using a wide range of approaches. Correspondingly, multi-party systems have generally been noted for their capacity to accommodate radical parties as well. Cf. Downs 1957, Duverger 1963, Sartori 1976.

¹⁷ The calculation uses the population percentage of Muslims in the respective states as given by the Census of India for 1991 as an approximation for the community's share of the electorate. The data used in this paper is provided by the Census of India on the internet at <http://www.censusindia.net>. The ratio is calculated as the population percentage of Muslims in the respective states divided by the average vote percentage of winning candidates.

The already significantly higher share of Muslims in the population of Uttar Pradesh is thus accentuated politically through the low average vote percentages of winning candidates. It has to be stressed that this increase in the relative value of a community's votes is valid for all communities or groups who show a significant tendency of voting homogeneously either in favour of a particular party in any constituency. Furthermore it has to be noted that the so-called Muslim vote is a hypothetical construct, although a range of survey data from the early 1990s onwards show a tendency of Muslims in Uttar Pradesh to vote in favour of the Samajwadi Party and to a lesser extent the Congress, while Muslim voters in Gujarat are shown to favour the Congress. In both cases surveys show a very small tendency of Muslims to support the BJP. By following a hard line ideological agenda, the BJP would thus ensure the strident opposition of one of UP's most influential communities which, unless the strategic context changes significantly and as long as the major Hindu communities' political support in UP remains fragmented on party lines, cannot be expected to be a preferred result of political action.

(2) As already mentioned above the diminished average vote percentages of winning candidates enable parties in Uttar Pradesh to increase (relative) patronage allocation to supportive groups or communities. This allows parties to develop comparatively strong ties with sections of society without needing to create and maintain effective organisational structures and without having to mobilise the electorate around specific social cleavages (apart from group or community membership), as long as the respective parties remain in power or can reasonably expect to return to power at some time in the foreseeable future.¹⁸ The BJP in Uttar Pradesh thus finds itself in a peculiar situation, since the modes of mobilization actually applied differ significantly from the ideological aim of the party and its affiliates in the Sangh Parivar. In other words, the mobilisation of the Hindu majority effectively runs counter to the preferred mode of electoral mobilisation in UP. The mobilisation of the Hindu majority considerably reduces the expected gains of groups and communities supporting the BJP, unless the expected gains are allocated only to a part of the party's voters or the intrinsic, ideological value of voting as an expression of Hindu majoritarianism surpasses the value of voting for a share in the patronage allocation process. Both these qualifications do not appear to be valid for a large majority of the electorate in UP at the moment.

¹⁸ As a further advantage, these ties protect parties and their leaders to some extent from any negative fallout in public perception due to e.g. corrupt practices or general mismanagement. For detailed analyses of the (lack of) organisational structures in many Indian parties cf. Chhibber 1999, Kohli 1990.

On the other hand, the BJP in Gujarat is not restricted significantly by these consequences. As shown above, the relative value of Muslim votes in Gujarat is rather insignificant to electoral considerations of both the major parties. At the same time, the necessity to mobilise comparatively large majorities to win elections in the state reduces the expected gains for large parts of the electorate from patronage allocation. Correspondingly, the relative value of voting in favour of a political party because of issues of governance or emotive issues increases. The temptation for the BJP to revert to a hard line ideological position is enormous, especially since the Congress party cannot expect to counter any hard line campaign by mobilising minority votes due to their relative low significance. As mentioned above, the rational response by the Congress party under these circumstances to position itself as a moderate right-wing party in order to minimize the BJP's expected gains from hindutva agitations, leads to a considerable shift of the mainstream political discourse in Gujarat to the right and thus indirectly helps the BJP to establish its supremacy there.

CONCLUSION

The argument developed in this paper is limited in many respects, as it assumes that the BJP's state party leadership acts rather isolated from political pressures and within a fixed strategic context. It thus chooses to ignore several important factors for the ideological positioning of political parties in India and especially of the BJP. The latter include among others factional conflicts, national and local level political compulsions and perhaps even more important the preferences of the party workers and the cadres of the BJP's sister organisations in the Sangh Parivar. As Basu notes, arguing that changes in the BJP's strategy should be seen as cyclical and not permanent:

*“[P]olitical parties cannot adopt and shed identities at will. They face pressures by leaders and constituencies to abide by past commitments that make it extremely difficult for them to reinvent themselves entirely.”*¹⁹

Tsebelis (1990) argues that game theoretical approaches should take into consideration that games as simulations of real life situations might be 'nested'. In other words, political actors generally find themselves in a situation where they are compelled to play several interlinked games simultaneously. It is thus conceivable that players might play to lose in one game in order to win in another. Considering the case of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, this means that factional conflicts, national level compulsions or campaigns by more militant Hindu

¹⁹ Basu 2001, 179.

nationalist organisations aiming to reassert themselves as influential pressure groups might force the BJP to revert to a hard line ideological stance. The temptation to make use of disputed or potentially disputed religious sites like Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura or other highly symbolical places like the Aligarh Muslim University located within UP will remain for the party and its leaders as well as for its affiliates. In the same way, political factors kept deliberately out of the analysis presented in this paper can lead the BJP in Gujarat to follow a line of moderation in the future.

However, as long as the present strategic context in Uttar Pradesh und Gujarat remains it is unlikely that the BJP leadership will expect political gains for the party in the respective states by shifting to an opposite ideological stance.

To return to the question raised at the outset of this paper: Uttar Pradesh cannot be expected to become a 'model state' for the BJP in the way Gujarat has become one unless the strategic context changes considerably in the direction of a stable bipolar party system. Politicians in UP and Gujarat thus face a situation where rational political considerations ensure ideological moderation in a highly fragmented party system, while enabling right-wing parties to follow a hard line agenda in a bipolar one.

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