Note

Positive Political Theory and Politics in Contemporary India: An Application of a Positive Political Model in Non-Western Politics

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There is widespread aversion to the application of rational choice and game theoretical models in the literature on politics in the non-Western world for a variety of reasons. For some, rational choice and its derivatives are inherently flawed because they are ahistorical. For others, such models are based on culturally biased assumptions reflecting Western individualism which makes them ill-equipped to explain political processes in the non-West characterized by very different socio-cultural contexts.[1] This article will show that this negative attitude against positive political theory of non-Western politics is unwarranted. A central contention of the article is that political actors in the non-West act according to motivations and incentives under objectively identifiable constraints, just as political actors do in the West. What may be different in non-Western contexts is merely the

1   For examples and summaries of such criticisms against the application of rational choice models in the non-West, see Daniel Little, ''Rational Choice Models and Asian Studies,'' *Journal of Asian Studies* 50 (1991), 35-52; and Chalmers Johnson and E. B. Keehn, ''A Disaster in the Making: Rational Choice and Asian Studies,'' *The National Interest* (Summer 1994), 14-22.

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mix of different motivations, incentives and constraints. However, as long as one recognizes that they structure the behaviour of individual political actors, one can be open to the application of positive models to explain political outcomes in the non-West.

As an example of the utility of applying positive political theory in a non-Western setting, this article draws on Peter Van Roozendaal's game theoretical model of cabinet stability to account for the premature termination of national governments in the three parliaments of India elected in 1989, 1991 and 1996 respectively.[2] It will argue that cabinet stability in India can be accurately predicted and accounted for by the game theoretic model based on the interaction between the so-called dominant and central players.

Following a brief overview of Van Roozendaal's theory of cabinet stability and a statement of the hypotheses, the data on cabinet stability in India are presented. By evaluating the hypotheses against the data, it will be shown that the game theoretical approach accounts very well for government durability in this non-Western democracy.

A Game Theoretical Model of Coalition Stability

Van Roozendaal proposed a theory of government durability based on the incentives and preferences of two key actors, the dominant and the central parties. While he acknowledges that in any legislative setting there may be more actors present, he argues that by virtue of their strategic position these two key players will determine the stability of the government.[3]

A player i is called a dominant player if there exists at least one

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2   The only rational choice and game theoretical approaches done for party politics in India are limited to examining the dynamics of coalition politics at the subnational level. See, Subrata Kumar Mitra, *Governmental Instability in Indian States: West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1978); and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Strategy, Risk and Personality in Coalition Politics: The Case of India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975). For works in the rational choice tradition on the party politics of other non-Western countries, see Masaru Kohno, *Japan's Postwar Party Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Hee Min Kim, "Rational Choice Theory and Third World Politics: The 1990 Party Merger in Korea," *Comparative Politics* 29 (1997), 83-100.

3   Peter Van Roozendaal, "The Effect of Dominant and Central Parties on Cabinet Composition and Durability," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 17 (1992), 5-35. The theory builds on earlier contributions by Duncan Black, *The Theory of Committees and Elections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); and Ad Van Demeen, "Dominant Players and Minimum Size Coalitions," *European Journal of Political Research* 17 (1989), 313-32, and "Coalition Formation and Centralized Policy Games," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3 (1991), 139-62.

Abstract. This article argues against the apparent aversion to apply positive political models in the comparative literature on non-Western politics. To provide an example of the utility of such models, the article draws on Peter Van Roozendaal's game theoretical model of cabinet stability to account for the instability of coalition governments in India. It argues that government durability in this non-Western democracy can be modeled as the function of the motivations and incentives of two sets of key actors, the dominant and the central parties, the same way as it can in a Western context.

Résumé. Cet article réfute le rejet des modèles positivistes par les comparativistes des systèmes politiques ouest-européens. Afin de démontrer l'utilité des modèles positivistes, il explique l'instabilité des gouvernements de coalition en Inde par la théorie des jeux de Peter Van Roozendaal. Il soutient que la longévité des gouvernements dans cette démocratie non occidentale peut être associée aux mêmes facteurs qui expliquent la durée des gouvernements occidentaux : les motivations et les avantages pressentis par les deux principales catégories d'acteurs : les partis dominants et les partis centraux du système politique.

winning coalition of players,[4] denoted S, including *i* such that *i* can form another winning coalition with players not included in S, however S cannot do the same.[5] Van Roozendaal identifies three necessary criteria for dominance. First, only the largest player in the game can be dominant; in legislatures this simply refers to the party with the largest number of seats. Second, the largest player can be dominant only if its weight is equal to at least half the quota, that is, the number of votes that a coalition needs to win the game. In other words, if the decision-making rule is simple majority, which it is in most parliaments, then the largest party must control at least half of 50%+1, that is 25%+1 of the seats.

Third, there must be at least one coalition of players outside a set of players A such that the largest party can form a minimum-size winning coalition with both, however, they cannot do so.[6] A minimum-size winning coalition is a set of players, or parties, that have sufficient votes in the game to win, that is they have more votes in excess of the quota, however, they contain no superfluous members.[7] In other

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4   A winning coalition means a set of players that, together, have sufficient weight, or votes, to win the game.

5   See, Bezalel Peleg, ''Coalition Formation in Simple Games with Dominant Players,'' *International Journal of Game Theory* 1 (1981), 11-33; and Ezra Einy, ''On Connected Coalitions in Dominated Simple Games,'' *International Journal of Game Theory* 2 (1985), 103-25. An important assumption is that the game must be weighted and proper. In a proper weighted game, the individual players' votes are not identical and the complement of every winning coalition, the set of players that has sufficient votes to win the game, is a losing coalition. In Peleg's terminology, if a weighted proper game has a dominant player then the game is called a dominated simple game.

6   Van Roozendaal, ''The Effect of Dominant and Central Parties,'' 8.

7   The concept of a minimum-size winning coalition was first offered by William Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

words, the removal of any member from the coalition would result in the loss of the coalition's winning status. Thus the third criterion simply states that the dominant player must be able to form at least two different minimum-size winning coalitions such that its alternative partners cannot form a winning coalition against it. Dominance refers exclusively to the numerical weight of the largest party. As long as a party meets the three numerical criteria, it is called a dominant party and it becomes a key player.

In most legislative games, however, interactions among parties are not driven solely by the need to build a winning coalition. What also matters is the internal cohesion of the coalition, meaning that there must be certain fundamental principles on which the coalition members agree.[8] The concept of the central player captures this idea. In a nutshell, the central player is the pivot of the legislative game, all coalitions rise and fall around it. The central player determines the longevity of the standing cabinet not by virtue of its numerical weight but as a result of its position in the ideological space. Whereas the dominant player can form alternative winning coalitions as a result of its sheer numerical size, the central player can do the same due to the compatibility of its ideological position with that of other players in the game.

The definition of a central player is based on the assumption that there exists an underlying policy, or ideological dimension, denoted R, along which parties position themselves. A player i is the central player when the absolute value of the difference between the total weights of all players located to the left and to the right of i on R is less than the weight of i itself. Formally, player i is a central player if:

$|w(R_+(i))-w(R-(i))| < w_i.$
where $R_+(i) = j \in N \mid j=i$ and $jRi\}$
$R_-(i) = j \in N \mid j=i$ and $iRj\}.$

$R_+(i)$ stands for all players located to the left of player i's position on policy order R, and $R_-(i)$ stands for all players located to the right of player i's position on policy order R.[9]

It follows from this definition that any winning coalition that is connected along R must include the central player.[10] Furthermore,

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8   The idea that ideological cohesion is just as important a determinant of the rise and fall of coalitions as is winning status was proposed by Robert Axelrod (*Conflict of Interest* [Chicago: Markham, 1970]).

9   Van Roozendaal, ''The Effect of Dominant and Central Parties,'' 9.

10 Van Demeen has proved both that in proper and strong simple games there can only be one central player and that there can be no more than one central player for a specific policy order (Van Demeen, ''Coalition Formation in Centralized Policy Games'').

since R is the underlying dimension of the most important values that the players are most concerned with, the compatibility of the coalition members' respective positions on R will become a critical factor sooner or later in the coalition. Thus, if there is a central player in the game it must be included in the cabinet so that the cabinet be durable. Otherwise, if a central player is present in the legislative game but excluded from the coalition cabinet, then it will always remain in position to form a new and R-wise more cohesive coalition, which will include it.

Depending on whether dominant and central players are present or not in the voting game in parliamentary legislatures, Van Roozendaal proposes a typology as shown in Table 1. The first type of parliament, DCP, is characterized by the presence of a player that is both dominant and central. In the second type, DP-CP, the dominant and central players are not one and the same; however, it is important that both are present. In the third type, DP, there is a dominant player but no central player. The fourth type, CP, is characterized by the absence of a dominant and the presence of a central player. Finally, there are parliaments, "-", in which neither a dominant nor a central player are present.

TABLE 1

The Typology of Parliamentary Games

Dominant player	Central player		Parliamentary game
present	present	DP=CP	DCP
present	present	DP=CP	DP-CP
present	absent		DP
present	present		CP
absent	absent		"-"

Note: DP = dominant player; CP = central player; "-" = neither a dominant nor a central player present.
Source: Peter Van Roozendaal, "The Effect of Dominant and Central Parties on Cabinet Compositional Durability," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 17 (1992), 12.

Based on the assumption that parties are office-seekers and they value being included in cabinets more than being excluded,[11] Van

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11   Kaare Strom notes that certain institutional arrangements provide incentives for political parties not to prefer inclusion to exclusion from the cabinet, which results in the formation of minority governments. In particular, he claims that if the committee structure of the legislature allows the opposition to exert significant influence on government policy, then the relative benefit of being in office declines and key actors may decide not to enter it. In India, however, as in West-

Roozendaal offers the following hypotheses regarding the stability of cabinets in the various types of parliaments:[12]

Hypothesis 1: In DCP parliaments, cabinets that include the dominant central party will be more durable than cabinets that exclude them.

Hypothesis 2: In DP-CP parliaments, cabinets that include central parties, with or without dominant parties, will be more durable than cabinets that exclude central parties.

Hypothesis 3: In CP parliaments, cabinets that include central parties will be more durable than cabinets that exclude central parties.[13]

These hypotheses suggest that, overall, the central player is more powerful than the dominant player. In each of the parliamentary types that Van Roozendaal examines, only those cabinets will be durable, hypothetically, that include the central party. Of course, in DPC parliaments the two players are the same; therefore there is no conflict between them. However, as the hypotheses suggest, when the dominant and central players are not the same, the central player has a stronger bargaining position and is able to sustain a more stable cabinet than any other that excludes it.[14] Finally, the fourth hypothesis suggests that the optimal conditions for stable governments are presented

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minster-style parliaments, the executive controls the legislature thus giving little say to the opposition in the shaping of government policy (Kaare Strom, *Minority Government and Majority Rule* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990]).

12 Van Roozendaal makes one more assumption, which, however, is relevant only for his discussion about the impact of parliamentary type on cabinet formation. This is that the largest party gets the first mandate to form a government after the election.

13 Van Roozendaal limits himself to offering only these hypotheses, ignoring the DP and A-'' parliamentary types. Nevertheless, it is plausible to hypothesize that in DP parliaments cabinets that include the dominant player will be more stable than those which do not because the dominant player will always have an incentive to destabilize it. Since in A-'' parliaments neither dominant nor central players are present, the theory is not applicable to these cases.

14 An important line of research on coalition stability has highlighted the importance of the so-called core party in multi-dimensional voting games. However, as long as the game is structured by one underlying dimension, and as long as the game is proper and strong, that is, there are no blocking coalitions and there is no single player that can win the game on its own, the core player is exactly the same as the central player. See, Norman Schofield, Bernard Grofman and Scott L. Feld, ''The Core and the Stability of Group Choice in Spatial Voting Games,'' *American Political Science Review* 82 (1988), 195-211; Kenjiro Nakamura, ''The Vetoers in a Simple Game with Ordinal Preferences,'' *International Journal of Game Theory* 8 (1979), 55-61; and Scott L. Feld and Bernard Grofman, ''Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for a Majority Winner in n-Dimensional Spatial Voting Games: An Intuitive Geometric Approach,'' *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (1987), 709-28.

in DCP parliaments. This is understandable because the key player does not have to deal with the possibility of conflicting strategies of another key player. Similarly, CP parliaments are expected to produce more stable cabinets than DP-CP parliaments because, once again, there is only one key player whose strategy is not conflicted by the strategy of another.

Cabinet Stability and Instability in India, 1989-1996

The post-1989 period constitutes a distinct stage in the evolution of India's party system. Whereas national elections prior to that year always resulted in a single party winning a majority of the parliamentary seats, since 1989 no political party has succeeded in doing so. Furthermore, with the exception of the one elected in 1991, each of these hung parliaments had highly unstable cabinets. Table 2 shows the bloc-wise distribution of seats in the three parliaments studied.

TABLE 2

The Bloc-wise Distribution of Seats in the 1989, 1991 and 1996 Lok Sabhas, in percentages

Bloc	1989	1991	1996
Congress(I)	40	47.6	26.4
BJP	16.5	23.8	35.9
National Front	27.5	14	NA
Left Front	9.8	10.4	NA
United Front	NA	NA	33.3

Sources: J. C. Aggarwal and N. K. Chowdhry, *Elections In India, 1952-1996* (Delhi: Shipra, 1996), 89; and David Butler, Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides, Elections 1952-1995* (New Delhi: Books and Things, 1995), 67-68.

After the general election of 1989, the National Front alliance of parties led by the Janata Dal formed a minority government relying on the external support of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Left Front.[15] The cabinet lasted for only 11 months, falling on a vote of confidence on November 7, 1990, following the BJP's decision to terminate its support. The main sources of tension between the National Front and the BJP were the so-called job reservation and temple construction issues. With regard to the former, the BJP resented that Prime Minister V. P. Singh announced, without prior con-

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15   Information on the National Front government was collected from various issues of *India Today* (New Delhi), 1990, and *Frontline* (Madras), 1990.

sultation with either the Left or the BJP, that his government would increase the quota of central government jobs reserved for specific socio-economically disadvantaged sectors of society, the Other Backward Castes. The policy alienated the BJP from the National Front because of its potential consequences on the party's electoral prospects. By giving explicit recognition to the caste cleavage in Indian society, the reservation policy conflicted with the BJP's agenda which aimed to forge a pan-Hindu unity transcending the multifarious cleavages that divide the community.

However, the immediate cause of the BJP severing its relations with the government was the issue of constructing a Hindu temple at the holy site of Ayodhya, revered by both the Hindu and the Muslim communities. Although the Janata Dal favoured a negotiated settlement acceptable to both religious groups, the BJP was adamant that construction of the temple should begin on October 30, 1990. En route to Ayodhya to meet the party's followers who had gathered there to destroy the standing mosque and build the temple, Lal Krishna Advani, the president of the BJP, was arrested. The BJP immediately terminated its support of the National Front government, in response to which the president of the Republic instructed the prime minister to demonstrate that he still enjoyed majority support in the lower house by seeking a vote of confidence.

Two days before the vote, a faction comprising 54 Janata Dal legislators left the Janata Dal and formed the Samajwadi Janata Party. The Congress(I) Party leadership assured the rebel faction that it would help it form a government if it voted against the National Front on November 7. The Samajwadi Janata Party agreed, and the National Front government, having lost the support of both the BJP and its own rebels, lost the ensuing vote by a margin of 142 to 346.

After this defeat, the Samajwadi Janata Party formed a minority government with the external support of the Congress(I) Party.[16] Just over four months, as the vote of confidence on the motion of thanks to the president's speech was about to be taken, the Congress(I) suspended its support of the Samajwadi Janata Party unless Prime Minister Chandra Shekar dismissed his party's general secretary whom the Congress(I) blamed for putting the home of the Congress(I) leader, Rajiv Gandhi, under plainclothes police surveillance. The prime minister refused to yield to the pressure, advised the president to order elections and resigned from his post on March 6, 1991.

In the hung parliament emerging from the general election of 1991, the Congress(I) Party formed a minority government. It man-

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16 Information on the Samajwadi Janata government was collected from various issues of *Sunday* (New Delhi), 1991, and *Frontline* (Madras), 1991.

aged to remain in office for the duration of its term by constantly seeking out new alliances with different parties on each issue that had to be voted on. For example, to have its own nominee, Shivraj V. Patil, elected as speaker of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, the Congress(I) made a deal with the BJP immediately after the election.[17] However, the BJP voted against the government on its first vote of confidence while both the National and the Left Fronts abstained.[18] Later on, when the BJP sponsored a non-confidence motion against the government in 1992, the Left voted with the Congress(I) while the National Front helped the government by abstaining.[19] Finally, in July 1993, the BJP as well as both the National and Left Fronts introduced a no-confidence motion against the Congress(I) government which it managed to survive due to the abstention of some small parties and the actual support of others in the last minutes before the vote.[20]

For the first time in India's electoral history, the BJP emerged as the single largest party from the 1996 general election.[21] The BJP did form a government in coalition with its tiny electoral ally, the Shiv Sena, and relied on the external support of other small parties. However, after two weeks in office the government resigned as it became obvious that it would not be able to survive the confidence vote that it had to face upon the instructions of the president.

After the resignation of the BJP-led government, the United Front, an alliance of parties headed by the Janata Dal, formed a government under the leadership of Prime Minister H.D. Dewe Gowda. To remain in office, the United Front relied on the external support of the Congress(I) Party, which made its assistance conditional upon being consulted on government policy. However, the governing parties were reluctant to abide by this condition with the result that the Congress(I) terminated its support. In the ensuing confidence vote, both the Congress(I) and the BJP voted against the government. Within two weeks of the fall of the Gowda cabinet, however, the United Front and the Congress(I) reached a new agreement resulting in the formation of yet another United Front government supported from the outside by the Congress(I). The new prime minister was Inder Kumar Gujral of the Janata Dal.

The reformed United Front cabinet did not last very long either. On November 20, 1997, the Congress(I) charged that it would with-

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17 *India Today* (New Delhi), July 31, 1991, 25.
18 *Keesings Contemporary Archives* (Bath, 1991), 38337.
19 *Keesings Contemporary Archives* (Bath, 1992), 39222.
20 *India Today* (New Delhi), August 15, 1993, 38-42.
21 Information on the various cabinets in the 1996 parliament was collected from various issues of *India Today* (New Delhi), 1996 and 1997.

draw its support from the United Front unless the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham, one of the governing parties, was expelled from the coalition. The Congress(I) justified its claim by arguing that the commission of inquiry appointed to investigate the assassination of former Congress(I) leader Rajiv Gandhi found the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham involved in the murder. As Prime Minister Gujral refused to bow to the Congress(I)'s demand, Sitaram Kesri, the president of the Congress(I) Party, notified the president of his party's termination of its support of the United Front cabinet effective November 28.[22] Although Congress(I) leaders who wanted to avoid new elections tried to work out a compromise with the United Front, no agreement was reached.[23] In the evening of December 3, the cabinet decided to advise the president to dissolve the Lok Sabha and order fresh elections. The president concurred and asked I. K. Gujral to remain in office as caretaker until a new government was formed.

Explaining Cabinet Instability in India

Of the three parliaments examined, those elected in 1989 and 1991 were DCP legislatures according to Van Roozendaal's typology. In contrast, the Lok Sabha, elected in 1996, falls into the CP type, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

The Typology of Indian Parliaments, 1989-1996

Lok Sabha	Dominant party	Central party	Parliament type
Ninth Lok Sabha	Congress(I)	Congress(I)	DCP
Tenth Lok Sabha	Congress(I)	Congres(I)	DCP
Eleventh Lok Sabha	-	Congress(I)	CP

In the first two legislatures, the Congress(I) Party was both the dominant and the central player. In contrast, whereas there was no dominant player in the third, the Congress(I)-led alliance managed to retain its central position.[24] As predicted in Hypothesis 1, of the three cabinets formed in the two DCP legislatures, only the one formed by the central player (the Congress[I] in 1991) proved stable. Since none of the cabinets formed in the 1996 Lok Sabha included the central

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22 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* (Bath, 1997), 41914.
23 Ibid.
24 For the calculations used to arrive at this classification, see Appendix.

party, the Congress(I), they were all terminated prematurely. The reason for the United Front coalition lasting significantly longer than the BJP cabinet is the Congress(I) Party's preference: it simply preferred a United Front cabinet to a BJP government, and so allowed the former to last longer.

Cabinet Stability in India's DCP Legislatures

The National Front cabinet fell because of the disagreement between the Janata Dal and the BJP on the temple construction issue which related directly to the parties' ideological position. The BJP was a party of the right that advocated, among other things, the cause of Hindu nationalism. In contrast, the Janata Dal was a centre-left party with a markedly secular ideology. Secularism and religious nationalism are inherently irreconcilable because the former tolerates religious pluralism whereas the latter does not. Thus, whereas it was imperative for the BJP that the temple be constructed to the detriment of an already standing mosque, it was unacceptable to the Janata Dal. Although there had been disagreements between the Janata Dal and the BJP before, for example the BJP did not agree with the way the job reservation issue had been handled by the prime minister, the temple issue was something on which the two sides could not possibly compromise.

Because the Congress(I) was a dominant central party it had a very strong bargaining position in the legislature. Following the withdrawal of the BJP from the National Front's supporting coalition, the Congress(I) could have stepped in to save the government. After all, the Janata Dal, the Front's most senior member, and the Congress(I) did share ideological proximity and affinity with one another. However, for strategic reasons it was in the Congress(I)'s best interest not to do so. By making it clear that it would vote against the government on the confidence motion, together with the BJP, the Congress(I) contributed to the split in the Dal which resulted in the formation of the Samajwadi Janata Party. As mentioned, the Samajwadi was formed by Janata Dal legislators who would accept the Congress(I)'s assistance in forming a cabinet of their own.

Why was it in the interest of the Congress(I) to let the Janata Dal government fall? The answer is the Congress(I)'s own motivation to enter office at the earliest possible moment. By indicating that it would vote against the cabinet, the Congress(I) appealed to the power-seeking motivation of some members of the Janata Dal who did not want to fall with the government. By encouraging the break-up of the Janata Dal, the Congress(I) was effectively slicing up its opponents, thus paving the way for the formation of a cabinet on its own. With the disintegration of the Janata Dal and the National Front, the chances that

the anti-Congress(I) coalition including the BJP could be re-formed were eliminated, allowing the Congress(I) to exploit its position as the central party and form a minority government on its own. In sum, the episode of the National Front cabinet clearly shows both the inherent instability of a cabinet that excluded the central party and the strong bargaining position such a party may have.

The instability of the Samajwadi Janata Party cabinet also attested to the Congress(I) Party's bargaining power and its ability to destabilize a cabinet of which it was not a part. From the very moment of the cabinet's formation, it was clear that the Congress(I) intended the Samajwadi Janata Party to implement the policies it dictated. While initially the governing party had no choice but to go along with this arrangement, it refused to do so after a while as the benefits it derived from being in office declined daily. However, once the Samajwadi Janata Party stopped acting in accordance with the Congress(I)'s dictates, the latter's costs for extending external support to the government started rising. Because the Congress(I) knew that there were no other parties in the legislature that would have either been able, numerically, or willing to support the Samajwadi in office, it calculated that it could afford to suspend its support to force the government back in line with its own policy preferences. That the prime minister decided to dissolve the legislature was an unintended consequence of the Congress(I)'s action. Nevertheless, the point about the inherent instability of the arrangement and the bargaining strength of the dominant central party remains well illustrated by this case.

The arrangement whereby the dominant central party would support another party's minority cabinet from the outside was unstable because of the conflicting incentives and motivations of the supporter and the supported. This arrangement increased the costs of remaining in the opposition for the Congress(I) over time while it reduced the benefits that the Samajwadi derived from remaining in office. The conflict culminated in their clash over the surveillance issue which caused the Congress(I) withdrawal of support, and the eventual dissolution of the Lok Sabha.

In stark contrast to both cabinets formed in the ninth Lok Sabha stands the minority government that the Congress(I) Party formed in 1991. As predicted by Hypothesis 1, in a DPC legislature, which is what the tenth Lok Sabha was, only a cabinet including the dominant central party, in this case the Congress(I), can be stable. On issues relating to ideology, such as the passage of the budget or, as mentioned earlier, secularism and communalism, and, generally speaking, most issues of governance, the Congress(I) could seek the support of parties located either to its left or to its right or both.

Furthermore, the fact that the Congress(I) survived even the censure motion that both the left and the right submitted against it showed

that dominance may be just as important in stabilizing a government as centrality. The joint motion of censure of the Left and the right against the central party indicated that the Congress(I) would be unable to save its government on ideological grounds. However, because of its numerical dominance as a dominant party it was able to muster the support of small parties, and thus survived the motion.

In sum, the contrast between the stability of the Congress(I) government on the one hand, and the instability of the National Front and Samajwadi Janata cabinet on the other, proves Hypothesis 1. Since both the ninth and the tenth Lok Sabhas were dominated centralized parliamentary games, by the Congress(I) being the dominant central party in both, only the cabinet that this party formed remained stable.

Cabinet Stability in CP Parliaments

According to Van Roozendaal's second hypothesis, cabinets in CP parliaments will be less stable if they do not include the central party than if they do. As shown, none of the three cabinets formed in this legislature included the central party, the Congress(I), and indeed, none of them managed to last long in office. At the same time, although the central party was not included in any of the cabinets, it did extend external support to the two United Front cabinets, which, not surprisingly, lasted longer than the BJP-led coalition which was not supported by the central party at all.

Why did the central player, the Congress(I), prefer a United Front to a BJP cabinet? The simple reason is that the United Front was weaker than the BJP-led bloc and as such was in a more subordinate position to the Congress(I) than a BJP cabinet would have been. This in turn gave greater leverage to the central player over government policy, thus reducing the costs of its formal opposition status. At the same time, however, the arrangement whereby the central party gave support to a cabinet that formally excluded it remained unstable, because the central party's cost of remaining in opposition increased while the governing party's benefits declined. Exploiting its strong bargaining position in the game, the central party demanded that the government pursue policies in line with its own preferences, which the government was only willing to tolerate up to a point. Once the government refused to meet the demands of its supporter, the latter could easily co-ordinate with the rest of the opposition, thanks to its central position, and bring the government down.

This finding may lead to a refinement of the original hypothesis by suggesting that in CP parliaments, cabinets that either include central parties or enjoy their negotiated support without formally including them will be more durable than cabinets that exclude central parties both from their executive and legislative coalitions.

Conclusion

The article showed that the Indian National Congress(I) Party retained an important position in India's party system even though it was no longer the predominant party that it had been. By virtue of being the central player, it was able to determine the stability of the various governments formed in the parliaments studied, even as its numerical weight in the Lok Sabha weakened. As long as the Congress(I) Party can retain its central position in the party system, it will remain the pivot that determines the viability of the various coalitions.[25]

In addition, this article has sought to bring positive political theory and the study of politics in non-Western countries closer to one another. By demonstrating that a game theoretical model can account convincingly for the relative stability and instability of national governments in India, it attempts to call on students of non-Western politics in general, and those of party politics in the non-West in particular, to take positive theoretical models more seriously. At the same time, it shows that refining positive theories of coalition and party politics may require one to look beyond Western democracies, which have been the traditional terrain for the empirical tests of such theories.

Appendix: Calculating Dominance and Centrality in India's Post-1989 Parliaments

In calculating the various scores for dominance and centrality, the units of analysis were the blocs of parties rather than the individual parties themselves. For the calculation of centrality, the relative ideological position of each bloc was defined according to the relative ideological position of their leading parties. The data on the ideological position of these parties along the dominant Left-Right dimension have been obtained from Huber and Ingelhart, as shown in Table 4 below. In sum, the four blocs are ranked from left to right as follows: Left Front, National Front, Congress(I), and BJP. By 1996 the Left and the National Fronts had combined but they still remained to the left of the Congress(I).

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25   This suggests that discussions of an emerging post-Congress polity in India, meaning a political reality no longer dominated by the Congress Party, are premature. See, Yogendra Yadav, "Reconfiguration in Indian Politics: State Assembly Elections, 1993-95," *Economic and Political Weekly* 31 (1996), 94-105.

TABLE 4

The Ideological Position of the Leading Political Parties in India

Party	Left-Right score
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	2.22
Janata Dal	4.5
Indian National Congress(I)	5.8
BJP	8.18

Note: The scores range from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating the left-most and 10 indicating the right-most position.
Source: John Huber and Ronald Ingelhart, ''Expert Interpretations of Party Space and Party Locations in 42 Societies,'' *Party Politics* 1 (1995), 73-111.

Calculating Dominance

The largest bloc of parties after the 1989 election was the Congress(I) alliance. With 40 per cent of the seats, the alliance clearly controlled more than one half of the quota, which given the simple majority decision-making rule is 25%+1. As for the third condition, the Congress(I) bloc could have formed a winning coalition with the BJP-bloc or the National Front, respectively, and indeed neither of these potential partners could have formed a winning coalition together. Thus, the Congress(I) bloc meets all three conditions of dominance in 1989. This does not change with the break-up of the Janata Dal and the formation of the Samajwadi Janata Party.

Similarly, after the 1991 election, the Congress(I) once again emerges as the dominant party. Being the largest bloc, and controlling 47.6 per cent of the seats, the Congress(I) alliance meets the first two criteria of dominance. As for the third criterion, the Congress(I) could once again have formed winning coalitions with two partners respectively, for example, the Left or the National Fronts, such that on their own the latter would have been unable to do the same. Thus in 1991, the Congress(I) bloc continued to be the dominant player.

After the 1996 election, the BJP-led bloc emerged with the largest number of seats. With 35.9 per cent of the seats, this bloc clearly met the second criterion for dominance. However, the BJP-bloc failed to meet the third condition of dominance: whereas it could have formed winning coalition with either the United Front or the Congress(I)-alliance, the latter two would also have been able to do the same. Thus, in this legislature there was no dominant player.

Calculating Centrality

Tables 5 through 7 show the calculations of centrality in each of the three parliaments. As discussed in the text, w(R+(i)) stands for the total weight of the blocs of parties that are to the left of each row-bloc, while w(R-(i)) stands for the total weight of the blocs of parties to the right if the each row-bloc. To be the central player, the weight of the row-bloc indicated in the second column must be greater than the figure in the last column. As Tables 5 through 7 show, in each of the three parliaments, the Congress(I) alliance met the conditions of centrality. In sum, according to the typology the three parliaments can be described as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 5

Centrality in the ninth Lok Sabha, 1989-1991

Bloc	weight	w(R+(i))	w(R-(i))	w(R+(i))—w(R-(i))
Congress(I)	40	37.3	16.5	20.8
National Front	27.5	9.8	56.5	46.7
BJP	16.5	77.3	0	77.3
Left Front	9.8	0	84	84

TABLE 6

Centrality in the tenth Lok Sabha, 1991-1996

Bloc	weight	w(R+(i))	w(R-(i))	w(R+(i))—w(R-(i))
Congress(I)	47.6	24.4	23.8	0.6
National Front	14	10.4	71.4	61
BJP	23.8	72	0	72
Left Front	10.4	0	85.4	85.4

TABLE 7

Centrality in the eleventh Lok Sabha, 1996-1997

Bloc	weight	w(R+(i))	w(R-(i))	w(R+(i))—w(R-(i))
Congress(I)	26.4	33.3	35.9	2.6
United Front	33.3	0	62.3	62.3
BJP	35.9	59.7	0	59.7