The Broken Promise of the Lower-Caste Revolution

*Ethnic Politics and Democracy in Uttar Pradesh*

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Abstract

This thesis discusses whether the emergence of lower-caste parties had a democratising effect in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP), and why democracy in UP remains deeply flawed despite the political ascendancy of marginalised groups. The parties in question, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), are operationalised as ethnic parties; and the analysis draws on theories on the potential of ethnic politics to deepen or undermine democracy. The thesis outlines a framework to analyse ethnic parties as agents of democratisation, and analyses UP using this framework and a comparison with two other cases (ethnicity-based indigenous/left-wing politics in Bolivia and nonethnic social and participatory democracy in Kerala). Two overarching hypotheses – that democratisation in UP is compromised by who the lower-caste parties represent, and that it is compromised by how they represent their constituents – are suggested. The analysis suggests that both these factors compromised democracy in UP, but that the organisation of North Indian politics (the how-question) was a more important factor than the ethnic character of lower-caste politics (the who-question). The lower-caste parties depend on multiethnic support, and are therefore relatively inclusive; but their core groups of supporters are ethnically defined and narrow, while outside support is attracted through pragmatic alliances and clientelism. Despite a strengthened lower-caste presence in the political elite, North India’s vertical, incorporative political culture thus persists. The organisation and policies of the lower caste parties are even more problematic. The BSP and SP are disinterested in the functioning of democratic institutions, detached from society, and dominated by an unaccountable leadership. Their programs are underdeveloped, and the parties mobilise mainly through clientelism and top-down populism. Thus, the ascendancy of lower-caste parties strengthened descriptive and symbolic representation of some marginalised groups, but failed to improve the functioning of democracy in UP. Old channels of representation remain flawed, and new ones have not been opened. The case of UP suggests that while ethnicity-based mobilisation of marginalised groups in a flawed democracy may make its institutions more representative on the descriptive level, such mobilisation is in itself insufficient to improve substantial representation. If they adapt to undemocratic political cultures instead of challenging them, ethnic parties are unlikely to have a substantial democratising effect.
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Oslo, April 2017

Vegar Krogh Arnesen
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<td>BAMCEF</td>
<td>All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation</td>
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<td>BJP</td>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party</td>
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<td>BKD</td>
<td>Bharatiya Kranti Dal</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>Bahujan Samaj Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>Communist Party of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>Communist Party of India (Marxist)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSDS</td>
<td>Centre for the Study of Developing Societies</td>
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<td>LDF</td>
<td>Left Democratic Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>Movimento al Socialismo</td>
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<td>MBC</td>
<td>Most Backward Castes</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member of the Legislative Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Other Backward Classes</td>
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<td>RLD</td>
<td>Rashtriya Lok Dal</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>Republican Party of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
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<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Samajwadi Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front</td>
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<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
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1 Introduction

Are ethnic parties good for democracy? In classic theoretical works on ethnic politics, the near-unanimous answer to that question is “no” (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972, Lijphart 1977, Horowitz 2000). Classic theory holds that ethnic politics lead to irreconcilable zero-sum politics, benefitting some groups at the expense of others and ultimately making democracy unworkable. However, case studies of ethnic parties often see them in a much more positive light. Ethnic parties from Canada to Bolivia to Turkey have been judged to make democracy more representative (Kymlicka 2003, Van Cott 2005, Fishman 2016). Sympathetic assessments of ethnic politics argue that ethnic mobilisation empowers previously excluded groups, and may be necessary to ensure genuine representation of minority interests (Pieterse 1997, Mansbridge 1999, Kymlicka 2003).

Positive assessments of ethnic parties are most common in societies where socioeconomic marginalisation follows ethnic lines. In such contexts, ethnic politics provide an opportunity to channel representative and redistributive demands. There are few countries where linkages between ethnic, socioeconomic and political orders are as obvious as in India, whose caste system is both an ethnic division and an institutionalisation of inequality. For over a century, therefore, Indian progressives have argued that the country’s democratic deficiencies and injustices cannot be addressed without attention to caste (Shah 2004). Ethnic parties based on caste, religion, or language have been at the forefront of the opposition to the once-dominant Congress party since Independence, and gained prominence with the decline of Congress from the 1960s on (Yadav 1996, Chandra 2005). The ethnification of Indian politics did not produce the destructive results suggested by classic theory (Chandra 2005); instead, it was seen as a potentially democratising development. In North India, parties affiliated with the lower castes came to power. To scholars such as Yadav (1996), Pai (2002), and Jaffrelot (2003), this signalled a deepening of democracy. To them, the transfer of power from upper to lower castes had deep implications for the future of Indian democracy – this was a “democratic upsurge” (Yadav 1996), an “unfinished democratic revolution” (Pai 2002) or a “silent revolution” (Jaffrelot 2003).

The research question of this thesis is to what degree ethnic politics have contributed to substantial democratisation of India’s largest state, Uttar Pradesh (UP), and which factors have compromised democratisation through ethnic politics in the state. UP was the state where the lower-caste revolution went furthest. Until 1989, the upper-caste-led Congress party
dominated the state. In the 1990s, Congress dominance gave way to a multiparty system, where two of the main parties – the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) – were based on ethnic bids to the lower castes. The BSP was associated with the Dalits, the lowest ranked castes in the traditional hierarchy, and pursued a radical rejection of the caste system and the old political order. The SP drew its support mainly from the non-Dalit lower castes, called OBCs (Other Backward Classes); and from the Muslim minority. The BSP and SP have been among the three largest parties in UP in every state election since 1993. From 2002 to 2017, they were the two largest parties. Since 1993, they have participated in most state governments – together in a coalition from 1993 to 1995, later in a succession of unstable minority governments and coalitions; then in single-party majority governments of the BSP (2007-2012) and SP (2012-17).

UP’s lower-caste revolution gained much academic attention. Positive assessments focused on the dramatically strengthened lower-caste presence in legislative assemblies and executive office (Yadav 1996, Pai 2002, Jaffrelot 2003 and 2011). Although the lower-caste parties were slow to initiate comprehensive reforms, Yadav (1996), Pai (2002: 222-23) and Jaffrelot (2003: 385-86) argued that the political rise of the lower castes had laid the foundation for a deeper transformation of power in politics and society. Others saw the symbolic change of leadership from upper to lower castes as a major democratic achievement in itself (Kumar 2007, Michelutti 2007). However, the democratic deficiencies of the lower-caste parties – including poor organisation, underdeveloped programs, and dominance of narrow ethnic groups – were a source of concern. To critics such as Bardhan (1998), Dube (1998), and Hasan (2001) such deficiencies made the net effects of lower-caste politics on democracy negligible or even negative. Hasan (2001) saw the BSP and SP as sectional parties interested only in capturing power to distribute the state resources to their own ethnic constituencies. Although lower-caste politics had improved political representation of some marginalised communities; others, too small to be of electoral value, were left out. To Hasan (Ibid.: 4406, 4408), UP politics remained a “Hobbesian world” of “cut-throat competitive politics;” an environment hostile to empowerment and development.

Ironically, as the lower-caste parties reached the zenith of their powers with the consecutive BSP and SP majorities of 2007-2017, academic interest in their political projects waned. A consensus emerged that the BSP and SP had not initiated a substantial, deep democratisation, and were unlikely to do so in the future (Jayal 2016: 183). As early as in 2003, Yadav and Palshikar ([2003] 2006: 110) wrote that lower-caste politics in UP had taken the shape of
electoral opportunism and a “more personal than political, more episodic than policy-driven” antagonism between the BSP and SP. As the lower-caste revolution entered its third decade – with very little turnover in leadership and chronically underdeveloped political programs – it seemed to have lost its momentum and promise of substantial democratisation. The lower-caste parties no longer seem to represent the future of Indian democracy, but it would be a mistake to abandon the debate for that reason. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the question of whether ethnic politics could renew and substantially deepen Indian democracy was open and hotly contended. Today, we have a quarter-century of empirical evidence to answer that question. Operationalising UP after 1989 as an historical case allows us to study the long-term effects ethnic mobilisation of marginalised groups has on democracy. Given the convergence of caste and class, India is a most-likely case of ethnic parties making democracy more representative of marginalised groups. Within India, UP is a most-likely case of democratising ethnic politics, as that was where lower-caste parties had the greatest electoral success.

The analysis begins with the assumption that ethnic politics are not necessarily detrimental for democracy; instead they can be both emancipatory and authoritarian (Pieterse 1997). The democratising promise of ethnic politics lies mainly in political integration of marginalised groups; however, we should not assume that any party appealing to marginalised groups necessarily integrates its supporters into the democratic polity (Mouzelis 1986). In UP, the lower-caste revolution greatly enhanced descriptive representation of the lower castes; however, whether there has been a substantial democratisation is much more questionable. Most of the old democratic deficits of the state remain in place. Political institutions remain dysfunctional, state capacity to implement policy remains extremely poor, and politicians remain unaccountable and corrupt (see Hasan 2001, World Bank 2010: 118-120, and chapters 6.3 and 7 of this thesis). By examining why the emancipatory promise of ethnic politics is largely unfulfilled in UP, we gain insight into the relationship between ethnic politics and democratisation.

I have set up two overarching hypotheses on why substantial democratisation continues to lag in UP. The first concerns who the lower-caste parties represent. Dube (1998: 216), Hasan (2001) and Sarkar and Sarkar (2016) argue that the BSP and SP do not represent the whole lower-caste population. Instead, they champion the interests of educated intracaste elites and narrow subgroups. Rather than working for social transformation, they seek control over state resources for their constituents, as classic theory suggests ethnic parties do. This is, however, not a universal view. Chandra (2005) and Jaffrelot (2011: 532-579) argue that broad support is
essential for the electoral success of the lower-caste parties, and that they therefore seek to represent a broad segment of the population. The second hypothesis is that the problem is not who the lower-caste parties represent, but how they represent them. Both critical (Bardhan 1998: 132-33) and more sympathetic assessments (Yadav 1996: 103, Pai 2002: 100-111) highlight the democratic deficits of the lower-caste parties themselves. The discussion of the how-question assesses the impact these organisational weaknesses had on democracy in UP.

To place UP in a broader context, I have used a part theoretical, part comparative approach. Although the who- and how-questions are drawn from the empirical literature on UP, they deal with classic problems of ethnic politics. Therefore, in chapter 4, I discuss them in light of general theory and other empirical cases. Based on this discussion, I break the two main hypotheses into a set of subquestions and indicators, comprising a suggested framework for analysing the democratic implications of ethnic politics. The following empirical discussion analyses lower-caste politics in UP based on the framework. In the empirical discussion, the historical developments in UP are compared with two other cases, where counter-hegemonic political movements have produced more substantial transformations than in UP: Left-wing politics in the South Indian state of Kerala and indigenous politics in Bolivia. The reference cases are applied for a contrast of contexts (see chapter 2) to highlight the unique dynamics of our case, rather than a classic most-similar or least-similar causal comparison.
2 Method

2.1 Introduction and Research Design

This thesis is a case study of the relationship between lower-caste politics and democracy in Uttar Pradesh; with broader implications for the democratizing potential of ethnic politics in India and beyond. The thesis operationalises UP after 1989 as a macrohistorical case, studying longterm developments and their implications for the broader universe of ethnic parties.

The point of departure is two overarching hypotheses, namely that the democratizing potential of the lower-caste revolution was compromised by problems of who the lower-caste parties represent or by how they represent them. The hypotheses are subsequently broken down into subquestions, drawing both from the empirical debate on North Indian lower-caste politics and from general theory on ethnic politics, democracy, and representation. Although writings on UP usually rarely place the state in a broader theoretical context of ethnic politics (Chandra 2005 is a notable exception), the points of contention regarding the lower-caste parties are very similar to those in the theoretical debate on ethnic politics. Integrating the two debates allows us to both view UP in a broader perspective, and to draw upon the case of UP for insights into ethnic politics in general.

After breaking the overarching hypotheses into subquestions, I address these questions using empirical evidence and comparisons. The study uses a bird’s eye perspective to study longterm developments and effects, and thus belongs to the macrosociological, historical tradition of social sciences (Skocpol and Somers 1980). Any case study should use a large number of observations of the case (Gerring 2007: 22), and in a macrohistorical study these should span over the timeframe in question. Due to the macrohistorical nature of the research question, and for practical reasons, I relied primarily on existing literature instead of making first-hand observations. There is a rich, if dispersed, literature on lower-caste politics in UP, much of which is empirical and based on fieldwork. Fieldwork is essential to understand Indian politics, which rely on local alliances and informal contacts to a much greater degree than the politics of the West (Jeffrey et al. 2008: 1392, Piliavsky 2014); and a metastudy of existing field studies provides a solid empirical base for a macrolevel analysis.

Throughout the thesis, lower-caste politics in UP are compared with two other cases: The Communist parties of the Indian state of Kerala and the indigenous-based MAS party in Bolivia. Using the macrosociological method of contrasting contexts (Skocpol and Somers 1980); the
comparative perspective is applied to take a step away from the typical nomothetic approach to North Indian politics. Furthermore, contrasts with other cases highlight not only what factors have been present in UP, but also which are missing. Unlike the most-similar and most-different system comparisons, the method of contrasting contexts does not aim to identify causal effects, but to “bring out the unique features of each particular case … to show how these unique features affect the working-out of putatively general social processes” (Ibid.: 178, 193).

The reference cases are selected as cases of relatively successful democratisation through mobilisation of marginalised groups, whose successes help us identify the deficits of UP. Kerala is a case of a nonethnic party in a similar context, Bolivia of an ethnic party in a different context. Kerala is selected as a case of a South Indian state that has come further in democratisation and development than UP (Heller 2013a). The North-South comparison is “a *locus classicus* of Indian studies” (Jaffrelot 2011: 449), and the South is in general seen as a greater democratic and developmental success that the North (P. Singh 2015). Few states represent Northern failures and Southern successes of democratisation better than, respectively, UP and Kerala (Heller 2013a, P. Singh 2015). Although mass mobilisation against upper-caste hegemony began at a much earlier stage in Kerala, the Keralan Communists and North Indian lower-caste parties had similar goals and mobilised similar segments of the population, but achieved very different results. Bolivia is selected for a more original angle, contrasting Indian lower-caste politics with Latin American indigenous politics. Despite very different contexts, the ethnic parties of North India and Latin America are fundamentally similar as ethnicity-based counterforces against vertical power structures in a flawed democracy, and rose to prominence around the same time. However, ethnic politics in Latin America were much more transformative, fundamentally altering democratic institutions and policies. Bolivia shares two key traits with UP – first, non-dominant ethnic groups form a combined majority; and secondly, parties claiming to represent them have reached the highest executive office – and is therefore selected as the Latin American reference case. It should however be noted that this is not a comparative study of UP, Kerala and Bolivia; rather, it is a case study of lower-caste politics in UP using Kerala and Bolivia as reference cases. My goal is not to analyse Kerala and Bolivia, but to use the comparison with these cases to explain developments in UP, before using the case of UP to make a broader argument about ethnic politics.
2.2 The Cases

The cases are two political parties from the same time and place: The BSP and SP of Uttar Pradesh. Following earlier writings (Chandra 2005, Sridharan and deSouza 2006: 23, P. Singh 2015: 162), they are defined as ethnic parties. In the Indian context, they are most-likely cases of ethnic politics improving democratic representation. Both parties (though especially the BSP) have been praised for bringing marginalised groups into the democratic polity (Yadav 1996, Pai 2002: 220-21, Corbridge et al. 2013: 152). As India’s most successful Dalit party, the BSP has brought the former untouchables to unprecedented levels of political power (Pai 2002: 232-36). Although its core constituents are historically not as marginalised as those of the BSP, the SP has been at the forefront of the “silent revolution” or “plebeianization of the political class” which has largely overturned upper-caste hegemony in North Indian politics (Jaffrelot 2002 and 2011: 411-23). Since 1993, most state governments of UP have included at least one lower-caste party, and from 2002 to 2017, the two parties had a combined majority in the UP Legislative Assembly. In short, for a quarter-century, the lower-caste parties of UP had both motive and a position to bring about a “democratic revolution” benefitting marginalised groups (Pai 2002).

I study both parties, instead of just one, for two reasons. First, classic theories of ethnic politics emphasise the key role interparty relations have in shaping ethnic politics,¹ and this has certainly been the case in UP. The BSP-SP relationship has influenced the support base, tactics and policies of each party, and their competition has prevented one party from monopolising the lower-caste vote. Second, the two parties are considered similar and frequently discussed together in the literature on Indian politics (see for example Yadav and Palshikar 2006: 85, Corbridge et al. 2013: 152, or Jayal 2016: 181). Nevertheless, studies of the phenomenon tend to focus more on the BSP than on the less revolutionary SP. The lower-caste revolution is sometimes primarily associated with the BSP (Pai 2002, Jeffrey et al. 2008, Sarkar and Sarkar 2016), sometimes with both parties (Jaffrelot 2003, Corbridge et al. 2013: 152), and never primarily with the SP. The SP is often reduced to a supporting role, defined by the BSP. In practice, however, the two parties are organisationally and politically quite similar, as we will see; and as the largest lower-caste party for much of the period the political influence of the SP

¹ Rabushka and Shepsle (1972), Lijphart (1977) and Horowitz (2000) all focus mainly on dynamics between ethnic organisations – usually parties – in their models of ethnic politics. None of these theorists give much attention to intraparty factors; they all implicitly consider interparty relations to be decisive.
arguably exceeds that of the BSP. Due focus to the SP alongside the BSP therefore gives a more complete picture of lower-caste politics in UP.

The timeframe spans from 1989 to early 2017. Lower-caste politics in UP go back to the 1960s, but it was the three elections from 1989 to 1993 that ended the dominance of the Congress party and established the new, ethnically based multiparty system (see section 6.3.3). The 2017 election is only discussed in brief, as most of the thesis was written before it took place. Relevant pre-1989 developments will be discussed as background to later events. Spatially, the study concentrates on Uttar Pradesh. Although both parties have periodically had a relatively strong presence in the capitol, the BSP and SP’s policies at the federal level is not discussed here. As our focus is on representation, it is more relevant to consider the policies of the two parties in their home state than their roles as small building blocks in federal coalition governments. The spatial delineations also exclude their modest presence in other states.

2.3 Empirical Analysis

Based on the framework (see chapter 4), the empirical analysis assesses qualitatively which indicators of the two overarching hypotheses are present and which are not. The empirical data is drawn primarily from secondary sources, supplemented by interviews, primary sources, and quantitative data (see chapter 5). Given the reliance on secondary sources, the empirical foundation for the argument comes primarily from a synthesis of previous findings, aiming to “identify what it is we ‘know’” about the subject, as Lucas (1974: 1) puts it. My goal is to use a macrohistorical and comparative approach to “[distil] the lessons from a set of local case experiences” (Ibid.: 2) and integrate the disparate literature on our case into a unitary argument with broader theoretical implications.
3 Theory: Ethnic Politics and Democracy

This chapter begins with definitions of the key concepts of ethnicity and ethnic parties. The next section outlines two theoretical paradigms in analysing ethnic politics: Ethnic politics as necessarily deterrent for democracy; and ethnic politics as potentially democratising.

3.1 Defining Ethnicity and Ethnic Parties

The definitions of ethnic groups and ethnic parties used here are taken from Horowitz ([1985] 2000), a standard of ethnopolitical theory. Horowitz offers a minimal definition of ethnicity that reflects mainstream usage of the term; and draws up distinctions between ethnic and multiethnic parties, and multiethnic and nonethnic parties. For a “minimal definition of an ethnic unit,” Horowitz (2000: 53) quotes Schildkrout (1979: 184): “The idea of a common provenance, recruitment primarily through kinship, and a notion of distinctiveness.” To this definition, Horowitz (2000: 53) adds “a minimal scale requirement, so that ethnic membership transcends the range of face-to-face interactions, as recognized kinship need not”. The definition “embraces groups differentiated by color, language, and religion; it covers ‘tribes,’ ‘races,’ ‘nationalities,’ and castes” (Ibid.).

Horowitz (2000: 291) defines an ethnically based (or ethnic) party as a party that “derives its support overwhelmingly from an identifiable ethnic group (or cluster of ethnic groups) and serves the interests of that group.” An ethnic party usually draws the majority of its support from a distinct ethnic group; although a majority of the members of that group does not necessarily support the party. Ethnic parties are not necessarily explicitly ethnic, and may pursue support from outside their core constituencies, for example by fielding candidates of other ethnic groups (Ibid.: 291-93). Horowitz distinguishes ethnic parties from nonethnic and multiethnic parties. Truly nonethnic parties, which do not mobilise on ethnic terms, are rare in ethnically divided societies; they tend to either shift toward ethnic politics over time, or have an ethnic or multiethnic profile locally (Ibid.: 298-302, 334-340). Multiethnic parties, which are based on ethnic alliances, are more common. Whether a party is genuinely multiethnic depends on the relative strength of the groups in the coalition: If one group is dominant, the party is an ethnic party with some support outside the core group rather than a multiethnic party (Ibid.: 299). Horowitz defines an ethnic party broadly and with fuzzy delineations, leaving much to the judgement of the analyst. The definition thus provides some methodological challenges; but its pragmatism and recognition of nuances is also a strength, in that the
definition avoids the common fallacy of equating an ethnic party with an ethnic group (see Brubaker 2004) and recognises the shifting local alliances of ethnic politics.

Ethnic parties are not mere agents of a pre-existing ethnic group interest. Horowitz (2000: 299) stresses that even in ethnified party systems, ethnic groups do not necessarily vote in blocs, and an ethnic party does not necessarily enjoy a monopoly of the associated ethnic group’s vote. Ethnic parties are independent actors capable of changing social relations (Ibid.: 32-34, 574). Brubaker (2004) takes these points further, criticising earlier approaches to ethnic politics for “groupism.” He defines groupism as “the tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis” (Ibid.: 8). Brubaker argues for a sharper distinction between ethnic groups, categories, and organisations. Rather than organising pre-existing ethnic groups, ethnopolitical actors constitute them out of ethnic categories (such as “Scots”). Instead of considering groups coherent actors, one should discuss the constitution of groupness, and redefine interethnic relations as relationships between organisations claiming to represent ethnic groups, be they states, parties, or armed groups (Ibid.: 13-15).

3.2 Theoretical Background

3.2.1 The First Paradigm: Ethnic Parties Undermining Democracy

Nearly all the classic ethnopolitical theorists agree that ethnic politics always or usually have a negative impact on democracy (Chandra 2005). To theorists such as Rabushka and Shepsle (1972), ethnic politics are fully incompatible with democracy; while somewhat less deterministic theorists such as Lijphart (1977) and Horowitz (2000) see the coexistence of ethnic politics and democracy as possible, but unlikely (Chandra 2005).

Rabushka and Shepsle (1972: 20-21, 187) see ethnic parties as inevitable products of “plural societies” where “the overwhelming preponderance of political conflicts is perceived in ethnic terms.” In such a society, politics turn into uncompromising ethnic competition over resources (Ibid.: 84-85), producing conflicts that are “[not] manageable in a democratic framework” (Ibid.: 217). Horowitz (2000) is less deterministic, but nevertheless considers ethnified party systems to be inherently vulnerable to violence and coups. Parties in developing countries tend to turn to ethnic politics over time. An ethnic bid from one party is followed by ethnic counterbids from others, leading to an ethnification of the entire party system. Ethnified party systems tend to produce policies of outbidding and permanent exclusion of small groups, which in turn lead to violent ethnic conflict (Ibid.: 333-349, 358).
Lijphart (1977) argues that ethnic parties in themselves do not undermine democracy, but competitive majoritarian politics in ethnically or otherwise plural societies do. In plural societies, an institutionalised system of compromise is necessary for the survival of democracy. If they are integrated into a consociational grand coalition with “a high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs” (Ibid.: 25), ethnic parties strengthen democracy by ensuring representation for each group and broad legitimacy for democratic institutions (Ibid.: 61-62). Lijphart argues that such coalitions had a stabilising effect in European countries such as the Netherlands or Switzerland (Ibid.: 2). Lijphart’s solution for reconciling ethnic politics with democracy is based on the implicit assumption that a sole party legitimately represents each ethnic group (Horowitz 2000: 574), leaving intraethnic competition and the degree to which an ethnic elite represents its constituents unaddressed and reducing democracy to elite trade-offs without alternatives to the ruling coalition.

3.2.2 The Second Paradigm: Ethnic Parties Facilitating Democratisation

Normatively, the notion that ethnic minority interests have a legitimate demand for representation is broadly shared (Banducci et al. 2004). In its Freedom in the World survey, a good indicator of mainstream democratic thought, Freedom House (2016) includes “the participation of minority groups in national or subnational political life” and the right of “political parties based on ethnicity, culture, or religion that espouse peaceful, democratic values” to contest elections among its indicators of political freedom. Ethnopolitical actors and their sympathizers often take this mainstream view further by arguing that ethnic mobilisation are not just legitimate but necessary; as politics that ignore ethnic cleavages implicitly maintain existing ethnic dominance and marginalise minorities (Mansbridge 1997, Kymlicka 2003: 252, Van Cott 2005: 228). Based on this argument, a disparate body of literature makes the case that ethnic politics have a democratising potential.

Empowerment theory, a mainly American school of thought, holds that the presence of minority representatives “enhance[s] trust in government, efficacy, group pride, and participation,” legitimising democratic institutions among minorities and empowering members of the minority community by inspiring them to participate in politics and assert themselves (Banducci et al. 2014: 538-39). Mansbridge (1999), for example, argues that the descriptive representation of formerly underrepresented groups elevate these groups from second-class to full citizens, strengthens democratic legitimacy, and articulates uncrystallised interests. As they focus on US politics, empowerment theorists tend to discuss individual representatives rather than parties, but similar arguments have been made regarding ethnic parties elsewhere. In an analysis of
minority nationalism, Kymlicka (2003: 252) argues that any state “necessarily privilege[s] particular national cultures” at the expense of others. Despite enjoying equal civil rights, minorities participate in the polity without full cultural citizenship, as the national political culture was constituted out of the majority or dominant group (Ibid.: 250-51). Through minority-national mobilisation – as seen in Catalonia or Scotland – minorities resist assimilation and claim democratic citizenship. This form of ethnic politics may be violent or peaceful, illiberal or liberal; but fundamentally it is about self-assertion (Ibid.: 246-253, 288-89). The empowerment theorists and Kymlicka reach the same conclusion: Without parties and politicians associated with ethnic minorities, ethnic minorities are not represented as democratic citizens.

Recent empirical assessments of the impact of ethnic politics in the developing world reach varying conclusions. In Africa, politicised ethnicity has often undermined democratic institutions (Berman 1998 and 2010). In India, Chandra (2005) finds that competing ethnic bids have resulted in moderation instead of radicalisation, adapting to minimal democracy. In Latin America, the rise of indigenous-based from the late 1990s was widely seen as a democratising development (Van Cott 2005, Panizza and Miorelli 2009, Bull 2013). Van Cott (2005: 228-32) argues that these ethnic parties “have had a number of positive effects on democratic institutions.” They have deepened and legitimised democracy by improving “the level of representation for a once-excluded group” and putting their interests on the agenda. Indigenous-based parties “offer a model of healthy party-society relations for other parties to emulate,” pursuing movement-based, participatory politics and challenging the corrupt and elitist political culture of the region.

In Latin America, democratisation through ethnic politics thus goes beyond representation of marginalised groups. Latin American ethnic parties challenged the ruling order on overarching political, social, and economic issues; coordinating different opposition movements into an ethnically based, but open alliance (Van Cott 2005: 214-19, Bull 2013). Elsewhere, the Kurdish-based People’s Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey and the Arab-based Joint List in Israel have built similar coalitions of ethnic minorities and left-wing members of the majority (Fishman 2016). Pieterse (1997: 386) suggests that ethnic politics have an emancipatory potential in its ability to frame a collective struggle, that does not necessarily entail “seeking advantage over other ethnic groups;” and the programmatic and inclusive ethically based left-wing parties of Latin America, Turkey, and Israel seem to be cases in point.
3.2.3 Concluding Remarks

The two paradigms have very different points of departure. To the classic theorists, the key problem was democratic stability. Writing in the 1970s and 80s, as most of the newly independent third world had fallen under authoritarian rule, their preoccupation was with whether democracy was at all viable in plural developing countries. From the 1980s on, democracy took root in much of the developing world, and now the predictions of the classic theories seem overly deterministic. However, as the new democratic institutions were deeply flawed and democratic reforms often produced semi-democratic hybrid regimes, the need to problematise the degree of representation within minimal democratic institutions became apparent (Carothers 2002, Törnquist 2009). Accordingly, the second paradigm focuses on representation, not on stability.

Whereas the classic theories are highly deterministic and fail to explain deviant cases (Chandra 2005), the new paradigm of ethnic politics improving representation faces the opposite problem: It is undertheorised, disparate and case-oriented. Empirically, ethnic politics have sometimes undermined democracy (Berman 2010) and sometimes improved it (Van Cott 2005); and in some cases ethnic parties have not threatened democratic stability, but not necessarily improved democratic representation either (Chandra 2005). While the classic theories overestimate the causal relationship between ethnic politics and ethnic conflict and neglect the legitimate demand for ethnic minority representation, followers of the second paradigm risk ignoring the destabilising element of ethnic politics, and assuming any ethnic party that brings members of a marginalised group into office to have a positive effect on democracy. An ethnic party representing a formerly excluded group should be seen neither as democratising by default or as detrimental to democracy. In the following chapter, drawing on the insights of both paradigms, I sketch out a framework to analyse factors facilitating and undermining democratisation through ethnic politics.
4 Framework and Hypotheses

This chapter elaborates on the two main hypotheses outlined in the introduction, breaking the questions of who and how into a set of subquestions with empirical indicators. Although the problems are drawn from the empirical literature on North Indian politics, the subquestions and indicators are largely based on ethnopolitical and democratic theory and other empirical cases. Hence, while designed for the case of Uttar Pradesh, the framework takes a general approach and could be applied to assess the democratic implications of ethnic parties elsewhere.

4.1 The Who-question

The who-question concerns the hypothesis that the lower-caste parties have had little impact on democracy because they never represented the lower-caste majority – instead, they have always been the parties of intracaste elites and a few influential castes. In this understanding, the transfer of power from upper- to lower-caste politicians was an elite change of guards, not a democratic integration of the lower-caste majority into the polity (Hasan 2001, Sarkar and Sarkar 2016).

4.1.1 Ethnic Bid

To analyse an ethnic party, a natural first step is to identify which ethnic group(s) the party is associated with. This is not always a straightforward question. Horowitz (2000: 291) defines ethnic parties as “overwhelmingly” relying on support from “an identifiable ethnic group … or cluster of ethnic groups,” but he explicitly avoids defining this overwhelming support quantitatively. An ethnic party might have a multiethnic support base, as long as one ethnic group dominates the party and the party does not mobilise across the main ethnic cleavages among the electorate (Ibid.: 298-300). The degree to which a party with multiethnic support is to be considered more ethnic than multiethnic depends more on “political context … than the literal meaning of words” (Ibid.: 299). It is essentially a question of “whose party [it is]” – whether the party can be convincingly described as the “party of” a particular ethnic group (Ibid.).

Thus, a quantitative study of the ethnic distribution of a party’s support gives an indication of whether the party is ethnically based, but can only take us so far. To assess if a party is an ethnic party, and if so, which ethnic group it represents; one should study qualitatively whether the party primarily appeals to ethnic sentiments and positions itself as the representative of one ethnic group. Given the subjective and constructed nature of ethnicity, one should be cautious
to speak of an objective ethnic group interest (Brubaker 2004). Instead, the question of which
group “owns” a party is a question of which groups the party associates itself with, through
ethno-symbolic bids and alliances with ethnic organisations, and of how the electorate perceives
the party (Horowitz 2000: 216-19, Brubaker 2004).

In North India, this is a key question. Jaffrelot (2011: 560) tellingly titled an article “The BSP
in Uttar Pradesh: Whose Party Is It?” In the most minimal analysis, the three main parties of
UP represent the three main tiers of the caste hierarchy: The BJP is the party of the upper castes,
the BSP of the Dalits, and the SP of the intermediate OBCs (Pai 2002: 2). However, for both
lower-caste parties there is a debate of how broad their ethnic base is. The SP emerged from
the broad OBC movement, but is primarily associated with the Yadav caste, although it also
traditionally has a strong appeal to Muslims (Jaffrelot 2003: 377, Michelutti 2007: 643). The
BSP is often referred to as a “Dalit party,” although some consider it mainly as the party of the
Chamars, the largest Dalit caste (Jaffrelot 2011: 560). However, both parties have multiethnic
bases, and leaders of both parties work to present their party as nonethnic (Gupta 2009, Pai
claim, arguing that the BSP is to some degree a catch-all party, and has never been a purely
Dalit or Chamar party.

In this thesis, the question will be addressed quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative
distribution of different ethnic groups among the parties’ voters and representatives give an
empirical foundation for discussing which ethnic groups the parties rely on. According to
Horowitz (2000: 293), “it is how the party’s support is distributed, and not how the ethnic
group’s support is distributed, that is decisive” of whether a party should be considered ethnic.
Hence, ideally, the relative strength of different ethnic groups among SP and BSP voters should
be discussed based on data on the vote by ethnic group per party. Unfortunately, the available
data instead show the vote by party per group. However, read together with estimates of the
size of ethnic groups, these data give an indication of the composition of each party’s ethnic
coalition. The distribution of different ethnic groups among representatives and party elites is
also discussed, based on data collected by Jaffrelot (2011: 532-579) and Jaffrelot and Verniers
(2014). The qualitative discussion deals with ethno-symbolic bids and public perception. The
conflicting interpretations of the parties’ ethnic bids – the SP as the party of OBCs or of Yadavs;
the BSP as the party of Dalits or of Chamars; or both parties as multiethnic parties – are
discussed based on literature and interviews.
4.1.2 Mobilisation of Marginalised Groups

As discussed in section 3.2.2, the democratising promise of ethnic politics lies mainly in mobilisation of marginalised groups. Through ethnic politics, politically excluded and socioeconomically underprivileged groups claim a stake in the democratic polity and a platform to demand socioeconomic redistribution. After identifying what group an ethnic party bases its bid on, one should therefore assess that group’s historical political and social standing. If the party primarily represents a group that already enjoys political and social dominance, the party cannot be credited with empowering marginalised sections.

By definition, Indian lower-caste politics mobilise in the lower strata of the social hierarchy. However, lower-caste politics have tended to be led by the relatively well-off intermediate farmer castes, who have pursued the economic interests of the middle peasantry at the expense of lower-status, poorer castes (Hasan 2001). Even the BSP, which has never been dominated by farmer castes, has been seen by some as a party primarily representing the educated Dalit class, mainly drawn from the Chamar caste (Corbridge and Harriss 2001: 216-18). Thus, the question is highly relevant for North India. Here, the socioeconomic and political status of the lower castes affiliated with the two parties will be discussed in turn. The degree of socioeconomic marginalisation will be discussed based on empirical surveys of the relationship between caste, class, and standards of living. The question of whether the lower-caste parties mobilised politically excluded groups will be addressed based on empirical data of representation of lower castes and minorities in UP’s political institutions before 1989.

4.1.3 Constitution of Ethnicity

In classic ethnopolitical theory, the detrimental effects of ethnic politics on democracy are closely linked with segmentation. To Rabushka and Shepsle (1972), Lijphart (1977), and Horowitz (2000) ethnic parties represent fixed segments of the population. Ethnification necessarily leads to segmentation, which in turn produces instability and permanent exclusion of ethnic groups outside the ruling coalition. This understanding, however, assumes that ethnic parties mobilise pre-existing, static groups. As Pieterse (1997) and Brubaker (2004) argue, ethnic groups are continuously constituted and redefined, and ethnic parties are independent actors who contribute to the process. The character of this constitution varies – ethnic appeals may be inclusive or exclusive, civic or primordial, chauvinistic or tolerant (Pieterse 1997, Kymlicka 2003). An inclusive ethnic bid that recognises internal differences is presumably more favourable for democratisation than a more segmental bid.
In India, the main ethnic division – caste – is relatively static and highly exclusivist. However, Indian ethnopolitical entrepreneurs have long worked to constitute broader ethnic identities, based on shared nationality, religion, language, or inter-caste solidarity (see section 6.1.2). Both lower-caste parties emerged from such ethnopolitical movements, although as seen above, many commentators see their appeal as more narrow. Based on a comparison with the successful bids to overarching identities in the reference cases, I will discuss if the lower-caste parties pursue inclusive or exclusive constitutions of ethnicity.

4.1.4 Beyond Ethnicity

Ethnic parties could also mitigate segmentalism by welcoming supporters from outside the core group, by adapting nonethnic issues and allying with nonethnic organisations. The ethnically based left-wing parties of Latin America, Turkey, and Israel are examples of this approach (see section 3.2.2). For example, the Turkish HDP bases its electoral support mainly on the large Kurdish minority, but it has also integrated other groups opposed to the government’s Islamic nationalism: Smaller ethnic minorities, the LGBT community, and far-left and environmentalist activists. Within the coalition, these small and marginalised groups gained political representation (Fishman 2016). Such rainbow coalitions enhance an ethnic party’s potential to make democracy more inclusive, and discourages it from pursuing segmentalist policies. However, significant support outside the core group is not necessarily an indicator of a broad counter-hegemonic alliance. As Horowitz (2000: 292) argues, ethnic parties pursue outside electoral support “insofar as it is low cost and does not threaten the more valuable principal source of support.” In an ethnified party system, members of marginalised groups without parties of their own might vote for the party of another group more for to the lack of a better option than because that party empowers them. Whether an ethnically-based party with multiethnic support is a programmatic rainbow coalition or a party that co-opts members of smaller groups in exchange of patronage should be discussed qualitatively, based on whether the party courts external support by ideological and interest-based mobilisation or by more pragmatic, incorporative alliances.

The lower-caste parties of UP are known to have significant support outside their core groups (Chandra 2005: 245, Jaffrelot 2011: 566-575). However, multiethnic alliances in India are typically established by co-optation of local leaders and pragmatic, local caste alliances. Such alliances give marginalised groups token representation, but fall short of a broader, transformative alliance (Jaffrelot 2003: 111-14, Jayal 2013b). The empirical discussion
examines whether the external support of the lower-caste parties comes from patronage and pragmatic alliances, or from issue-based rainbow coalitions.

4.2 The How-question

The hypothesis guiding the how-question is that the deepening of democracy in North India is compromised by the organisation and policies of the lower-caste parties, and not necessarily by their ethnic character. The discrepancy between the lower-caste parties’ ideologies of democratisation and their own undemocratic organisations is well known (Yadav 1996: 100, Guha 2007: 675), but rarely discussed as a compromising factor for democratisation. Yadav and Palshikar (2006: 110) suggests that the programmatic and political weaknesses of the BSP and SP led to the stagnation UP’s democratic revolution, but do not analyse these problems in depth. Pai (2002: 100-111, 220-236) discussed the democratic deficiencies of the BSP but did not give them weight in her cautiously optimistic analysis of the lower-caste revolution. North Indian politics are notoriously corrupt, nepotistic, elitist, clientelist, and ineffectual (Hasan 2001, Guha 2007: 672-76, J. Singh 2016 [interview]); and the enthusiastic early analyses of lower-caste politics may have taken too lightly on how capable the new parties, as products of this environment, were to change the region’s undemocratic political culture instead of adapting to it. Drawing on theory of representation and democracy, this section sets up indicators of substantial and flawed democratisation, to analyse the relationship between lower-caste politics and democratisation.

Two theoretical distinctions serve as the point of departure for the analysis. The first is Pitkin’s (1967) trichotomy of descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation. Descriptive representation refers to shared objective characteristics between the representative and the represented. Descriptively, a female Muslim politician represents the women and Muslims of the electorate (Pitkin 1967: 60-61, Törnquist 2009: 6, Vieira and Runciman 2008: x, 5-6). Symbolic representation “implies that a representative symbolises a constituency, for example, the way a king is a symbolic figure for the nation” (Stokke and Selboe 2009: 59). Substantive representation refers to “the representative [acting] for the represented, for instance, a leader advancing the interests of workers” (Törnquist 2009: 6).

The second key concept is Mouzelis’ (1986) distinction between integration and incorporation. Whereas integration allows the masses to participate in a considerable degree in the political spaces that were formerly reserved for the elite; incorporation brings “new participants … into the political game in a more dependent/vertical manner” (Ibid.: 72). Through incorporation,
political leaders open new political spaces for marginalised groups, but continue to treat their members more as subjects than as democratic citizens. Mouzelis (Ibid.: 76-78) identifies two main systems of incorporation: Clientelism and populism. Both phenomena are empirically closely linked with ethnic politics, and are often highlighted as factors that compromise democracy in India and other developing countries (Berman 1998, Subramanian 2007, Törnquist 2013: 59-60, Piliavsky 2014). Therefore, clientelism and populism are here operationalised as the two main indicators of compromised democratisation, contrasted with systems of democratic integration.

4.2.1 Descriptive and Symbolic Representation

Strengthening descriptive representation of marginalised groups in political institutions is the most minimal indicator of ethnic parties as a deepening of democracy. In this respect, there is little controversy over the success of the lower-caste revolution (Jayal 2016: 181-83). In this thesis, the degree of improved descriptive representation of lower castes and minorities is discussed based on quantitative data of the ethnic composition of the UP Legislative Assembly and state government (Zérinini 2009, Jaffrelot 2011: 532-579, Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012), comparing trends before and after 1989, and between lower-caste and other main parties.

According to empowerment theory, descriptive representation is in itself democratising (see section 3.2.2). Echoing empowerment theory, Kumar (2007), Michelutti (2007), and Padalava (2007) argue that lower-caste politics inspire self-assertion in marginalised groups. To Kumar and Padalava, criticisms of the BSP’s underdeveloped political programs miss the point. Kumar (2007: 2239) argues that where other parties offer “food, shelter and employment,” the BSP offers “self-respect;” while Padalava (2007: 3431) argues that the BSP government’s legacy should be decided by “whether the UP Dalits will use this opportunity and achieve higher levels of education, conversion, mobility [and] visibility.”

Empowerment inspired by representation does, however, presume that members of marginalised groups identify with their descriptive representatives. This is a question of symbolic representation – both of which groups a politician symbolically claims to represent, and of how these groups receive the bid. The democratic implications of the symbolic bids of the lower-caste parties depend on whether members of marginalised communities feel a stake in their projects, and see them as inspiration for self-assertion.
4.2.2 Substantive Representation

Empirically identifying descriptive and symbolic representation is a relatively easy task, whereas discussing substantive representation is more challenging. A first step is to operationalise how the abstract concept of democratic representation works out in practice.

There are two ideal types of democratic representation: Representation through the chain of popular sovereignty, and direct participation (Törnquist 2009: 5-9). In the chain-of-popular-sovereignty or principal-agent approach, state institutions are directly or indirectly agents of the legislative, which is subjected to the popular will through elections. The people is thus the ultimate source of authority. The paradigm is central to liberal political philosophy, and is the legitimising myth of most current states (Østerud 2007: 149-150, Vieira and Runciman 2008: 24-28, 66-73, Törnquist 2009: 6-7). The direct participation approach holds “direct participation by the immediately concerned people” to be the ideal form of representation (Ibid.: 8). Rooted in Rousseau’s democratic theory, direct participation was long a marginal position, held by radical socialists and post-colonialists (Ibid., Pateman 1970). However, participatory ideals were revitalised in the 1990s, and since then both neoliberal financial institutions and left-wing developing-world governments have sought to strengthen direct participation through empowering civil society and delegating policy to local participatory bodies (Tharakan 2004, Törnquist 2013: 62-63).

Welzel (2009: 75) defines democratisation as a process in which people power is institutionalised. An analysis of democratisation is essentially an analysis of changes concerning how effectively indirect or participatory democratic institutions empower citizens to influence policy (Ibid., Dahl 1973: 48-63, Törnquist 2013: 2). In this thesis, the question is approached from two angles: First, I assess to what degree the lower-caste parties have addressed the democratic deficiencies of UP’s institutions. Second, the parties’ own role in the chain of popular sovereignty is analysed. Indicators of substantial democratisation, from theory and the reference cases, are contrasted with clientelism and populism, which are the main indicators of pseudo-democratic incorporation.

The final section of the discussion of substantive representation concerns policy output. Although not directly related to democratic institutions, redistributive policies have implications both for reconciling ethnic politics with democratic stability, and for effective representation of marginalised groups.
Democratic Institutions

Democratic institutions in the developing world tend to have flaws that compromise representation, such as single-party dominance, poor state capacity, and lack of transparency (Carothers 2002, Törnquist 2013: 74-78). Such flaws could be addressed either by reforming existing channels of representation (according to the chain-of-popular sovereignty approach) or by setting up local, participatory bodies (according to the direct participation approach). Institutional reform is largely a nonissue in UP, and is rarely discussed in the existing literature on the lower-caste parties. This does not mean it should not be addressed here; rather, the lack of action is in itself an important finding. The reference cases provide two different examples of institutional reform aimed at deepening democracy, and therefore the contrast of contexts is illuminating, highlighting UP’s institutional neglect by contrasting it against cases of substantial reform.

Where representative political institutions are dysfunctional, politicians distribute resources through other channels. The traditional system of doing so, in India and elsewhere in the developing world, is clientelism (Manor 2013: 243, Piliavsky 2014), defined by Mouzelis (1986: 73-94) as one of the main systems of incorporation. Therefore, clientelism is here contrasted with institutional reform as an indicator of flawed substantive representation.

Burnell et al. (2011: 503, 509) define clientelism as “the exchange of specific services or resources (usually publicly funded) between individuals in return for political support such as votes” and the closely related concept of patronage as “the politically motivated distribution of favours, intended to create and maintain political support among groups.” Clientelism undermines democracy by strengthening subservience (Leftwich 2011: 232) and by channelling public resources through networks outside the chain of popular sovereignty (Törnquist 2013: 74-78). However, clientelism may coexist with formal channels of redistribution, in a system Manor (2013) dubs “post-clientelism.” Politicians adapt post-clientelist measures when they find classic clientelism insufficient to mobilize support. Post-clientelist measures may curtail clientelism (though without eliminating it altogether) by moving funds from patronage to official channels of redistribution, or supplement it by funding both simultaneously.

Clientelism has very strong traditions in India. Democratisation and modernity retained and often strengthened pre-modern patronage networks, with elected representatives acting as patrons for their supporters (Piliavsky 2014). Under the powerful patrons, a new class of political fixers emerged as local middlemen between politicians, the administration, and
ordinary people (Berenschot 2014). Recent developments have changed India’s traditional patronage networks. Political competition and the rise of lower-caste politics has strengthened party-based and often lower-caste fixers, at the expense of traditional upper-caste patrons (Ibid., Michelutti 2014). To a varying degree, Indian states are also moving toward post-clientelism (Manor 2013). This thesis discusses clientelist incorporation in UP in light of these developments.

**Party and Movement**

Parties are not only actors able to reform democratic institutions; they are also themselves a channel of popular representation within existing institutions. There are several ways a party could facilitate effective representation of its constituents: By campaigning on a coherent political program and keeping its promises in office, thus channelling the voters’ political demands; by democratic party organisations that enables ordinary members to influence policy or by channelling the demands of democratic civil society organisations and social movements (Dalton et al. 2013: 142-158, Törnquist 2013: 65-68, Van Cott 2005: 13-14). The empirical analysis views the notorious organisational deficits of the lower-caste parties in light of these three systems of facilitating representation. The reference cases, which were both relatively successful in facilitating representation of marginalised groups through party organisations, provide an illuminating contrast.

As indicators of organisations that fail to facilitate substantive representation, I focus on charismatic, centralised leadership and populism (Mouzelis 1986: 78-88, Törnquist 2013: 65-68). Populist incorporation combines a pseudo-democratic ideology with centralised top-down structures (Mouzelis 1986: 78-88). Ambitious politicians use populist mobilisation to remove the middlemen of clientelist networks in an incorporative fashion, replacing one undemocratic structure with another. The lower-caste parties are often dubbed populist (Bardhan 1998: 132-33, Subramanian 2007: 89-90), but that does not necessarily mean they are authoritarian. The term “populism” is inconsistently used (Canovan 1999: 3), and populist parties do not necessarily establish authoritarian structures (Subramanian 2007, Panizza and Miorelli 2009). Both the degree and appliance of populism in lower-caste politics therefore need to be analysed.

The definitions and indicators of populism used here are drawn from the theoretical works of Canovan (1999), Mudde (2004) and Müller (2016). They all conceptualise populism as politics based on a people-elite dichotomy. Mudde (2004: 543) defines populism as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, “the
pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.”² Per Canovan (1999), indicators of populism include “the populist style” and “the populist mood.” The populist style is simplistic and direct communication, typically drawing up simple dichotomies and blaming society’s problems on a small, antagonistic elite (Ibid.: 5, 12). The populist mood sets populist politics apart from “ordinary, routine politics.” Populism “has the revivalist flavour of a movement, powered by the enthusiasm that draws normally unpolitical people into the political arena” (Ibid.: 6). Populist movements are often fronted by charismatic leaders, who personally claim authority as the sole legitimate spokesmen of the people (Ibid., Mudde 2004: 546-47, Müller 2016: 20). Populists are sceptical of all political institutions, including parties; and populist parties tend to centralise power at the hands of their leaders, who rely on their voters for enthusiastic but passive support (Mudde 2004: 546-47, 560, Müller 2016: 34-35). The representative claim of a populist movement is mainly symbolic: The movement somehow channels the unitary preferences of “the people” (Mudde 2004: 546-47), often with its leader as the symbolic personification of both the movement and the people (Ibid., Müller 2016: 34-35). Populists thus combine a pseudo-democratic ideology with a top-down incorporative approach to representation.

**Policy**

The third aspect of the analysis of substantive representation shifts the focus from democratic institutions to policy, and returns to the debate on ethnic politics. The classic theories assume that ethnic parties pursue sectional policies, seeing public resources as a pot for different ethnic groups to compete over. As the competition becomes too fierce to manage in a democratic context, democracy breaks down (see section 3.2.1). Redistributive policies are therefore central to the argument that ethnic politics as detrimental to democracy. Even a party channelling the demands of a marginalised group could undermine democracy by pursuing sectional redistribution that heightens the level of conflict, excludes other marginalised groups, and leads to a neglect of nonethnic issues (Pieterse 1997). However, ethnic politics do not necessarily produce this effect. As Chandra (2005) argues, it is in the rational interest of ethnic parties to maximise their support. Empirically, ethnically based left-wing parties (see section

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² The definitions of Canovan (1999: 3) and Müller (2016: 10, 19-21) resemble Mudde’s, although Canovan and Müller do not consider populism to be an ideology. Their similar, compatible conceptualisations of populism (Canovan is a major influence on Mudde and Müller) allows us to draw on all three authors for a coherent set of indicators of populism.
3.2.2) have adapted broad political and socioeconomic issues, showing that ethnic parties do not necessarily pursue policies that only benefit one group.

The question of sectional or universal policies is therefore key to the impact of ethnic politics on democratic stability, and a contested issue in North India. Hasan (2001) and Prerna Singh (2015: 165-69) argue that the policies of the lower-caste parties primarily benefit a few groups, while Chandras (2005) claims that North Indian ethnic parties have strong incentive to build broad bases and therefore are likely to move toward catch-all policy positions over time. These two positions will be discussed here, based on indicators of formal or informal sectional and universal policies.

4.3 Summary

Table 4.1 summarises the framework, as outlined above and as it will be used to discuss the case of UP in chapter 7.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The who-question: Who does the party represent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With which ethnic group(s) is the party affiliated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the party constitute ethnic groups?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the party represent a narrow ethnic interest or a broader alliance?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The how-question: How does the party represent its constituents?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the party improve descriptive and symbolic representation of marginalised groups?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the party contribute to democratising representative institutions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the party organisation an effective channel of democratic representation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the party’s redistributive policies universal or sectional?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Data

5.1 Secondary Sources

The existing academic literature on lower-caste politics in UP constitutes the bulk of the data basis. According to Lucas (1974: vi), for an analysis based on existing case studies “to be a scientific enterprise,” it “must make explicit the rules and procedures that were used and provide sufficient data about the reliability of the data, the results, and any effects due to sampling bias” (Ibid.: vi). The literature search should be conducted systematically, and possible biases in the literature should be identified (Ibid.: 8-10).

Lucas (1974: 9-10) recommends carefully selecting and naming the journals one scans for secondary sources. Online databases have made it less urgent to limit the search to a few journals, but I nevertheless made one publication, the Economic and Political Weekly (EPW), my point of departure. EPW is one of India’s leading outlets for academic debate on development, economy, society, and politics (Alam and Reddy 2016), and much of the debate on the democratic implications of lower-caste politics has taken place in the weekly. I therefore began the search in the EPW archives.

For other sources, I followed citations from EPW articles and from introductory works on India’s recent political history (Corbridge and Harriss 2000, Guha 2007, Corbridge et al. 2013), and consulted my contacts at Indian academic institutions. The empirical, scientific articles found in this search and used as the data foundation of the thesis are presented in table 5.1. These are by no means all the empirical works published on lower-caste politics in UP; but the selection aims to be fairly representative of the existing literature, aiming for reliability and breadth. For reliability, the selection consists of methodologically transparent, empirically oriented peer-reviewed articles and books by well-known scholars; at the expense of the many essayistic and non-scientific works on the subject. For breadth, I have aimed for representation of all the best-known scholars working on politics in UP. To avoid merely repeating the findings of previous works and to reduce the effect of the biases of individual scholars, I have prioritised breadth over depth. Therefore, some scholars are represented with only a fraction of their relevant work, selected based on availability and topical relevance.

The resulting selection is substantially and methodologically diverse. Substantial diversity ensures coverage of all the subjects that are relevant to the thesis are covered, and the broad range of methods allows us to observe the phenomenon from many different perspectives. On
the other hand, with no two articles covering the same subject, it is hard to critically evaluate
the validity of the findings of each contribution. The selection offers few opportunities to
compare similar case studies or to analyse developments over time, apart from the subjects
where the authors themselves have applied historical perspectives (for example Zérinini 2009
or Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012). In the field studies, the object of study has only been observed
at one point in time; and it is hard to assess if the findings are generalizable for the whole period.
To address this problem, I discussed some of the findings of the older contributions with my
interviewees; asking if they believed phenomena observed earlier were still in place. The up-
to-date assessments gathered from the interviews were based more on informed judgement by
experts than on systematic scientific research, but they provided me with at least a basic
impression of continuity and change in UP politics.

Table 5.1. Empirical surveys on lower-caste politics in UP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Method and data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey 2002</td>
<td>The role of caste, politics and patronage in the enforcement of agricultural policies</td>
<td>Fieldwork in villages in Meerut District, Western UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pai 2002</td>
<td>The origins, organisation and ideology of the BSP; BSP policies in practice</td>
<td>Qualitative historical and organisational analysis; fieldwork in villages in Meerut District, Western UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verma 2007</td>
<td>The impact of caste and other factors in UP elections</td>
<td>Statistical data on distribution by caste, class and other indicators among each party’s supporters in the state elections of 2002 and 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandra 2005</td>
<td>Ethnic cleavages and conflict</td>
<td>Historical analysis of UP’s party system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelutti 2007</td>
<td>The cultural/ethnic foundation and democratic implications of SP mobilisation</td>
<td>Anthropologic fieldwork in Mathura, Western UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey et al. 2008</td>
<td>The BSP’s impact on intercaste relationships, and the role of BSP local politicians</td>
<td>Fieldwork in villages in Bijnor District, Western UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zérinini 2009</td>
<td>Ethnic composition of the state legislature and executive in UP</td>
<td>Statistical data on the caste/community of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Methodology/Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Singh 2010</td>
<td>The BSP’s social and developmental policies</td>
<td>Analysis based on statistical indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffrelot 2011</td>
<td>Whether the BSP is an ethnic or catch-all party</td>
<td>Statistical data on the caste/community of BSP state legislators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) 2012</td>
<td>The impact of caste and other factors in UP elections</td>
<td>Statistical data on distribution by caste, class and other indicators among each party’s supporters in the state elections of 2007 and 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012</td>
<td>Ethnic composition of the UP Legislative Assembly</td>
<td>Statistical data on the caste/community of all state legislators since 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Singh and Kumar 2012</td>
<td>The developmental policies of BSP and SP governments</td>
<td>Comparative analysis based on statistical indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farooqui and Sridharan 2014</td>
<td>Nomination processes in five Indian parties (Congress, BJP, CPM, SP, BSP)</td>
<td>Interviews; quantitative analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelutti 2014</td>
<td>Ethnified patronage and the relationship between crime and politics</td>
<td>Fieldwork in Mathura, Western UP; conducted in 1998-2000 and 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narayan 2014</td>
<td>Standards of living and political preferences of MBCs (Most Backward Castes)</td>
<td>Fieldwork in a village near Varanasi, Eastern UP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A systematic literature search decreases the likelihood of a biased selection, but not of reproducing biases in the literature itself (Lucas 1974: v-vi). Assuming that the above selection is representative of the literature as a whole, two possible biases are striking: A tendency to focus on the BSP over the SP, and a tendency to focus on Western UP over other regions of the state. As a consequence of BSP bias (see section 2.2) there is much available data on the BSP
but little on the SP on some fields of interest for the thesis. Some of the arguments in the thesis are therefore primarily based on empirical evidence from the BSP.

Most of the field studies in the selection took place in Western UP, one of the state’s four regions. Although the four regions are culturally similar, their demographics and levels of socioeconomic development vary somewhat (Pai 2002: 29-30, World Bank 2010: i-ii). Findings from Western UP may therefore reflect the particular features of that region. However, a representative sample of locations for studying local politics in the state would be unfeasibly large, and there is no basis for such a sample in the literature. As long as the case is clearly delineated, density of observations strengthens the internal validity of a case study (Gerring 2007: 48-50, 57-61). Therefore, local politics are here analysed mainly based on findings from Western UP, assuming that the region stands is representative of UP as a whole.

5.2 Interviews

To supplement the literature, I interviewed researchers with up-to-date first-hand knowledge about UP politics. With input from my academic contacts in New Delhi, I compiled a shortlist of potential interviewees. After contacting everyone on the list, I got four appointments, of which one subsequently cancelled. I thus interviewed three political scientists, who all follow UP closely and have done fieldwork in the state. The interviewees were A. K. Verma from the Christ Church College in Kanpur, UP, whom I interviewed by email; and Adnan Farooqui at the Jamia Millia Islamia and Jagpal Singh at the Indira Gandhi National Open University, whom I interviewed at their offices in New Delhi. The interviews were conducted in February and March 2016. The interviews with Farooqui and Singh, which lasted respectively 30 and 49 minutes, were recorded and transcribed. All the interviewees agreed to be identified and cited in the thesis.

The interviews were semi-structured, using an interview guide (see the appendix) supplemented by follow-up questions guided by the course of the conversation. The shorter email interview with Verma only consisted of prepared questions. The questions focused on subjects related to political culture and practice, which I presumed someone who followed UP politics to be familiar with – phenomena such as everyday politics, the political agenda, and the public image of individual politicians. The answers were obviously coloured by each interviewee’s opinions, but by asking the same questions to all three interviewees I could compare the answers and get an idea of the academic consensus on various subjects.
5.3 Primary Sources

The analysis related to party ideology and discourses is partly based on primary sources. Obtaining useful party literature was not easy. Neither of the two lower-caste parties seem to prioritize issuing written publications, and even less so in English. In a state with a literacy rate of 57% as of 2001 (World Bank 2010: 71), and a political culture in which informal networks and local rallies are the core components of electoral campaigns, this is hardly surprising. SP literature is mainly available in Hindi, and the BSP does not issue manifestos at all (The Hindu 2014). However, I have obtained a pamphlet titled Views and Interviews of Kanshi Ram, which collects interviews and writings of the BSP’s late founder, dating from 1987 to 1995. Although the pamphlet bears no indication of being an official BSP publication, it seems to be aimed at Kanshi Ram’s supporters. Given Ram’s ideological and practical dominance of the party (see section 7.2.2), the pamphlet is a good source for the party ideology under his leadership. In the absence of comparable literature, SP ideology as well as BSP ideology after Ram’s death are analysed less in depth, and based mainly on secondary sources. A few references from the SP’s official website and direct quotes from leaders of both parties found in secondary sources are also included.

5.4 Quantitative Data

The analysis on the relationship between ethnicity and party preference is based on quantitative data from surveys conducted by the Centre of the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) during the 2002, 2007, and 2012 elections. CSDS conducted the surveys in UP immediately after the elections, surveying a random sample of voters in districts selected by systematic random sample. Non-voters were not included in the survey. According to the CSDS (2012: 86), “the social profile of the respondents interviewed [in 2012] largely matched the demographic profile of the state, except for women,” who were underrepresented. This underrepresentation may reflect lower electoral turnout than for men.

As the raw data is not freely available, I rely on the presentation of the data in Verma (2007) and CSDS (2012). Both present the distribution of party support by ethnic category (denoted as “caste/community”) among the respondents. Verma (2007) compares data from 2002 and 2007; and CSDS (2012) compares data from 2007 and 2012. The distribution is presented in percentages. CSDS (2012) also list the number of respondents (N) per ethnic category in the survey, and denotes that for two of the smaller castes, a small N is a possible source of error. The N by ethnic category is not listed for the 2002 and 2007 data. However, as the CSDS Data
Unit is a renowned statistical institution and the data are presented in a peer-reviewed publication, I assume that the data for the larger castes (excluding those with small samples in 2012) is based on statistically reliable samples. With this assumption, the data can be used for its purpose here, namely to make a simple analysis of ethnic voting in UP, and to compare trends in ethnic voting between different groups and within each group over time.

Verma (2007) lists the relative support of four parties – the SP, the BSP, the BJP, and Congress – in thirteen ethnic categories. Those that voted for other parties or independents are listed under “Other.” CSDS (2012) adds a fifth party, the RLD, and uses fourteen ethnic categories. The ethnic categories include the main castes and the Muslims, who are listed as a separate category; and umbrella categories such as “Other upper caste.” As the categorisations in Verma and CSDS differ slightly from each other, 2002-12 temporal comparisons are therefore only possible for the ethnic categories that are listed in both articles. These, however, include all the main ethnic groups of UP.

The discussion on descriptive representation of different ethnic groups uses quantitative data on MLAs, candidates, and ministers by caste and community (Zérinini 2009, Jaffrelot 2011: 532-579, Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012). Jaffrelot and Verniers (2012) show distribution by ethnic group in the UP Legislative Assembly from 1950 to 2012, allowing for an analysis of long-term developments. Jaffrelot and Verniers also include a table showing distribution of ethnic groups by representatives of each major party since 1993, which allows us to discuss the representation of different ethnic groups in the lower-caste parties. For candidates, Jaffrelot (2011: 570-71) and Jaffrelot and Verniers (2012: 91) include data on the distribution of candidates by ethnic group for the BSP in the 1996 and 2012 elections, and for the SP in 2012. Zérinini (2009) includes tables on the distribution by ethnic group in selected UP state governments from 1952 to 2001. These data form a solid foundation for analysing representation by ethnic group in the lower-caste parties, compared with each other and earlier and contemporary parties in the state. The data most relevant to this thesis are reproduced in tables in chapter 7; more detailed data can be found in the original sources.

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3 The RLD was the state’s fifth largest party in terms of both seats and votes in 2002 and 2007. In 2012, it got the fifth most seats, but the sixth most votes, behind the Peace Party (http://www.indiavotes.com).
6 Background and Historical Overview

This section outlines the key features of India’s and UP’s political and social systems, and provides a historical overview of the North Indian lower-caste movement and its political parties in UP. The reference cases are also presented, and the conclusion compares historical developments in UP with those in Bolivia and Kerala.

6.1 India

6.1.1 Political System

India is a federal parliamentary republic. The federal government is commonly called “the centre.” The executive is formally headed by a ceremonial President, and led by the Prime Minister, who is accountable to the legislature. The Lok Sabha, the national parliament, is elected on a Westminster model of single-person, majoritarian districts. The states enjoy considerable legislative, economic, and administrative autonomy. State governments resemble that of the country, with first-past-the-post elections in single-person constituencies and a Chief Minister (CM) accountable to the state’s Legislative Assembly. The centre has the authority to dismiss a state government and put the state under central administration, called President’s Rule, until new elections have been held. President’s Rule is intended for extraordinary crises of governance, but it has also been used by the centre for political purposes (Guha 2007: 498).

The Indian National Congress (known as “the Congress party” or “Congress”) was the leading organisation of the independence struggle and the dominant party for several decades after independence. This era is commonly referred to as the “Congress system.” Under Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister from 1947 to 1964, Congress had a secular, socialist, and democratic ideology; but was entrenched in traditional caste-based power structures, often resulting in conservative policies (Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 43-66). After Nehru’s death, Congress’ position gradually weakened. Yadav (1996: 99) dubs this era, which lasted until the mid-1990s, the “Congress-Opposition system,” defined by a declining Congress that nevertheless remained “the core around which the party system was structured.” In 1977, in the first elections after the Emergency (a 21-month period of authoritarian government under Indira Gandhi), the opposition Janata Party won a majority and formed the country’s first non-Congress government. Congress returned to power in 1980, but was defeated again in 1989, and in the 1990s the Congress-Opposition system evolved into a fragmented multiparty system (Yadav 1996). There were now two main national parties – Congress and the right-wing Bharatiya
Janata Party (BJP) – and a plethora of minor and regional parties. No party has held a majority since 1989, and federal governments have depended on broad coalitions.

Each state has its own party system, most of which have gone through the evolutionary stages of Congress, Congress–Opposition, and multiparty systems. Although Congress and BJP are major parties in many states, most states also have major regional or state-based parties (Yadav 1996).

6.1.2 The Caste System

The Western term “caste” encompasses two ancient South Asian concepts: Varna and jati. The varna system divides society into a four-tier hierarchy of Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (peasants and merchants), and Sudras (labourers). A fifth tier, the ati-Sudras, include people of the lowest status, ranked below the varnas. Although codified in Hindu scripture, the varna system has always been more of a religious ideal than a functional social hierarchy (Shah 2004, Encyclopedia Britannica 2010, Ruud et al. 2011: 37-40). The jatis are smaller endogamous groups traditionally associated with a specific occupation. Hindu tradition sees jatis as subcategories of the varnas, but in practice the thousands of jatis have never fit in a fixed hierarchy. An individual’s social status depends on their jati, but the status of the jati depends on local dynamics and may evolve over time (Shah 2004, Encyclopedia Britannica 2010, Jaffrelot 2011: 449-484). Although not all Indians recognise the caste hierarchy, a jati is a deep-rooted ethnic identity that all Indians have, regardless of their religion (Shah 2004: 4). In contemporary usage, and in this thesis, “caste” usually refers to jati instead of varna, or to clusters of related jatis (Ibid.: 4, 20, Encyclopedia Britannica 2010).

The traditionally dominant upper castes are roughly equivalent to the three upper varnas. The Brahmins, the priestly caste, are the largest upper caste. Due to their education and prestige, Brahmins dominated Indian politics from pre-modern times (Shah 2004, Encyclopedia Britannica 2009 and 2010).

At the opposite extreme of the caste hierarchy were the so-called untouchables, now called Dalits. The Dalit castes were associated with unclean work, and were themselves considered unclean and subjected to stigmatisation and exclusion. The Indian Constitution grants officially recognised former untouchable jatis (“Scheduled Castes” (SCs) in legal parlour) the right to
positive discrimination. In practice, the terms “Dalit” and “SC” are used interchangeably (Suresh 1996: 355).

Between the upper castes and Dalits are a heterogenous group of intermediate and lower castes, ranging from wealthy farmer castes to low-status labourer castes. Most of these castes are defined as Other Backward Classes (OBCs), a term encompassing any caste or community of traditionally low status, apart from Dalits and tribals (Guha 2007: 599). The lowest-status OBCs are collectively known as Most Backward Castes (MBCs) (Pai 2002: 135). The term “lower castes” refers to Dalits and OBCs.


6.2 The Reference Cases

6.2.1 Indigenous Politics in Bolivia

Bolivia is one of the least developed American countries, and has a long history of inequality and political exclusion. Until 1952, Bolivia was under an oligarchic system where the franchise was limited to 2-3% of the population. The democratic revolution of 1952 introduced universal suffrage, but political power remained largely concentrated in the economic and military elite, and until 1982 there were several periods of military rule. The two main countermovements to the oligarchic regime were the labour movement and the indigenous movement, which emerged in the early 20th century and gained strength after the 1952 revolution. Given the large indigenous component in the working class and the left-wing ideology of many indigenous organisations, the two movements overlapped considerably (Van Cott 2005: 52-62, Kohl and Bresnahan 2010: 8, Schilling-VacafLOUR 2010: 7-9).

With an estimated indigenous population of 62%, Bolivia is the only indigenous-majority country in South America. The indigenous population is divided into two large nations, the Quechua and Aymara (respectively 56% and 36% of the indigenous population as of 1998),

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4 Similar rights were granted to tribal communities (“Scheduled Tribes” or STs) (Guha 2007: 272).
and 35 officially recognised smaller ones (Van Cott 2005: 50-52). Despite the emergence of indigenous social movements, the indigenous peoples remained underrepresented in party politics. Barriers against new party registration, low voter registration in indigenous-majority regions, and a centralised electoral system marginalised indigenous parties (Ibid.: 71, 79). Mainstream parties neglected indigenous concerns, and the main left-wing parties undermined grassroots mobilisation by co-opting indigenous leaders (Ibid.: 49-50, Schilling-Vacaflor 2010: 8).

In the 1990s, neoliberal economic reforms led to massive popular discontent. New social movements integrated the class-based and ethnic struggles of earlier generations into a left-wing, indigenous-led broad movement opposing neoliberalism, US influence, and corruption; and championing institutional reforms and indigenous rights. In 1995, a new constitution liberalised and decentralised the electoral system, paving the way for new indigenous parties. The most successful new party was the Movement for Socialism (MAS). It emerged from the coca-growers union, which formed the backbone of the broader campesino (tenant) movement. The MAS drew electoral strength from coca-growers’ organisation and geographically concentrated support, and also allied with other indigenous organisations and sections of the old Left. After finishing second in the 2002 elections, the MAS won 54 % of the vote in 2005, sidelining both the old parties and rivalling indigenous parties (Van Cott 2005: 85-98). Its leader, coca-grower Evo Morales, became Bolivia’s first indigenous president and embarked on an ambitious program of socioeconomic and institutional reform. The MAS retained its majority in two subsequent elections (Kohl and Bresnahan 2010, Schilling-Vacaflor 2010, Freedom House 2016b). Although its democratic record is mixed (see section 7.2.2), the MAS government has substantially transformed Bolivian democracy according to communitarian and participatory ideals (Gratius 2007: 14-16, Kohl and Bresnahan 2010, Schilling-Vacaflor 2010).

6.2.2 Social and Participatory Democracy in Kerala

The South Indian state of Kerala is widely considered exceptional both in terms of inclusive development and democracy. It outperforms nearly all other Indian states on indicators of human development. Kerala’s redistributive reforms and relatively functional public sector has led to its categorisation as a rare third-world social democracy (Heller 2013a, Harriss and Törnquist 2016). Compared with the rest of India, Kerala also scores very highly on indicators of substantial democracy; such as political competition (Heller 2013a: 275), electoral turnout (P. Singh 2015: 144), inclusion of socioeconomically marginalised groups (Heller 2013a: 272), and civil society activity (Tharakan 2004, Heller 2005 and 2013a: 272).
Kerala is a linguistically homogenous state, where nearly the entire population speaks the Malayali language. The main ethnic cleavages are religion and caste. There is a slight majority of Hindus (55%), with large Muslim (27%) and Christian (18%) minorities, further divided into denominations and sects (Census of India 2011, Zachariah 2016). Traditionally, Kerala was a feudal society with the most rigid caste hierarchy in South Asia (Harriss and Törnquist 2016: 54-55). Around one fourth of the Hindus are upper-caste, of whom most belong to the local Nair caste (Census of India 2011, Zachariah 2016). The majority of Keralan Hindus belong to lower castes. The Ezhavas, an OBC caste of peasants and rural labourers, comprise around 20% of Kerala’s population and are the state’s largest caste (Zachariah 2016, Harriss and Törnquist 2016: 57). Dalits constituted 10% of Kerala’s population in the 2001 Census of India. There is also a small tribal minority (Harriss and Törnquist 2016).

In the colonial era, present-day Kerala was divided into three princely states, subordinate to the Madras Presidency. The empowerment of the lower castes began in the late 19th century, when the princes began to support tenants to curb the power of upper-caste feudal lords. Christian missionaries set up schools for the lower castes; and the princes soon followed up with pioneering public education programs. As literacy and confidence spread in marginalised communities; lower-caste, minority, and peasant organisations appeared, championing social justice and, increasingly, economic redistribution. In the 1930s, economic hardships and left-wing agitation radicalised the Keralan underclass, and the Communist Party of India (CPI) successfully integrated many of the social justice movements into a united front. The party was led mostly by upper-caste Hindu and Christian intellectuals, but gained a mass following of lower-caste peasants and labourers. The party mobilised on two overarching issues: Land reform and establishing a unitary Malayali state. The party was highly centralised, but able to integrate the pre-existing grassroots organisation of the social justice movements, and it was remarkably responsive to civil society demands (Harriss and Törnquist 2016). The CPI condemned the caste system early on, but saw it as a product of economic inequality, and integrated the struggle against caste discrimination into a class-based analysis (Shah 2004: 28).

The CPI abandoned its revolutionary line in 1951, and began a turn toward social democratic policies. In 1957, the party won the first Keralan elections. Although the first Communist government was dismissed by the central government in 1959, on a pretext of public order, the Communists would frequently return to office (Guha 2007: 291-301, Harriss and Törnquist

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5 This was achieved with the establishment of the state of Kerala in 1956 (Kumar 2009: 394).
In 1964, a left-wing faction split from the CPI and set up the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM, which came to eclipse the mother party (Rodrigues 2006). In Kerala, the CPM inherited most of the Communists’ grassroots and civil-society base (Harriss and Törnquist 2016: 60). The Keralan party system was unstable for much of the 1960s and 70s, with increasing fragmentation and shifting alliances between CPM, CPI, and Congress. However, by the 1980s, a bipolar party system crystallised around two formalised electoral coalitions: The CPM-led Left Democratic Front (LDF), including the CPI; and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF). The two alliances have frequently alternated in office in a competitive but stable system (Heller 2013a, Harriss and Törnquist 2016).

During their many stints in government, the Communist parties initiated comprehensive reforms. They invested in public education and empowered social movements, contributing to the emergence of a literate, politically active populace (Heller 2005). In the 1970s, they oversaw India’s most comprehensive land reform, effectively dismantling the feudal system. However, economic growth lagged, and skilled workers increasingly migrated abroad. Although they had access to education and decent welfare services, the poorest sections of society did not benefit from land reforms and struggled to find employment. The highly centralised public sector was effective, but unaccountable to local communities; and the fragmentation of both the CPI and Congress atomised civil society and led to party-clientelism (Harriss and Törnquist 2016: 59-62).

Facing this mounting crisis of representation, in the 1990s the CPM sought to revitalise itself by allying with social movements and embracing decentralised, participatory government (Harriss and Törnquist 2016: 62-65). After winning the 1996 elections, the LDF introduced the People’s Planning Campaign (PPC). The PPC devolved developmental funds from the central state to local bodies, on the condition that they were administered in a participatory process. The PPC decentralised and democratised developmental policies and greatly strengthened representation of marginalised groups, but was undermined by middle-class disengagement and party politics. After the LDF lost the 2001 elections, the new UDF government decreased the mandate and funding of the PPC, while Communist-associated organisations withdrew from the participatory bodies (Ibid., Tharakan 2004, Heller 2005 and 2013b). Nevertheless, the PPC had a substantial and lasting impact on popular political participation (Heller 2005: 86-87).
6.3 Uttar Pradesh

6.3.1 Society

Located in the North of India, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state of the country, with 199 million inhabitants. The territory occupies a key position in South Asian history. It was the site of the ancient Indus Valley civilisation, the cradle of Hinduism, and the heartland of the Mughal Empire. In the colonial era, UP was a core area both for the British administration and for the independence struggle. It was a main base for the Congress party, the Hindu right, and the Muslim League. In independent India, UP state politics have been a springboard for national leaders. It is the home of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty and a long list of Prime Ministers (P. Singh 2015: 152-53).

Despite its historical and cultural centrality, UP is among India’s most backward states. Its GDP per capita is the second-lowest of India’s 33 states and territories (Statistic Times 2015). Urbanisation is below the national average, the economy is largely agricultural, and there is a large surplus workforce migrating to richer parts of India (Hasan 2001: 4405, World Bank 2010: i-xiii). UP is a “lagging state” of slow economic growth. Its GDP per capita relative to the national average declined from parity in the 1950s to a third by the early 2000s (World Bank 2010: 1). Life expectancy and literacy are among the lowest in India. The quality and reach of public services is very poor, and the state’s infrastructure is severely underdeveloped (World Bank 2010: 2, S. Singh and Kumar 2012: 3-5).

6.3.2 Demographics

UP is a Hindi-language state with strong Indian national sentiments. Like Kerala, UP is linguistically homogenous with religion and caste as its main ethnic cleavages. The Hindus form a larger majority than in Kerala, with 80 % of the population. 19 % are Muslims (Census of India 2011).

Upper-caste Hindus comprise around 20 % of the population, OBCs around 40 %, and Dalits 21 % (Chandra 2005, Census of India 2011). Within each of these groups, there are a few large

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6 As of 2014-15, UP has a GDP/capita of 793 USD, compared with 1627 USD for all India and 2271 USD for Kerala (Statistic Times 2015).

7 Although there is a caste hierarchy among the Muslims as well, these estimates only include Hindus. In the literature; upper castes, OBCs, Dalits, and Muslims are almost universally considered the four main caste/community groups of UP (see for example Chandra 2005, Zérinini 2009, or Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012). This thesis keeps with that tradition. Population estimates for Muslims and Dalits are based on the Census of India (2011). No precise figures exist for other groups, so the population of upper castes and OBCs can only be roughly estimated.
*jatis* and many smaller ones. Based on the 1931 Census of India (the last with a caste headcount), Pai (2002: 29-30) outlines the state’s fragmented demographics:

Except in the hills, where *Thakurs* constituted more than 50 per cent of the population, there has never been a caste comprising more than a quarter of a district’s population. Only in the case of five districts … a single caste approximated to nearly 20 per cent of the total population. In [two cases], the caste being the *Chamars* … Larger castes like the *Brahmins, Rajputs, Ahirs* and *Kurmis* tended to be evenly spread throughout the state … The *Chamars* comprised 59 per cent of the [Dalits] in the colonial period, but … were scattered fairly evenly over [UP] … While in any district, the number of castes with over 5 per cent of the total population might only be five or six, there would be another 15 to 20 castes each with more than 1 per cent share in the total population. UP is a multi-caste state with a highly ramified caste structure.

Around half the upper-caste population are Brahmins. The Rajputs (or Thakurs), whose traditional status is lower than that of the Brahmins, are the second largest upper caste (Pai 2002: 29, Gupta 2014).

The OBCs are the largest group, but also highly heterogenous, comprising over 77 distinct *jatis*. The category includes both the relatively high-status farmer castes and the marginalised MBCs. In UP’s traditional feudal society, the most influential farmer castes – notably Yadavs, Jats, and Kurmis – acted as middlemen between upper-caste landowners and the peasantry. These intermediate castes were “large in number, well organised, exercising economic and social power” (Guha 2007: 598-600). They were the main beneficiaries of UP’s modest land reforms after Independence, ascending from tenants to landowners (Ibid., Jaffrelot 2003: 32-45). The Yadavs, a farmer-herder caste, are the most numerous OBC in UP, comprising around 9 % of the total population (Jaffrelot 2011: 477). The Jats are far fewer in number (around 1 % of the population), but they traditionally had higher status than the other farmer castes. Although they are officially defined as a backwards caste, Jats comprise the local elite in much of Western UP (Jaffrelot 2011: 430-448, J. Singh 2016 [interview]).

The Chamars (or Jatavs) constitute over half of the Dalit population and are UP’s largest *jati*, ahead of the Brahmins (Jaffrelot 2011: 562-63). In the colonial era, the leather industry provided some Chamars with wealth and access to education (Pai 2002: 28-29, 44). The Chamars became the best organised Dalit caste and the backbone of UP’s Dalit movement, and the bulk of the

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8 As of 2014, UP’s official OBC list had 77 entries. However, some of these are groupings of several related *jatis* (National Informatics Centre 2014).
small Dalit middle class is Chamar. Smaller, lower-status Dalit castes include the pig-herding Pasis and the street-sweeping Balmikis (Jaffrelot 2011: 562-53).

Lower castes and religious minorities form a combined majority, as in Kerala, and mirroring the indigenous majority of Bolivia. As in both reference cases, the subaltern majority is divided into a broad range of smaller ethnic groups. However, while in the reference cases overarching identities (“indigenous” in Bolivia, “Malayali” in Kerala) bridge these divisions, there is no strong ethnic identity encompassing the whole of UP’s subaltern majority. Where strong intercaste solidarity exists, it encompasses smaller groups such as the Dalits or Muslims. In much of UP conflict between the upper and lower strata of the backward castes is more prominent than between upper and lower castes (Pai 2002: 29).

6.3.3 Political History

From Congress to Congress-Opposition System

The colonial administration formed the United Provinces by a merger of two smaller units in 1902. While other colonial mega-provinces split into smaller states after Independence, UP remained intact – even retaining its abbreviated name, although its content was changed to “Uttar Pradesh” (“the Northern Provinces” in Hindi). The state’s borders remained unchanged until 2001, when the Himalayan region in the northwest seceded to form the state of Uttarakhand (P. Singh 2015: 95-96).

Following the pattern suggested by Yadav (1996), the political system of UP was dominated by Congress until 1989, but as the party slowly declined, the dominant-party system evolved into a Congress-Opposition system. The UP Congress drew electoral support from the “coalition of extremes,” appealing to the top (upper castes) and bottom (Dalits, Muslims) of the social hierarchy, with less support from OBCs (Jaffrelot 2003: 48-87, 427, Zérinini 2009: 56).

The initially marginal opposition grew in strength in the 1960s (see table 6.1). There were three main opposition forces: The Hindu right, the Socialists, and the agrarianist parties (Hasan 2001, Pai 2013). These were all part of broader North Indian movements, and had national ambitions. The Hindu right was Congress’ most persistent rival. Its main party, the Jana Sangh, was highly organised and had a strong social foundation (Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 173-193). The Socialist parties were North India’s main left-wing opposition, popular among lower castes and farmers. The first agrarianist party, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD), formed in 1967 and was led by ex-Congressman Charan Singh. Appealing to the middle peasantry, the BKD absorbed
parts of the Socialists’ base. In 1974, the BKD and the largest Socialist party merged to form a new party, the Lok Dal (Jaffrelot 2003: 254-304, Pai 2013). In 1977, the Jana Sangh, Lok Dal and remaining Socialist parties all merged into the Janata Party (Guha 2007: 519).

Before 1989, the opposition interrupted Congress rule thrice. During the turbulent years from 1967 to 1974, hung parliaments and Congress splits enabled Charan Singh to form two short-lived governments – one in 1967-68, supported by all the main opposition parties; and one in 1970, supported by Indira Gandhi’s Congress. The Janata Party won both the federal and UP elections in 1977. Charan Singh became Deputy Prime Minister of India, while his ally Ram Naresh Yadav became Chief Minister of UP and implemented agrarianist and pro-OBC reforms. The Janata Party’s conservative wing disapproved of his reforms, and in 1979 he was toppled and replaced by a moderate ex-Congressman. In 1980 the Janata Party disintegrated, and Congress returned to power at the centre and in UP in new elections, repeating the feat in 1985. The Hindu right formed the BJP, while the agrarianist/socialist opposition fragmented. In 1989, most of the agrarianist and socialist parties merged into a new national party, the Janata Dal (Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 85-92, Jaffrelot 2003: 254-386).

The New Three-Party System

The state elections of 1989, 1991, and 1993 established a highly competitive multiparty party system with the BJP, SP and BSP as the main parties. The Janata Dal won the 1989 elections, forming a state government led by Mulayam Singh Yadav. The elections also marked the entrance of the Dalit-based BSP into the Legislative Assembly. In the 1991 elections, called after the Janata Dal government at the centre disintegrated, the BJP won a majority. The centre dismissed the BJP government in 1992, due to its implication in the Ayodhya incident – a violent demolition of a mosque by a Hindu mob, which sparked countrywide anti-Muslim violence (Guha 2007: 628-634). Ahead of the 1993 elections, Mulayam9 formed a new party, the Samajwadi Party, which effectively replaced the Janata Dal in UP (Jaffrelot 2003: 371). Seeking to unite lower-caste and Muslim voters against the upper-caste, anti-Muslim right, the SP and BSP formed an electoral alliance that narrowly beat the BJP and formed a coalition government headed by Mulayam (Pai 2002: 162-63).

However, relations between the SP and BSP soon soured. In 1995, the BSP withdrew from the coalition and formed a new majority with the BJP, which offered its support for a government led by Mayawati, the state’s first Dalit CM. However, the BJP withdrew its support after a few

9 Like the BSP’s Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav is usually referred to on a first-name basis.
months, initiating a crisis of governance that led to President’s rule and new elections. The elections of 1996 and 2002 produced hung parliaments, and until 2007 the politics of UP were marked by unstable coalitions and periods of President’s rule. Mayawati briefly returned to the Chief Ministry in 1997 and 2002-03; but both her governments relied on uneasy and short-lived alliances with the BJP. The BJP governed with support from BSP defectors from 1997 to 2002; while the SP governed with a plurality from 2003 to 2007 (Pai 2002: 155-179, The Wire 2017c).

In 2007, the BSP became the first party since 1991 to win a parliamentary (if not electoral) majority. The BSP owed its victory to strengthened non-Dalit support, including from the upper castes, and the new Mayawati government had less of a radical Dalit profile than its three predecessors (S. Singh and Kumar 2012: 10-11). In 2012, the SP won a parliamentary majority and Mulayam’s son, Akhilesh Yadav (born 1973), became Chief Minister. In 2017, the BJP won a landslide victory in the state. The catastrophic performance of both lower-caste parties, along with efforts to de-emphasise caste from both BJP and the SP’s young new leadership, signals a possible end to the lower-caste era of UP politics (Verma 2014, Pai 2017, Pai and Kumar 2017).
<table>
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6.4 The Samajwadi Party

The SP is the successor of the socialist/agrarianist opposition, which was closely linked with two convergent movement: The Farmers’ movement and the Mandalist movement for OBC reservations.

6.4.1 The Farmers’ Movement and Mandalism

The Farmers’ movement is a North Indian social movement of middle farmers, raising demands for subsidies and other favourable policies for cultivators. Jaffrelot (2003: 275-79) traces its origins to the Jat organisations of the early 1900s, whose ideology of entrepreneurship and self-reliance informed the movement. Charan Singh (1902-1987) was the movement’s main ideologue. Influenced by the Jat organisations, but able to mobilise far beyond his own caste, he argued that Congress’ statist and collectivist developmental policies led to stagnation and needed to be replaced by pro-property, pro-cultivator policies. He clothed his economic policies in a romantic vision of the harmonious village and of the independent farmer, who personalised the traditional Indian way of life. This message found resonance among the land-owning, mostly OBC middle farmers, the kisans (Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 80-85, 90-92, Jaffrelot 2003: 275-284). Singh formed a farmers’ association, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), successfully mobilising across caste and religious cleavages. However, after Singh’s death the BKU split along party lines, fragmenting the Farmers’ movement (Jaffrelot 2003: 371, J. Singh 2016 [interview]).

The movement for reservations emerged in the 1950s. The Constitution of 1950 gave Dalits and tribals the right to positive discrimination, to ensure representation and facilitate social mobility for these groups. Lawmakers imposed reservations (quotas) for these groups in legislative bodies, educational institutions and civil service employment (Guha 2007: 125-26). Opposition quickly demanded similar reservations for OBCs, arguing that they too were discriminated against by the caste hierarchy, and would be marginalised without reservations. The socialist and agrarianist opposition embraced the demand, and in 1979 the Janata Party government appointed a commission led by B. P. Mandal to address the issue. The Mandal Commission recommended the implementation of OBC reservations in public employment, but with the collapse of the Janata government the report was shelved. Intense mobilisation for and against Mandalism, as the demand for OBC reservations was now called, continued throughout the 1980s. After the 1989 elections, the Janata Dal government made Mandal’s
recommendations into law, but delegated its implementation to the state governments (Chandra 2005, Guha 2007: 599-603).

6.4.2 From Socialism to Janata

The Indian socialist movement began as a formally organised faction of the Congress party, formed in the state of Bihar in 1934. Like the CPI, the Socialist party was initially led by upper-caste Marxist intellectuals, but had considerable mass appeal. In 1948, the socialists split from Congress and formed the Socialist Party. The CPI and Socialists both organised nationwide and occasionally collaborated, but by Independence the Socialists had established themselves as the main force of the left in the North, while South India and West Bengal became the main strongholds of the CPI. In the 1950s, Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-1967) emerged as the Socialist Party’s leading figure and shifted the party’s emphasis from class to caste, mobilising for OBC reservations. From 1956, the Socialists went through a succession of splits, and with Lohia’s death the movement lost its greatest leader. Fragmented and in disarray, the Socialists began to turn to Charan Singh for leadership (Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 47-49, Jaffrelot 2003: 259-265, 302-04).

With the formation of the Lok Dal in 1974 and the Janata Party in 1977, the agrarianist and socialist parties merged. The new parties integrated the economic policies of the Farmer’s movement with the socialist demand for OBC reservations (Jaffrelot 2003: 296-309). The socialists were the junior partners in the alliance, and by adhering to Charan Singh’s pro-farmer policies they “did not succeed in enunciating an alternative programme” (Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 91). Unlike the Keralan communists, the North Indian Left thus abandoned collectivist programs and made the middle peasantry its core base.

After the collapse of the Janata Party, Charan Singh’s reconvened Lok Dal and the rump Janata Party competed over the socialist and agrarianist heritage in UP. After Singh’s death, the Lok Dal split into two factions, one led by his son Ajit Singh, the other dominated by socialist Mulayam Singh Yadav (born 1939). In 1988, however, both Lok Dal factions merged into the Janata Dal, along with most other socialist and agrarianist parties. The Janata Dal won the UP elections in 1989, and its legislative group chose Mulayam over Ajit Singh as Chief Minister (Jaffrelot 2003: 332-33, 368-360).
6.4.3 Organisation of the SP

From the early 1990s, the Janata Dal disintegrated into a plethora of state-based successor parties (Sridharan and deSouza 2006: 19). In UP, Mulayam formed the Samajwadi Party (Socialist Party). The party took its name from the old Socialists, and claimed Lohia as its “guiding light” (Samajwadi Party: “Ideology”). While the UP Janata Dal had been led by an uneasy alliance of Yadavs and Jats, the SP was led by the former group. Ajit Singh, leader of the Janata Dal’s Jat faction, broke with Mulayam and formed the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), which won most of the Jat vote (Jaffrelot 2002: 370-71, Verma 2004). Besides Yadavs, Muslims became the SP’s core constituency (Jaffrelot 2003: 372).

Although the UP party is formally subordinate to a national party organisation, the SP is essentially a state party. The party is dominated by Mulayam and his family, who hold most of the key positions in the party organisation (see section 7.2.2). Mulayam served three terms as Chief Minister of UP between 1989 and 2007. His son, Akhilesh Yadav, was Chief Minister of UP from 2012 to 2017. Several party veterans were displeased with the younger Yadav, and in the autumn of 2016, the discontent escalated into a public feud between Akhilesh and Mulayam’s brother, state party president Shivpal Singh. The rivals purged respectively the cabinet and state party of each others’ supporters. Though nominally neutral, Mulayam increasingly supported Shivpal’s faction, purging the party of Akhilesh’s supporters and indicating that he would consider a new CM candidate for the party (Fareed 2016, Kang 2016). By December, Akhilesh claimed leadership of the party, dismissing Mulayam’s list of candidates for the upcoming election (The Hindu 2016). In January, thousands of SP supporters gathered to hail Akhilesh as leader, and Mulayam withdrew from electoral campaigning (The Wire 2017a and 2017b). Akhilesh thus effectively replaced his father as party leader.

6.5 The BSP

6.5.1 The Dalit Movement

The Dalit movement is a social movement for Dalit rights and dignity (Suresh 1996). The untouchables, as the Dalits were formerly called,10 traditionally had no access to education or basic welfare. In the late 19th century, the colonial administration allowed a few Dalits to pursue academic, military, and bureaucratic careers (Pai 2002: 38-41). This social mobility was mainly

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10 From the early 20th century, many less derogatory names were suggested. The term “Dalit” (“oppressed”) comes from the Dalit movement and was popularised from the 1970s (Suresh 1996: 355, Shah 2001: 20-25)
limited to the “first of the last” castes, as Jaffrelot (2005: 20) puts it. These were Dalit castes of relatively high status, often gained from unclean but profitable occupations such as leather tanning (Pai 2002: 36-39; Jaffrelot 2005: 18-26). From the new educated Dalit elite, the first Dalit organisers emerged. Early Dalit mobilisation consisted of *sanskritisation* within the “first of the last” castes; that is, adapting the mannerisms of the upper castes and claiming to be part of the Hindu community (Jaffrelot 2011: 456-57). However, from the early 20th century, more radical Dalit intellectuals argued that instead of pursuing social mobility on upper-caste terms, the Dalits should unify and demand a more egalitarian social order. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) was the towering figure of this generation of Dalit organisers (Ibid.: 451-53).

A Western-influenced liberal, Ambedkar (2004: 68) argued that without the full abolition of the caste system there could be no “society based on *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.*” To him, class was a product of caste, and the caste system was the foundation of inequality and backwardness in India (Ibid.: 61-64, Shah 2004: 28). He advocated solidarity among Dalits, OBCs, and minorities; and organised a regional Dalit movement in Maharashtra (Jaffrelot 2005: 74-90). By the 1930s, however, the Dalit movement received competition, as both Congress and the Left condemned caste discrimination and reached out to Dalits. Mahatma Gandhi, spiritual leader of Congress, had a strong Dalit following and became Ambedkar’s main opponent (Suresh 1996: 361-63). Ambedkar criticised the socialists and communists for their orthodox Marxist analysis of caste; and Gandhi for patronising Dalits and sanctifying the caste system (Ibid., Ambedkar 2004: 64-66, Jaffrelot 2005: 52-73). To Ambedkar, outlawing discrimination was insufficient. He argued that to abolish the caste hierarchy, political institutions must be designed to empower Dalits (Ambedkar 2004: 61-67). In the 1930s, he negotiated with the British government and Gandhi over India’s political system, resulting in the system of reserved Dalit seats in the legislature (Jaffrelot 2005: 52-68). At Independence, Ambedkar accepted Nehru’s invitation to join India’s first government and head the Constituent Assembly. The resulting Constitution’s liberal-democratic foundation owes much to Ambedkar; as does its guarantees for Dalit reservations and affirmative action (Ibid.: 106-118, Guha 2007: 132-34). In the early 1950s, Ambedkar broke with Nehru and returned to radical opposition. He began to organise a new party, the Republican Party of India (RPI), which formally formed shortly after his death (Jaffrelot 2005: 114-142).

From Independence, Dalits have thus had comprehensive rights to positive discrimination. Caste discrimination is outlawed, the political elite considers “caste [as] antithetical to the idea of India’s democracy” (Shah 2004: 3), and welfare for Dalits is an official priority for the Indian
Nevertheless, Dalits remain socioeconomically marginalised and subjected to discrimination (see section 7.1.3). Politically, Congress long dominated the Dalit vote through clientelistic co-optation of local Dalit leaders. Partially by co-opting its leaders, Congress fended off the challenge from the RPI (Jaffrelot 2003: 89-114). In civil society, however, “a wide variety of political and non-political Dalit organisations” emerged (Suresh 1996: 375). Through these, the Dalit movement was remarkably successful in constituting a unitary Dalit identity, based on a shared mythology, literature, and set of symbols (Punalekar 2002, Jaffrelot 2011: 451-53, Jayal 2013b: 66-67). Ambedkar became the subject of a posthumous cult of personality, and his image became the most widespread symbol of the Dalit identity (Zelliot 2002, Jaffrelot 2005: 154-55). By the 1990s, indicating the success of the Dalit movement, the term “Dalit” had come into mainstream usage, and major parties were appropriating Ambedkarist symbols to court the Dalit vote (Shah 2001: 22-23, Jaffrelot 2005: 144-46).

In UP, the Dalit movement developed at a late stage (Pai 2002: 25-27). Early organisers of the Chamars, the best organised Dalit caste, advocated sanskritisation and put forward moderate demands (Ibid.: 41-51, Jaffrelot 2011: 562). Gandhi had a much stronger following than Ambedkar among UP’s Dalits, and no native Dalit organiser of Ambedkar’s calibre emerged in the state (Pai 2002: 31-32). The RPI had some success in the 1960s, but quickly fragmented and diminished. Few Dalits identified with the OBC-based socialist-agrarian opposition, and Congress continued to dominate the Dalit vote in UP until the emergence of the BSP (Ibid.: 73-80).

6.5.2 Organisation of the BSP

The Bahujan Samaj Party was formed by Kanshi Ram (1934-2006), an Ambedkarist Dalit organiser from Punjab (Jaffrelot 2011: 533). In 1971, he formed the All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation (BAMCEF), an organisation for Dalits and other backwards groups in public employment, committed to their interests and to the upliftment of the Dalit community as a whole (Pai 2002: 89-90, 104). His first political venture was the DS-4, formed in 1982 as a “quasi-political party” concentrating on agitation (Ibid.: 91). In 1984, Ram formed the more electorally oriented BSP (Ibid.: 86-91). Ram’s three organisations coexisted under his personalised leadership, and the BAMCEF and “to a much lesser extent, the DS-4” supplied the BSP with cadre, funds, literature, and organisational resources (Ibid.: 100).
Ram was based in Uttar Pradesh, which became the BSP’s main stronghold (Pai 2002: 90). He selected his protégé Mayawati Prabhu Das (born 1955), a Chamar from Delhi, to lead the party’s UP section. Mayawati gradually eclipsed Ram as the party’s most prominent politician, and after his death she officially became its leader (Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 215, N. Singh 2014). Beyond UP, the party had electoral success in several other Northern states in the 1990s (Pushpendra 2004: 287-92, N. Singh 2014), and has performed relatively well in federal elections. Mayawati, however, has focused on UP state politics, and as the party has diminished in other states it has practically evolved into a state-based party (Ibid.).

6.6 Concluding Remarks

In the mid-20th century, social structures in UP, Bolivia, and Kerala were relatively similar. An oligarchic order concentrated social, economic, and political power in the hands of a small elite; whose privileges were institutionalised by a racial hierarchy in Bolivia and the caste system in the Indian states. Marginalised ethnic groups formed a combined majority, but this majority was highly fragmented. In all three cases, a few large subgroups – Aymara and Quechua in Bolivia; Ezhavas and religious minorities in Kerala; farmer castes and Chamars in UP – were better organised than the smaller groups.

Mass movements against the oligarchic order gained strength in all three cases in the first half of the 20th century. These movements were usually led by members of the well-organised larger groups, or by sympathisers from the ethnic elite. With the independence of India and Bolivia’s 1952 revolution, liberal-democratic institutions normatively at odds with the old hierarchies were put in place, and the formal rights of members of marginalised groups dramatically improved. However, transformative movements seized the opportunities provided by formal democratisation at a much earlier stage in Kerala than in the other two cases. There, the CPI successfully integrated diverse counter-hegemonic movements and built a strong electoral base from the subaltern majority, enabling it to initiate comprehensive reforms. In Bolivia and UP, by contrast, clientelist parties led by the old elite remained in power until the end of the century. In UP, the Congress party adhered to a progressive ideology and had a mass lower-caste following, but was embedded in traditional, caste-based power structures. During its 40-year dominance of UP politics, Congress gave only token representation to marginalised groups, and its transformative policies were limited to modest land reform and welfare schemes (Jaffrelot 2003: 11-143, S. Singh and Kumar 2012).
Both in UP and Bolivia, electorally successful counter-hegemonic parties eventually emerged at the turn of the century. Unlike in Kerala, these parties had an ethnic base. There are, however, key differences between UP’s lower-caste parties and the Bolivian MAS. The MAS built on the strong organisation of indigenous and labour movements, revitalised and unified by the looser social movements of the 1990s. The lower-caste parties had a weaker movement basis. The SP emerged partly from the Farmers’ and Mandalist movements. These movements had already influenced UP politics for decades, but they were vertically organised by and around political entrepreneurs, and were embedded in UP’s clientelist political culture. The Dalit movement was more of a genuine grassroots movement, but in UP it was relatively weak. BSP founder Kanshi Ram built on Ambedkarist ideology and local Dalit organisations, but had to create a stateswide movement for himself. He did this in typical North Indian style: Through charismatic leadership, networking, and top-down organisation. The lower-caste parties further differ from the Keralan and Bolivian parties in that they failed to unite the subaltern majority behind one party. Instead, reflecting the internal hierarchy in the lower castes, the SP concentrated its bid on farmer OBCs, while the BSP focused on Dalits. Like the Keralan Communists, the lower-caste parties found that their intended constituents were divided by economic interests – mainly the cleavage between the middle peasantry and rural labourers – but unlike them, they were unable to unite these groups through an overarching ideology and mass organisation. The lower-caste movement of UP, though electorally successful, was belated, poorly organised, and divided.
7 Empirical Analysis

7.1 The Who-question

This section begins with a brief outline of the character and degree of ethnic voting in UP, before we move on to an empirical discussion of the hypothesis that democratisation of UP lags to due problems of who the lower-caste parties represent.

7.1.1 Ethnic Voting

The tables below summarise the ethnic vote by party in the UP state elections from 2002 to 2012.

| Table 7.1. Party preference by ethnic category in the 2002 Legislative Assembly elections. Percentages |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Upper castes                                   | SP   | BSP  | Congress | BJP  | Others |
| Brahmin                                        | 3    | 6    | 26       | 50   | 15     |
| Rajput                                         | 9    | 5    | 10       | 47   | 29     |
| Vaish [Vaishya]                                | 17   | 3    | 12       | 49   | 19     |
| Other upper caste                              | 14   | 5    | 22       | 10   | 49     |
| OBCs                                           |      |      |          |      |        |
| Jat                                            | 5    | 0    | 0        | 10   | 85     |
| Yadav                                          | 72   | 5    | 5        | 5    | 13     |
| Kurmi                                          | 9    | 10   | 4        | 43   | 34     |
| Lodh                                           | 22   | 12   | 6        | 22   | 38     |
| Other peasant castes                           | 19   | 19   | 8        | 26   | 28     |
| MBCs                                           | 22   | 28   | 9        | 20   | 21     |
| Dalits                                         |      |      |          |      |        |
| Jatav [Chamar]                                 | 2    | 79   | 4        | 2    | 13     |
| Other SC                                       | 15   | 55   | 9        | 12   | 9      |
| Muslims                                        | 54   | 10   | 10       | 2    | 24     |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party preference by ethnic category in the 2007 Legislative Assembly elections. Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Upper castes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajput</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaishya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other upper caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OBCs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yadav</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurmi/Koeri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other OBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dalits</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jatav [Chamar]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasi/Pano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other SC</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Muslims</strong></td>
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<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
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Table 7.3. Party preference by ethnic category in the 2012 Legislative Assembly elections.

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<tr>
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<th>Congress</th>
<th>BJP</th>
<th>RLD</th>
<th>Others</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>522</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rajput</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other upper caste</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jat</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yadav</td>
<td>66</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurmi/Koeri</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>389</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td><strong>Dalits</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jatav [Chamar]</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmiki*</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasi/Pano</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other SC</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Muslims</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Small samples with a high margin of error (CSDS 2012: 83).
Three general points should be made about the ethnic vote, based on the above data. First, the party system only loosely follows the caste hierarchy. The BJP is empirically the strongest party among upper castes, the SP among OBCs and Muslims, and the BSP among Dalits. However, none of the four main groups vote homogenously for one party; and none of the three main parties draws support exclusively from one level of the caste hierarchy. The BJP draws support from both upper castes and OBCs, and cannot be said to dominate the upper caste vote, which is relatively fragmented. The SP has its base among the OBCs and Muslims, but the party’s OBC support is disproportionately drawn from the Yadav caste. Other OBCs are more divided, and the SP also has modest upper-caste and, in 2012, Dalit support. The BSP draws much of its support from the Dalit, who vote more homogenously than the other groups. The BSP has consistently had very strong support from the Chamar, and strong but somewhat weaker support from other Dalits. However, much of the party’s support also comes from non-Dalits. In 2002, the party’s non-Dalit support came mostly from smaller OBCs (cf. its share of the “Other peasant caste” and MBC vote); but in 2007 and 2012, the party won a significant share of the vote from all four main groups. The formerly anti-brahmanistic BSP’s successful bid for a share of the Brahmin vote was much publicised (Verma 2005, Jaffrelot 2011: 574), but the party also made large gains among other groups, most notably the Muslims.
Second, on the state level, the degree of homogenous voting varies considerably between ethnic groups. Four castes – the Yadavs (SP), Chamars (BSP), Pasis (BSP), and Jats (RLD) – consistently voted overwhelmingly for one party.\footnote{Note that in three of four cases, excluding the Pasis, these \textit{jatis} are those of the leaders of the parties in question.} The other castes, such as the Brahmins and Kurmis, voted relatively heterogeneously; as did the Muslims. Classic ethnopolitical theories suggest that ethnic bids lead to an ethnic segmentation of the electorate, but as Chandra (2005) hypothesises, this has empirically not been the case in the UP. The BSP and SP monopolised the Chamar and Yadav vote, respectively; but other lower castes and minorities voted more heterogeneously, and despite the BJP’s ethnic counterbid there was no monopolisation of the vote of any of the main upper castes.

Third, suggest, a temporal comparison (table 7.4) indicates an ethnic de-alignment of the vote in UP, as Verma (2014) and Jayal (2016) suggest. The largest party in each major group remained constant from 2002 to 2012 (the Rajputs were the sole exception), but within each group, the dominance of the largest party weakened. Some groups, notably the Brahmins and Muslims, voted considerably more diversely than in the preceding election both in 2007 and 2012. In both groups, the largest party (respectively the BJP and SP) fell from a narrow majority to under 40\% of the group’s vote, with multiple parties cutting into the vote. Although Yadavs and Chamars continued to vote relatively homogenously, even their support for respectively the SP and BSP decreased significantly from 2007 to 2012.

It should be noted that these findings concern the state level, and may obscure a higher degree of ethnification at the local level. North Indian parties are known for tactically selecting candidates from castes whose support could tip the balance in a particular constituency (Michelutti 2007: 645, Farooqui and Sridharan 2014, J. Singh 2016 [interview]). The parties assume that there is a high degree of constituency-based, but not necessarily stateswide, ethnic voting. For example, a party fielding a Rajput candidate in one constituency may increase its support among Rajput in that constituency, but not necessarily elsewhere. The available data is insufficient to empirically test this assumption, and to my knowledge it has never been systematically tested.

\textbf{7.1.2 Ethnic Bids}

The reference cases provide one example each of an ethnic party and a nonethnic party. The Bolivian MAS bases its support mainly (but not exclusively) on indigenous peoples, as opposed
to the right-wing opposition based in white-majority regions; and bases its organisation and ideology on the indigenous social movements (Van Cott 2005, Gratius 2007). The Keralan party system is not above ethnic cleavages – the Izhavas lean to the left and the Nairs and Christians to the right – but from the beginning, the Keralan Communists integrated caste-based movements into a mass party based on class and Malayalam regionalism instead of ethnicity (P. Singh 2015: 87).

Like the MAS, the BSP is rooted in an ethnically based social movement – the Dalit movement. The party’s original ideology was explicitly ethnic: It defines itself as the party of the “Bahujan,” meaning the perceived community of marginalised ethnic groups: Dalits, OBCs, tribals, and religious minorities (Pai 2002: 16). However, in practice, the Bahujan were never a unitary ethnic group, and the BSP has never been strongly associated with OBCs, tribals, and minorities. The party is widely considered a “Dalit party,” thus associated with only a subset of the Bahujan (Pai 2002: 1, Guha 2007: 604-06, S. Singh 2010: 77). The SP is nominally a nonethnic socialist party, but there is both a public perception and academic consensus of the party as a Yadav party first, and a socialist party second, if at all (Jaffrelot 2003: 375-76, Michelutti 2007: 643, Pai 2013: 264). My interviewees all seemed to be in line with this, strengthening the impression of a consensus. Farooqui (2016) characterised the SP as “mainly a Yadav party,” Singh (2016) explained SP policies in terms of ethnic Yadav interests, and Verma (2016) stated that “no one believes SP to be following [the] socialist ideology of Dr. Lohia.”

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</thead>
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<td><strong>BSP</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13.4</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>41.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>25.7</td>
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</tr>
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<td>28.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>30.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
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<td>16.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>96</td>
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<td>Upper castes</td>
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<td>21.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>27.5</td>
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<td>143</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jaffrelot and Verniers (2012)
Table 7.6. BSP and SP candidates by ethnic group in the 1996 and 2012 legislative elections. Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>30.2</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBCs</td>
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<td>23.2</td>
<td>27.1</td>
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<td>21.2</td>
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<td>Muslims</td>
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Table 7.7. Dalit and non-Dalit MLAs for the BSP

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<tr>
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<th>Other districts</th>
<th>Non-Dalits</th>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Nevertheless, neither party has a monoethnic support base. With over two thirds of the Chamar vote and between half and two thirds of the other Dalit vote, the BSP’s Dalit base comprises around 15% of the electorate. The SP’s electoral base consists of a near-monopoly of the Yadav vote and a large if declining share of the Muslim vote. The Yadavs comprise around 9% of UP’s population; the Muslims 19% (see section 6.3.2). With two thirds of the Yadav vote and around half the Muslim vote, the SP’s traditional core voters comprise around 15-20% of the electorate. Given the state’s fragmented demographics, the core constituents of the lower-caste parties give them a solid state-wide base, but are by themselves insufficient to secure electoral success in UP’s single-person majoritarian system. They therefore depend on a significant number of votes from other groups, which they draw from a wide range of jatis from all tiers of the caste system, as seen above.

The political elite of the lower-caste parties is also remarkably multiethnic. Surveys by Jaffrelot (2011: 532-579) and Jaffrelot and Verniers (2012) of MLAs and candidates indicate that neither party overwhelmingly fields candidates from one group. Dalits have never been in a majority among BSP legislators – in fact, nearly all the party’s Dalit MLAs are elected to the reserved
seats, where every party is obliged to field a Dalit candidate (table 7.7). For the general seats, the BSP prefers to run candidates from other groups. Jagpal Singh (2016 [interview]) suggests that Dalits tend to support the BSP regardless of the ethnicity of the candidate in their district, seeing the candidate as someone the BSP’s Dalit leadership has vouched for. Empirically, the strong support for the BSP from Dalits and the very low number of Dalit candidates for the party outside the reserved districts together indicate that this is the case. In both parties, all four main groups and every major jati is represented among legislators and candidates, although some are overrepresented. Chamars are somewhat overrepresented in the BSP (with two thirds of the party’s Dalit candidates in both 1996 and 2012); as are Yadavs in the SP (13 % of the party’s candidates and 15 % of MLAs in 2012). To some degree, the parties check each other’s tendencies for overrepresentation: The SP underrepresents Chamars while giving tickets to a wide range of other Dalit castes, while MBCs and Kurmis have long been underrepresented in the SP but strongly represented among BSP candidates (Jaffrelot 2011: 566-573, Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012).

Descriptively, the lower-caste parties are multiethnic; but symbolically, their appeal is more narrow. In both parties, the leader symbolically personifies both party and caste. When Kanshi Ram led the BSP, his personification of the party was remarkably explicit: A party slogan held that “the BSP is Kanshi Ram and Kanshi Ram is the BSP” (Pai 2002: 101). Another slogan stated that “Baba [Ambedkar], your mission remains unfulfilled, Kanshi Ram will complete it” (Jaffrelot 2005: 154-55); casting Ram as the successor of the greatest Dalit leader and thus the leader of all Dalits. By contrast, Ram’s specific jati and religious background – he came from the Ramdasian caste, a Sikh subset of the Chamars – was toned down.12 Like her predecessor, Mayawati personally dominates the party (see section 7.2.2), and casts herself first and foremost as a Dalit leader (Jayal 2013b: 65-67). Her ministries gave high priority to symbolic projects such as memorials and statues of Dalit leaders, signalling that BSP leadership means Dalit leadership (Ibid., P. Singh 2015: 165).

The SP, too, is dominated by its leader. From the party’s inception until very recently, Mulayam exercised unchecked personal leadership of the party (see section 7.2.2). Mulayam’s public image highlights his Yadav identity. His background as a cow herder and wrestler – cows, milk, and wrestling being traditional Yadav symbols of masculinity and leadership – is continuously emphasised, and his official biography is designed to resemble that of Krishna, the Yadavs’

12 Ram’s caste was little known to the public, and Ram, a nonreligious man, made no claim to represent the Sikhs (Jaffrelot 2011: 560, Ram 2012: 75, 96).
chief deity (Michelutti 2007: 650). In the SP discourse, Mulayam symbolises Yadav assertion (Ibid.: 647):

> Charismatic Yadav political leaders tell ordinary Yadavs that they can become like ‘Mulayam’ … They say that in every Yadav there is a ‘Mulayam,’ that is, every Yadav has a predisposition for politics. However, Samajwadi Party politicians explicitly say that these predispositions need to be brought out by action. Yadav politicians ask their caste-mates to assert themselves and to be proud of being Yadav.

Mulayam is the Yadav community, and Mulayam is the SP. Likewise, the two BSP leaders personify both the BSP and the Dalits. Thus; as leader, party, and caste converge symbolically, the party symbolically represents the caste. The symbolic representative claims personified by Mayawati and Mulayam are, however, limited to Dalits and Yadavs. Other marginalised groups are descriptively, but not symbolically, represented by the lower-caste parties. This extends to the Muslims, the other core constituency of the SP. Given the dominance of Mulayam and his family (see section 7.2.2), the party is decisively led by Yadavs, with Muslims as junior partners. The party reaches out to the Muslims by co-opting Muslim leaders and offering protection from Hindu violence in exchange of votes (Pai 2014, Jayal 2016). Its approach to the Muslims has more in common with traditional Congress incorporation of marginalised groups than with the SP’s passionate and assertive mobilisation of Yadavs. The Yadav-Muslim electoral alliance thus differs from the alliance of different Dalit jatis supporting the BSP in that it was a pragmatic alliance, based on shared interests and political entrepreneurship rather than an overarching ethnic solidarity. However, given the Yadav dominance, the alliance did not make the SP a truly multiethnic party as defined by Horowitz (2000: 299). In the 2000s, the SP’s share of the Muslim vote declined, while it made inroads into other groups; making the Muslim component less vital for the SP’s electoral success. The SP has thus come to resemble the BSP as a party with a diverse base, but led by and associated with one ethnic group.

### 7.1.3 Mobilisation of Marginalised Groups

In both reference cases, left-wing parties mobilised socioeconomically and politically marginalised groups. The Bolivian indigenous peoples were disproportionately poor and left out of a polity that, until 1952, was exclusive to the upper strata of the white minority. Despite democratisation, they remained politically underrepresented throughout the 20th century (see section 6.2.1). The indigenous peoples experienced new hardships from the 1980s, due to neoliberal reforms and clampdowns on coca-growing (Van Cott 2005: 50-67, Schilling-Vacaflour 2010: 7-9). In Kerala, the Communist movement was initially led by upper-caste and
Christian intellectuals, but it built its mass appeal on a mainly lower-caste coalition, empowered through unions and other pressure groups. The Left held together a diverse coalition of people marginalised by the traditional South Indian feudal system (Harriss and Törnquist 2016), and established a political system where “the extent to which subordinate classes have been effectively empowered and mobilized and have seen their interests institutionalised” far exceeds most of India (Heller 2013a: 275).

In UP, unlike in Kerala, lower-caste mobilisation is more ethnic than class-based. However, lower-caste politics are, by their very nature, aimed at socioeconomically marginalised groups. Low caste traditionally meant low status, poverty, and social exclusion. Despite political efforts against caste discrimination, caste and class continue to correlate. Empirically, OBCs and (especially) Dalits are overrepresented in low-status, low-income classes and underrepresented in the middle class; while for the upper castes, the opposite is the case (Vaid 2012). For the lowest castes, social mobility is low; and the caste-class correlation “seems to weaken only marginally over time” (Ibid.: 420). In UP, as in most of the country, average standards of living for Dalits are significantly lower than for the general population, and Dalits have a higher poverty rate than other groups in the state (World Bank 2010: 28-33, Arora and S. P. Singh 2015). OBCs, too, are empirically economically underprivileged, but less so than Dalits (Vaid 2012, Arora and S. P. Singh 2015). Nationwide, Muslims are much more heterogenous in terms of class (Vaid 2012); but this finding may obscure the higher degree of marginalisation of Muslims in the North than in the South (Guha 2007: 366-371). Threats of casteist and Hindu extremist violence, which occurs very frequently in UP, add to the marginalisation of Dalits and Muslims (Human Rights Watch 1999, Sharma 2013, Muralidharan 2014). Dalits, OBCs, and Muslims are thus socioeconomically marginalised; but degrees of marginalisation vary between the jatis. While the farmer OBCs have long traditions of local social and economic dominance (Jaffrelot 2003: 271-75, Guha 2007: 598-604), the status and socioeconomic conditions of MBCs in local communities are not necessarily better than those of the Dalits (Pai 2002: 135-36, Narayan 2014). Among the Dalits, social mobility have mostly benefitted Chamars, while other Dalit castes are more marginalised (Jaffrelot 2011: 563).

In the Congress era, the dominant party depended on the votes of Dalits and Muslims, but its leadership was overwhelmingly upper-caste (Jaffrelot 2003: 48-87). Upper castes were overrepresented in the Congress-dominated UP Legislative Assembly, comprising a majority

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13 Most of North India’s once formidable Muslim elite migrated to Pakistan during the Partition, reducing the Muslim community to a marginalised minority (Guha 2007: 366-371).
until 1962, and around 40 % of the Assembly from 1974 to 1989. Dalits were guaranteed representation proportionate to their population due to the reserved seats. OBCs and Muslims were underrepresented, with a share of legislators around half their share of the populations – OBCs held around 20 % of the seats for most of the pre-1989 period, and Muslims around 10 % (Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012). Upper-caste dominance initially extended to the opposition: The Jana Sangh was overwhelmingly upper-caste, and like the Keralan Communists the North Indian Socialists were initially led mostly by upper-caste intellectuals (Jaffrelot 2003: 256-261, Pai 2013: 252). However, by the 1960s, this began to change with the rise of Mandalism and agrarianism (Jaffrelot 2003: 256-261, Pai 2013). The executive, too, was dominated by the upper castes. Every Congress Chief Minister of UP was upper-caste, as were most of their ministers. OBCs in particular were underrepresented: UP had not had a single OBC minister before Charan Singh’s 1967 government (Zérinini 2009). The only middle- or lower-caste CMs before 1989 were opposition leaders Charan Singh (a Jat) and Ram Naresh Yadav (a Yadav), who both depended on the support of conservative upper-caste factions (Jaffrelot 2003: 294, Jha 2004).

To sum up, the lower-caste parties emerged from mobilisation of the lower tiers of a hierarchical society. The Dalits, the core constituency of the BSP, were severely socioeconomically marginalised and to a lesser degree politically marginalised. The Yadavs, the core constituency of the SP, were politically marginalised under the Congress system, and to a lesser degree socioeconomically marginalised. As part of the upper stratum of UP’s subaltern majority, they are in an intermediate position between the old elite and the most marginalised groups. In politics, however, they were greatly underrepresented. For somewhat different reasons, both lower-caste parties should thus be characterised as representatives of genuinely marginalised groups. Nevertheless, as the lower-caste parties primarily represent Dalits and Yadavs, other marginalised groups remain underrepresented.

7.1.4 Constitution of Ethnicity

In both reference cases, parties appealed to overarching, inclusive ethnic identities to unify different groups. In Bolivia, the indigenous movement of the 1990s attempted to overcome the Aymara-Quechua divide by emphasising a shared indigenous identity, rallying around overarching issues, and, crucially, integrating organisations from both groups into the same network. The MAS builds on this network, and applies an anti-colonial, pluralistic, indigenous-based nationalism to bridge differences between indigenous communities and win non-indigenous support (Van Cott 2005: 50-97, Gratius 2007: 14-17). In Kerala, the Communists
adapted a program of Malayali identity politics from the 1930s. After successfully campaigning for establishing the Malayali state of Kerala, the Communists have supported Malayali nation-building through cultural enterprises, and they have framed their developmental programs in the perceived unity of the Malayali people, across caste and religious divides (P. Singh 2015: 85-86).

In North India, ethnopolitical leaders have long sought to integrate the jatis into larger ethnic groups. Local and regional caste associations have organised clusters of jatis with similar status and economic interests since the colonial era, and continue to operate both as interest groups and as providers of social services (Shah 2004: 14, Jaffrelot 2011: 449-458). Modern movements such as the Dalit movement, the Hindu right, and the Mandalist movement all sought to build solidarity across the jatis on a wider scale. As we have seen, the Dalit movement was highly successful in constituting a shared ethnic identity for the untouchable jatis. The Mandalist movement succeeded in establishing alliances between the farmer OBCs, and turned the bureaucratic abbreviation “OBC” into an ethnic identity – although its attempts to establish a deeper OBC solidarity were largely unsuccessful (Jaffrelot 2011: 474-79). Both received competition from the Hindu right, which attempted to constitute an ethno-religious nation (Hindutva) out of Hindus of all castes. To Hindu nationalists, the jatis are part of a harmonious whole, while Muslims are otherized (Patnaik and Chalam 1996: 266-67, Chandra 2005).

The BSP’s ethnic bid is based on the Dalit movement. Dalit solidarity may not have the same appeal to all Dalit jatis: UP’s Dalit movement was led by Chamars, building on earlier Chamar organisations (Jaffrelot 2011: 560-66); and Chamars both lead the BSP and outnumber other Dalits among its voters. However, the BSP’s Dalit politics are no mere smokescreen for Chamar politics. Dalits from all jatis empirically tend to support the BSP, although not as overwhelmingly as the Chamars; and the party uses pan-Dalit symbols such as the image of Ambedkar, which resonates strongly far beyond the Chamar community (Zelliot 2001, Jaffrelot 2005: 2).

Beyond uniting the Dalits, Kanshi Ram aimed to constitute a broader Bahujan identity. Borrowing the term “two-nation theory” from the colonial-era Muslim League,14 Ram (2012: 6) envisaged the Bahujan as a distinct nation composed of Dalits, OBCs, tribals, and religious

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14 Muhammad Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League and founding father of Pakistan, argued that the Hindus and Muslims of the Indian subcontinent were distinct nations and that the Muslims therefore should have a sovereign state (Guha 2007: 24-25).
minorities – together, the majority of India’s population. Ram (2012: 29) acknowledged the need to actively constitute the Bahujan:

[We] know there is no Bahujan Samaj [society] yet. So we will be satisfied only when this goal is realised. The Samaj [is] broken into 6,000 fragments (castes), our job is to unite them and this is going to take a long time.

The Bahujan project was not a departure from Dalit politics, but a Dalit-led attempt to spread the ideology of the Dalit movement to other groups, perceived to share the Dalit’s experience of upper-caste oppression. However, the Bahujan identity never became nearly as entrenched in the population as the Dalit identity, and after the fall of the SP-BSP government in 1995 the BSP largely abandoned the project, in favour of Dalit ethnopolitics and pragmatic alliances with other groups (Pai 2002: 121-26). Hence, despite an ideological commitment to uniting the Bahujan, the BSP’s constitution of ethnicity is essentially limited to the Dalits.

OBC identity politics, by contrast, failed to build solidarity beyond one issue: Reservations. After the movement’s zenith in 1992 – when OBC reservations were made into law, after decades of agitation – it began to disintegrate (Jaffrelot 2011: 474-75). The OBC coalition was thus already in decline when the SP formed. The party made no great effort to revitalise it, appealing to Yadav solidarity and forging a pragmatic electoral alliance with the Muslims, while alienating Jats, Kurmis, and other castes of the Mandalist coalition (Jaffrelot 2003: 371-72, Zérénini 2009: 58-60).

Bolivian pluralistic nationalism and Keralan subnationalism have no parallel in UP. Unlike in Kerala, no distinct UP identity emerged in the colonial era. Instead, the state became a bastion of Indian nationalism, which persisted in the Congress era. With the rise of the lower-caste parties and the BJP, the emphasis moved from nationalism to caste-based and religious ethnic politics; while subnational sentiments remained very weak (P. Singh 2015: 87-96, 149-169). Since Independence, demands have appeared for various regions to secede from UP. With the secession of Uttarakhand in 2001, one of these demands was met (Ibid.: 96). Low-level secessionist mobilisation persists in other regions, and Mayawati has expressed interest in dividing UP into smaller units, but she has never initiated such a plan in office (Ibid., J. Singh 2016 [interview]). According to Jagpal Singh (Ibid.), these demands are raised by opportunistic politicians and lack a strong social foundation. The lower-caste parties lack a firm position on secessionist demands, neither wholeheartedly backing them nor committing themselves to UP’s
terриториалной целостности. Следовательно, нижестоящие партии не делали ни федеральных, ни регионалистских этнических предложений, чтобы преодолеть разделы на основе касты.

7.1.5 Beyond Ethnicity


Как МАС, нижестоящие партии этнически базированы, но получают значительную поддержку от сторонников, которые не являются членами их основных групп. Однако, в сравнении с примерными случаями, кампании BSP и SP по получению внешней поддержки менее идеологичны и тактичны. Они строят практически много-этические альянсы между этническими группами, а не пересекая этнические разломы. Ни на центральном, ни на местном уровне, нижестоящие партии кажутся рассматривать избирателей как постоянную, монофильную этническую группу. Подходящий группистский термин (см. Брубер 2004), они ожидает, что интересы и политические предпочтения отдельного человека определяются его кастой и сообществом.

Канши Рам (2012) собранные интервью показывают группистский упорядоченный порядок с этнической демографией. Здесь, например, он объясняет падение BJP и рост BSP в чисто этнических терминах (Ibid.: 41):

If you look closely at the shift, in percentages of social composition, you will realise [sic]. For instance, the SC [Dalit] vote which was only 23% of the total vote earlier has risen to 26%. Similarly, there has been a rise in the OBC voter percentage ... The comparative percentage of the ‘caste hindu voters’ has declined. From 21%, I believe, it has now shrunk to 18%. Now 90% of these ‘caste hindu votes’ will go to the BJP. Similarly, 90% of the SC vote will remain with the BSP. But the Most Backward Caste votes ... which used to go to the BJP earlier and have religious affiliations with it, will now be divided between them and us. The MBCs, have no conflict with the BSP. We made their representatives Ministers in the Mayawati Government. Similarly, the Backward Castes will be divided between the SP and the BSP.
Ram’s demographic obsession informed the party ideology, which emphasised the numerical superiority of the Bahujan (Pai 2002: 121). While toning down Ram’s majoritarian ideology, his successor Mayawati built an inner circle of representatives of different ethnic groups, who were openly tasked with drawing the support of their groups. At her first press conference after the BSP’s 2007 electoral victory, Mayawati appeared with three senior BSP politicians: Satish Mishra, a Brahmin; Nasimuddin Siddiqui, a Muslim; and Babulal Kushwaha, an MBC (Gupta 2009: 21). Along with Mayawati the Dalit, they descriptively represented the four main ethnic groups of UP. Mayawati thanked Mishra and Siddiqui for attracting Brahmin and Muslim support (Ibid.), thus making their roles as representatives of their communities explicit. Clearly, Brahmins and Muslims were mobilised as Brahmins and Muslims – not on nonethnic cleavages. The party’s grassroots campaigns are organised according to this groupist logic. The BSP holds sammelans (mass conferences) explicitly targeting specific groups, such as Brahman sammelans and Yadav sammelans. In its bid for the upper-caste vote in the mid-2000s, the party emphasised Brahmanistic identity; introducing slogans such as “Brahmin and Dalit, brothers,” setting up “brotherhood committees” co-led by Brahmins and Dalits, and with Brahmanistic priests ritually greeting Mayawati at rallies (Jaffrelot 2011: 574). By contrast, nonethnic civil society organisations have a neglectable role in BSP campaigning (see section 7.2.2).

BSP groupism is perhaps most apparent in Ram and Mayawati’s approach to the Muslim community. In a 1988 interview, Kanshi Ram (2012: 96-97) said “the Muslim masses” would vote for the BSP because “they have no other choice.” He referenced the BJP’s anti-Muslim sentiments, and implicated Congress and Janata Dal leaders in anti-Muslim violence. He made no attempt to argue that the BSP had a positive appeal to Muslims, beyond being the only major party that was not anti-Muslim. Five years later (Ibid.: 68), Ram acknowledged that Muslims “will vote for different parties,” but continued to imagine a collective Muslim will, referring both to their “betrayal” of the Janata Dal in the 1991 elections and to their realisation that it would be rational to vote for the SP-BSP coalition:

Mulayam Singh was defeated in the last elections because of the betrayal of the Muslims. But this time when he came with me the Muslims realised that whatever Kanshi Ram was saying made sense. They thought that even if [Mulayam] gets 50 % of the Muslim votes in addition to Kanshi Ram’s SC/ST [Dalit/tribal] vote bank, it will be a winning coalition.

The idea of the collective Muslim will reappeared in a 1998 interview, where Ram argued that the Muslims, as a group, irrationally voted for the SP, despite the BSP being their best chance to defeat the BJP (Ibid.: 64-65):
The Muslim[s] did not vote for us. The Muslims appear to have a death wish. They know that Mulayam Singh Yadav only has the Yadav votes so that their vote for his party will help the BJP win. Why are they against the BSP which can promise them 20% votes? If the Muslims add their 16%, we can cross the 30% magic figure.

Mayawati, too, envisages a collective Muslim will. After losing the 2012 elections to the SP, she “explicitly complained that her loss was attributed to the Muslims’ shift in allegiances away from her party” (Verma 2012: 18). Although UP’s 40 million Muslims differ greatly in terms in terms of caste, class, and political preferences (Ahmed 2014), to Ram and Mayawati they are a homogenous bloc expected to vote en masse for the party that best serves their basic needs – primarily security against Hindu extremists. Ram saw no differing interests, based for example on class, within the Muslim community. To him and Mayawati, appeals to the Muslims are a zero-sum game: The BSP either wins or loses the collective Muslim vote.

I have found less data regarding the SP’s tactics for rallying non-Yadav support. Michelutti (2007: 645) reports a groupist approach from local SP offices:

> Long hours spent at political party headquarters and pre-election campaigning times taught me that politicians are obsessed with ‘caste’ and with ‘numbers’. In my experience, candidate selections in Uttar Pradesh are most of the time based on caste arithmetic.

The groupist obsession with caste is typical of Indian parties (Farooqui and Sridharan 2014), and not unique to the lower-caste parties. It does, however, set them apart from the reference cases, and by ideological rainbow-coalition ethnically-based parties elsewhere. Unlike these parties, the BSP and SP view the electorate through an ethnic lens, and their genuinely multiethnic electoral bases is an indicator more of shrewd local multiethnic coalition-building than of a nonethnic appeal.

### 7.2 The How-question

#### 7.2.1 Descriptive and Symbolic Representation

Both in the reference cases and UP, new parties challenged oligarchic orders by claiming to represent marginalised groups. In all three cases, descriptive and symbolic representation in governing institutions changed in favour of subaltern groups. In Bolivia, the electoral reforms of 1995 and the ascendancy of indigenous parties strengthened the indigenous presence in parliament and the executive, both through the rise of the MAS and other ethnic parties, and the traditional parties’ increased willingness to field indigenous candidates. The election of Evo Morales, Bolivia’s first indigenous president, was a major milestone (Van Cott 2005: 85-98).
The Morales government made great efforts to symbolically institutionalise indigenous leadership. Its symbolic measures include cultural policies rooted in indigenous traditions, frequent proclamations of “decolonisation” (aimed both at the United States and remnants of colonial power structures), and a constitution guided by indigenous political culture (Kohl and Bresnahan 2010, Schilling-Vacaflor 2010).

In Kerala, lower castes established a strong presence in the Keralan Legislative Assembly in its inaugural elections. Although at least half the members of the 1957 Assembly were upper-caste,15 there was also relatively strong OBC representation. Beginning in the 1960s, upper-caste representation declined slowly, while OBC representation improved. Dalit and tribal representation remained constant, largely confined to reserved seats. The religious breakdown has been relatively constant, with significant representation of all three main religions in Kerala, although Christians are overrepresented and Muslims underrepresented (Kumar 2009). According to Kumar (Ibid.: 401), “Kerala was the first state to offer a high level of representation to [OBCs] in the entire country, both in politics and administrative positions.”

The early organisation of marginalised groups, and the integration of these organisations into the Communist party, contributed greatly to the early political ascendancy of lower castes and minorities. Despite initially being led by upper-caste intellectuals, the CPI was shaped by its strong lower-caste support, and provided the lower castes with a channel of political representation (Kumar 2009, Chaturverdi 2015: 164, Harriss and Törnquist 2016). Since 1957, representation of lower castes and Dalits among CPI/CPM legislators has tended to be stronger than in the Assembly in general (Kumar 2009: 397-401). Symbolically, the Communist parties adapted and channelled the egalitarian ideologies of lower-caste organisations, especially those of the Ezhavas (Chaturverdi 2015: 164). The CPM and lower-caste grassroots organisations still have a reciprocated ideological influence (Chatuverdi 2015). However, the relationship between the CPI/CPM and the Dalit movement is more controversial. According to Devika (2013), the early Communist ideologues took a patronising approach to the Dalits, prioritising their welfare without integrating Dalit organisations in the movement. The following two sections discuss whether the lower-caste revolution in UP brought about a similar strengthening of descriptive and symbolic representation of lower castes and minorities.

15 Due to a large number of legislatures of unidentified identity, figures for the demographic composition of the Kerala Assembly (Kumar 2009) are less accurate than those for the UP Assembly used in this thesis. Also note that caste statistics for Kerala includes all religious groups, instead of listing non-Hindus as a separate ethnic group alongside the castes.
Descriptive Representation

As seen in section 7.1.3, the UP Legislative Assembly was dominated by upper castes and underrepresented OBCs to a much greater degree than the Keralan Assembly. However, from 1985 on, the UP Assembly became more representative of the state’s ethnic demographics, mainly because OBC representation strengthened at the expense of the traditionally highly overrepresented upper castes. Since 1991, OBCs and upper castes have each held around 30-35% of the seats. The demographics now resembled the Keralan Assembly, as upper castes were overrepresented but not numerically dominant, and OBCs underrepresented but no longer marginalised. Strengthened legislative representation did not, however, extend to Dalits and Muslims. As in the Congress era, Dalit representation remained essentially confined to the reserved seats and thus proportionate. Legislative underrepresentation of Muslims worsened after the rise of the lower-caste parties, falling to an all-time low of 5.4% in 1991 and staying under 10% until 2002. From 2002, however, Muslim representation significantly improved, and in the 2012 elections it peaked at 17%, roughly proportionate for the first time in UP history (Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012).

Table 7.8. OBC representatives in the UP Legislative Assembly by party

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<td></td>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC MLAs</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBCs as percentage of MLAs</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC MLAs</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42*</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBCs as percentage of MLAs</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>38.5*</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC MLAs</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBCs as percentage of MLAs</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC MLAs</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBCs as percentage of MLAs</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>35.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC MLAs</td>
<td>28*</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15*</td>
<td>14*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBCs as percentage of MLAs</td>
<td>35.0*</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>30.6*</td>
<td>51.9*</td>
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Source: Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012: 90.
* In these party groups, over 1% of the legislators in Jaffrelot and Verniers’ dataset are of unidentified ethnicity, so the actual number of OBC legislators may be slightly higher than indicated above. The percentages of legislators of unidentified ethnicity in these groups are 1.8% for the SP in 1996; and, in 2012, 5.0% for the BSP, 4.1% for the BJP, and 3.7% for Congress.
As table 7.8 shows, the lower-caste parties were major driving forces behind the OBC assertion in the Assembly. In every election from 1993 to 2012, many more OBCs were elected from the lower-caste parties than from the two other main parties. Throughout the period, representation of OBCs in the BSP and SP party groups has tended to be roughly equivalent to their share of the population; while OBCs were underrepresented by BJP and Congress. Nevertheless, as the table shows, a substantial share of OBC representatives came from the BJP and Congress. The BJP, in particular, made efforts to shed its upper-caste profile by fielding high-profile OBC candidates from the early 1990s on (Jaffrelot 2003: 482-91). Strengthened OBC representation from BJP and Congress is likely to have been partly motivated by rising competition from the lower-caste parties (Ibid.: 490-91), as the rise of ethnic parties motivated established Bolivian parties to field more indigenous candidates. The BSP and SP thus directly and indirectly made the UP Legislative Assembly descriptively more representative of the state’s demographics.

Hasan (2001: 4407) argues that lower-caste politics marginalises small, electorally unimportant castes. Jagpal Singh (2016 [interview]) similarly suggests that “smaller [castes] are permanently left out” and a few castes “are dominating the politics of the entire state.” Empirically, however, descriptive representation in the lower-caste parties is not limited to large jatis such as Yadavs and Chamars. A diverse group of lower- and upper-caste jatis are elected on BSP and SP tickets, and none are dramatically overrepresented (see section 7.1.2).

In the executive, changes were more visible and radical than in the legislature. The rise of Mulayam and Mayawati effectively ended Brahmanical dominance of the executive (Zérinini 2009). Mulayam not the first OBC to lead UP; however, he was much less dependent on upper-caste allies than the two first lower- or intermediate-caste CMs, Charan Singh and Ram Manesh Yadav (see sections 6.3.3 and 7.1.3). In his Janata Dal government (1989-91), Mulayam led a party dominated by OBCs, although with a sizeable upper-caste presence in government; in his SP-BSP government (1993-95), he led a coalition of two lower-caste parties with very few upper-caste ministers (Jaffrelot 2011: 430-448, Zérinini 2009: 59). Mayawati’s ascension to the Chief Ministry in 1995 was even more remarkable. Whereas the three earlier lower-caste CMs were men of the landowning farmer castes, Mayawati was a Dalit woman, descriptively representing one of the most disadvantaged demographics in North India. Due partly to the dominance of Mulayam and Mayawati, and partly to OBCs fronting the BJP, UP has been

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16 For a total of 19 of the 28 years from 1989 to 2017, UP was led by Mulayam, Mayawati, or Mulayam’s son Akhilesh.
under almost continuous lower-caste leadership since 1989. Farooqui (2016 [interview]) suggests that lower-caste leadership has created a political culture where Brahmins, who once dominated the politics of the state, have accepted the idea of lower-caste leadership, allowing Brahmin leaders to join the BSP as junior partners without losing face:

[Brahmins] were co-opted [by the BSP], because Brahmins, you know, since 1989, have been out of power. So at least they were given part and parcel of the government. Only the fact that BJP itself was trying to reinvent itself as a backward caste party … Until recently the Brahmins and Rajputs were supporters of the Congress party. When Congress became weak, they had to find a new party of their own … They were also open to the idea of allying with the BSP. I think we read too much into incompatibility. They weren’t that incompatible.

Symbolic Representation

As seen in section 7.1.2, the BSP and SP make symbolic bids to represent respectively Dalits and Yadavs. The reception of these bids is discussed in several field studies, which find a relatively strong symbolic legitimacy for the lower-caste parties among villagers and poor city-dwellers of certain castes (Jeffrey 2002, Pai 2002: 126-147, Michelutti 2007 and 2014, Jeffrey et al. 2008, J. Singh 2016 [interview]). This legitimacy is rooted primarily in ethnic solidarity, and thus limited to the ethnic core constituencies of the two parties. Fieldwork by Sudha Pai and Jagpal Singh in Western UP in the late 1990s indicate a strong affinity for the first Mayawati government among Dalits. Pai (2002: 144) writes that Dalit villagers spoke of the BSP government as “our government” and supported its policies. According to Singh (2016 [interview]), when the first Mayawati government formed in 1995, “in Dalit villages, there was a celebration. People sang, they fired buzz crackers, they played drums …” Interviewing Dalit villagers, Singh found that the women saw Mayawati as a role model of female Dalit empowerment. Michelutti (2007 and 2014) finds that the SP’s ethno-symbolic appeal resonates strongly with Yadavs. She argues that the SP’s symbolic bids inspire Yadavs to democratic participation. SP politicians and supporters explicitly connect the achievements of Yadav leaders to active grassroots mobilisation with slogans such as “be like Mulayam” (see section 7.1.2) and “I am Mulayam” (Michelutti 2014: 296). Jeffrey (2002: 36) similarly finds that the BSP’s symbolic appeals to Dalit solidarity “appear to have increased the confidence of SCs in the villages in which [Jeffrey] worked.” According to Jeffrey, the BSP inspired Dalit rural

17 UP has had two upper-caste CMs since 1989: Rajnath Singh (2000-02) and Yogi Adityanath (2017-present). Both represent the BJP and are members of the Rajput caste. The BJP’s two other CMs of UP, Kalyan Singh (1991-92 and 1997-99) and Ram Prakash Gupta (1999-2000), were OBCs (Jaffrelot 2003: 419, 490, Farooqui 2016 [interview], Pai and Kumar 2017).
labourers to protest against corrupt officials and exploitative landowners. In a later field study, Jeffrey et al. (2008) find that the BSP’s young party workers in the villages have embedded a new language of rights and class struggle among ordinary Dalits, strengthening intracaste solidarity.

The literature says little about the symbolic legitimacy of the lower-caste parties beyond the core groups of Dalits and Yadavs. Pai (2002: 143-45) finds that MBCs in Western UP in the late 1990s felt overlooked by the Mayawati government and did not identify with any party, unlike Dalits in the same villages, who enthusiastically supported the BSP. Fieldwork by Narayan (2014) among MBCs in a village in near Varanasi, Eastern UP similarly indicate disengagement with politics. The scarce empirical data thus indicates that the symbolic legitimacy and inspiratory potential for the lower-caste parties among non-core groups is weak. Symbolic representation seems to have divided the lower-caste electorate into two tiers; separating those who are both descriptively and symbolically represented by one of the two parties from more loosely associated groups who are only descriptively represented. Two-tier representation was a feature of the old Congress coalition, which represented upper castes as citizens while Dalits and Muslims were incorporated as clients (Jayal 2016: 178-181). The representative bid of the lower-caste parties appears to be fundamentally similar, although led by a segment of the lower castes.

### 7.2.2 Substantive Representation

**Democratic Institutions**

Institutional reform is a key feature of both reference cases. In Bolivia, constitutional reform was one of the main unifying demands of the social movements from which the MAS emerged. Shortly after forming its first government, the MAS initiated and won elections for a Constitutional Assembly, resulting in the new constitution of 2009. With a stated goal to establish a “participative, representative, and communitarian” democracy, the constitution introduced numerous decentralising and participatory measures. These included the legal autonomy of elected indigenous communitarian councils; the right of civil society to participate in policy design; and the right of the populace to influence the appointment and removal civil servants and judges through petitions and referenda. The participatory measures were meant to supplement the traditional chain of popular sovereignty, not to replace it, and the constitution guaranteed the integrity of elections and the right to organise opposition parties, and went to unprecedented lengths in recognising civil rights (Schilling-Vacaflor 2010). The flipside of the
MAS’ democratic decentralisation is an illiberal disregard for checks and balances. Morales has worked to strengthen the presidency and weaken Bolivia’s already dysfunctional legal institutions. There have been some controversial sentences against opposition politicians and occasional violent clashes between government and opposition supporters (Ibid., Freedom House 2016b). Nevertheless, the constitutional rights of opposition parties and independent civil society have generally been respected, and observers have deemed elections under Morales to reflect the popular will, despite some irregularities (Ibid.).

In Kerala, a relatively functional administration and well-organised parties secured a more effective, transparent chain of popular sovereignty than in other Indian states (Heller 2013a: 52, Harriss and Törnquist 2016). However, the state was also highly centralised, and party-clientelism was prevalent. In the 1990s, to address these problems, the CPM championed decentralised, participatory democratisation; culminating in the People’s Planning Campaign (PPC). The PPC set up local participatory bodies that were open for all, but elaborately regulated to ensure representation of marginalised groups and diverse interests. Quotas were set and funds earmarked to ensure Dalit, tribal, and woman participation. Informal labourers and the self-employed were encouraged to participate, meeting around the same table as representatives of the traditional triangle of state, employers, and organised labour (Harriss and Törnquist 2016, Tharakan 2004, Heller 2005 and 2013b). Although the PPC only partially met its ambitious goals of democratic decentralisation, and was partially rolled back from 2001, Heller (2005: 86-87) judges the program to have substantially strengthened popular control over local policies through a fiscal, administrative, and political decentralisation with very broad participation. At the peak of the PPC, 35-40 % of Kerala’s developmental budget was under the direct control of participatory bodies (Ibid.). Marginalised groups, especially women, participated enthusiastically (Heller 2013b: 60).

By contrast, UP’s lower-caste parties never took an interest in institutional reform. Despite institutional conditions similar to those of Kerala, and a more severe crisis of representation, they neither made steps to initiate participatory decentralisation, nor have they championed reform of existing institutions. Corruption is the most obvious factor compromising representation through the chain of popular sovereignty in UP. However, the lower-caste parties have made no serious attempt to curb corruption (Verma 2016 [e-mail]). Instead, they have themselves have gotten a reputation for corruption (Bardhan 1998: 138, Nielsen 2010). BSP ideology stresses the importance of capturing power on behalf of the Bahujan within democratic institutions, but neither Pai’s (2002: 112-126) critical outline of the party’s ideology nor Kanshi
Ram’s (2012) selected interviews and articles ever address reform of the institutions themselves. As long as descriptive representatives of the Bahujan are in power, the BSP seems to deem the institutions sufficiently democratic.

Neither reference case is without clientelism, but in both cases transformative parties have taken steps against clientelist networks. In Kerala, a functioning public sector and the cadre-based organisation of the CPI/CPM is a counterforce to clientelism; although clientelism and camaraderie has increased in recent decades (Heller 2013a, Harriss and Törnquist 2016: 59-69).

In Bolivia, the indigenous movement highlighted and criticised the clientelism of the old parties, at least in its early oppositional phase (Van Cott 2005: 229-230). In UP, according to Verma (2016 [e-mail]), clientelism “continues unabated.” By neglecting state institutions and party organisation, the lower-caste parties offer no alternative to clientelism. However, the clientelist networks of the lower-caste parties differ from those of the Congress system, which were based on traditional caste hierarchies. Jeffrey et al. (2008), Michelutti (2014), and Jagpal Singh (2016 [interview]) all suggest that a new class of lower-caste fixers has emerged. Singh describes the fixers such:

Earlier, the patronage used to be given by the traditional patrons. Traditionally dominant caste groups. Traditionally dominant leaders. Now this pattern operates in terms of networking and relations with the politicians. So there’s a politician, there’s a party, and the party has somebody who is mediating different people and the party. And this person who is mediating different people and the party, he works as a patron. He will take some commissions, or he will mobilize people in favour of a particular party. This person may belong to a particular community. May be an influential person also. Maybe an educated person … He works as an intermediary between the politicians and the people.

Michelutti (2014) argues that patronage network rooted in horizontal lower-caste ethnic solidarities have replaced those rooted in the vertical caste hierarchy, while Jeffrey et al. (2008) find that vertical and horizontal networks coexist and compete. By setting up their own patronage networks, competing with or replacing old casteist networks, the lower-caste parties have provided clientelism with a new legitimacy, rooted in ethnic solidarity.

**Party and Movement**

In the reference cases, democratic party structures give some credence to claims to represent the masses. In Bolivia, the social movements from which the MAS emerged remain active and influential, both as supporters and opponents of the Morales government (Bull 2013). Through
such organisations, channels of participation have opened for formerly excluded groups. Morales is widely considered a populist, and he certainly has authoritarian tendencies (Gratius 2007: 2-4, Müller 2016: 85). Nevertheless, Gratius (2007: 14-15, 20) categorises his movement as one of populism from below, “where indigenous people and their demands are a more important political factor than the personality of the president” – as opposed to the presidential populism of more authoritarian Latin American leaders, such as Hugo Chavez. Despite its mixed democratic record, the case of Bolivia shows that a populist style of leadership and integration through grassroots mass movements are not mutually exclusive.

In Kerala, the Communist parties have long facilitated popular representation both through relatively democratic party organisations and alliances with civil society. The initial Leninist structure of the CPI was hardly democratic, but from it emerged robust party organisations (Harriss and Törnquist 2016: 58). Atypically for India, the Communist parties have the characteristics of well-organised mass parties, including a formalised nomination process (Farooqui and Sridharan 2014: 86) and financing from membership fees and trade union support, avoiding the shadowy funding of most Indian parties (Sridharan 2006: 325). Unlike typical nonideological developing-world parties (Randall 2006), the Keralan Communists have campaigned on ambitious social programs rooted in ideology. Their ideological foundation evolved from orthodox Marxism to social democracy to participatory democracy, with open debates and civil society participation preceding every ideological shift (Harriss and Törnquist 2016). Like the MAS, the Communists have worked closely with civil society organisations, championing their interests and contributing to a political culture of making demands through collective mobilisation (Tharakan 2004: 111-13, Harriss and Törnquist 2016: 56-59). In Kerala, representation through the chain of popular sovereignty is thus facilitated both through relatively democratic, programmatic parties and an activist civil society, providing citizens with several channels to influence policy.

Both in terms of party organisation, programmatic coherence, and civil society foundation, the SP and BSP are much weaker agents of representation than the Bolivian and Keralan parties. Both parties are dominated by their leaders. In the SP, until recently, Mulayam was the undisputed leader of the party. Through his network, he controlled party affairs down to the local offices (Farooqui and Sridharan 2014: 87). He surrounded himself with his family, who occupied most key positions in the party, and handpicked his son Akhilesh Yadav as his successor. The 2016-17 power struggle (see section 6.4.3) forced Mulayam to step down as party leader in favour of Akhilesh, but Mulayam’s role in the feud underlines his dominance of
the party, symbolically and in practice. Although Mulayam effectively sided against his son, Akhilesh’s faction continued to pay their respects to Mulayam. At a closed party meeting in October 2016, Akhilesh reportedly told his father that “it is your party” and offered to resign as CM if Mulayam wanted him to (Fareed 2016). In January 2017, Akhilesh’s supporters formally demanded that Akhilesh should replace his father as party chairman. However, they suggested that Mulayam should be given the title of chief mentor, and Akhilesh stated that he would “respect [Mulayam] more than ever” and “act against” any conspiracy against him (The Wire 2017). Thus, even when openly challenging his leadership, SP members continue to recognise Mulayam’s symbolic leadership of the party.

In the BSP, Kanshi Ram was “the sole leader, ideologue, organisational head and Constitution of the Party, with unquestioned authority over it” (Pai 2002: 101). His successor Mayawati similarly dominates the party (N. Singh 2014, Verma 2016 [email]). Ahead of elections, she personally devises electoral strategy and selects BSP nominees. Potential nominees are expected to pay fees both to local party officers to forward their names to Mayawati, and to Mayawati personally. The process is undemocratic and corrupt not only according to liberal-democratic ideals, but also compared to other Indian parties, especially the cadre-based CPM (Farooqui and Sridharan 2014). Policy development is equally centralised, not involving the party organisation in any meaningful way (J. Singh 2016 [interview]).

In typically Indian fashion, but unlike in the cadre-based CPM, BSP and SP politicians are typically patrons with powerful local bases, given tickets in exchange for mobilising local castes and communities to support the party. This has resulted in legislative parties filled with politicians with independent followings and dubious ideological credentials. Membership of both parties has always been fluid. Opportunistic floor-crossings are very common in Indian politics (deSouza 2006), but the lower-caste parties are especially prone to them (Farooqui and Sridharan 2014: 100-02). There have been a series of high-profile defections, mergers, and co-optations, indicating poor organisation and opportunism. These include a mass defection of the BSP’s Kurmi faction to set up two short-lived parties in the late 1990s; former BJP CM Kalayan Singh’s candidature for the SP in 2002, which damaged the party’s secular, pro-Muslim credentials; the controversial merger of a minor party led by a notorious crimelord, formerly expelled from the BSP, into the SP in 2016; and the purges accompanying the SP’s 2016-17 power struggle (Jaffrelot 2011: 564-65, Kang 2016: 16-18). Paradoxically, the centralised leadership is likely to have contributed to the decentralisation of the legislative parties. When
the leaders do not tolerate opposition and cannot be held accountable to the party organisation, dissenters have no other means of challenging the party line than to split from the party.

Thus, in the absence of internal democracy, BSP and SP supporters lack the opportunity to influence policy outcomes through the party organisation. The opportunity to influence policy through the ballot box, too, is limited. Unlike the Bolivian MAS and especially the Keralan Communists, the lower-caste parties lack strong ideological foundations and political programs. Like the Keralan Communists, the SP is rooted in the old Indian Left, but the North Indian Socialists turned to caste-based pragmatism in the 1960s (see section 6.4.2), and today the SP has a reputation as a party without an ideology (Farooqui 2016 [interview], Verma 2016 [email]). According to Farooqui (2016 [interview]), the lack of an ideological foundation leads to “a certain ad-hoc-ism” in policy development. Farooqui considers the BSP to, unlike the SP, “[have] certain core beliefs.” Although the BSP may be more ideological than the SP, it is a party without a comprehensive political program (Pai 2002: 227-29, 237-244). The party makes a point out of not issuing manifestos, trusting voters to know what they stand for (The Hindu 2014). Thus, policy development in the party is under the total control of the leadership, restricted only by electoral concerns. Frequent floor-crossings further compromise voter influence on policy, as a candidate cannot be trusted to stay with the party he was elected to represent.

Despite the roots of both lower-caste parties in movements outside party politics, party-society linkages are much weaker in UP than in Bolivia or Kerala. The BSP built on the Dalit movement and emerged directly from a civil society organisation, the BAMCEF. However, BAMCEF is hardly a mass movement and lacks a strong independent base. BAMCEF was intended not as a mass organisation, but as an elite vanguard of educated Dalits. It is informally organised, and was never an autonomous influence on BSP policies. Kanshi Ram personally dominated the organisation and did not tolerate dissent, leading to splits; while Mayawati neglects the BAMCEF, prioritizing the party (Pai 2002: 104-06, Verma 2016 [email]).

Although the SP’s predecessors in the socialist-agrarianist opposition were linked with the Farmers’ movement, relations between Mulayam and the movement soured even he formed the SP. In 1990, the BKU, the main farmers’ association, severed its ties with Mulayam’s Janata Dal government (Jaffrelot 2003: 371). The rise of the lower-caste parties coincided with the fragmentation of the farmers’ associations, who never regained their former influence (J. Singh 2016 [interview]). In contrast with Bolivia and Kerala, modern civil society is generally very weak and fragmented in UP. Labour is disorganised and trade unions are virtually non-existent.
– despite its socialist ideology, the SP, unlike the Bolivian MAS and Keralan Communists, has never been linked to organised labour. Both parties are associated with rural interest groups – the SP with middle farmers, the BSP with landless labourers – but these associations are largely informal, thus receding the capability of organised interests to influence policy. Both parties also have ties to business and industrialists, but these ties, too, are informal (Farooqui 2016 [interview], J. Singh 2016 [interview], Verma 2016 [e-mail]). Civil society in UP is mainly comprised of local caste associations and religious communities, which tend to be conservative and undemocratic (J. Singh 2016 [interview]). The lower-caste parties work with these groups locally and incorporate them in their networks (Ibid., Farooqui 2016 [interview]). Such linkages embed the parties in society, but have little democratising effect. They embed undemocratic organisations in the power structure, and delegate local concerns to unaccountable patrons, fixers, and religious and caste leaders. Given its vertical structure, the party organisation offers no alternative channel of political participation.

Indicators of top-down populism can be found in both lower-caste parties. BSP founder Kanshi Ram’s distinction of the “Bahujan” (the oppressed majority) from the “Brahmins” (the ruling minority) is an obvious case of a people-elite distinction, although he deviated from the populist ideal type by acknowledging internal ethnic divisions in the Bahujan. However, despite his aforementioned obsession with ethnic blocs, he considered these divisions artificial and pursued the unification of backward castes (Ram 2012: 29). In typical populist fashion, Ram (Ibid.: 10) saw all the other main parties as agents of the elite interest:

> To my mind, all parties represent the forces of status quo. For us, politics is about transformation. The existing parties are the reason for the status quo. That is [why] there has been no upward mobility for the backward communities. The Communist parties have become the biggest stumbling block in this regard. They keep talking about change, but work for status quo. The BJP is better, they never talk about change. So people never feel duped.

Ram dubbed the main national parties (Congress, BJP, Janata Dal, CPM, and CPI) as five different expressions of Brahmanism (Ibid.: 69, 84), and repeatedly answered questions about the BJP and right-wing extremism by arguing that the real problem was not Hindu chauvinism but the Brahmanical social order, and that the other parties were no better than the BJP in this respect (Ibid.: 73-74, 80, 88). He thus expressed the dualistic populist worldview in which society’s woes are caused by a unitary elite and its agents need to be swept out of office by a movement representing “the people.” Mayawati has toned down Ram’s anti-brahmanism, but continues to present the BSP as the party of “the people,” now more vaguely defined as the
“Sarvajan” (“the masses”) instead of the “Bahujan” (Gupta 2009). Her legitimization of the party’s refusal to issue manifestos has populist undertones: “[W]e believe more in doing real development work for the people rather than making hollow claims which are never realised” (The Hindu 2014). In this argument, the unitary interests of “the people” and BSP policies converge by default.

With typical populist disdain for political institutions, Ram (2012: 31) argued that in India, “where votes and purchased and sold[,] stolen and looted the Parliament does not represent the people.” The BSP’s underdeveloped and undemocratic organisation, neglect of formal political programs, and dependence on charismatic leaders, who personally channel the will of the people are other facets of populist anti-institutionalism. Ram entered politics as a charismatic outsider, forcefully condemned all the other parties and built a cult of personality around himself (Ibid: 101) – all characteristics of the populist style and mood (Canovan 1999: 5-7, Mudde 2004: 545-46). Although the party’s claim to represent a fresh new anti-establishment force may have waned, Mayawati has retained elements of the populist style and mood; relying on charismatic authority and addressing her supporters at symbolically laden mass rallies (Jaffrelot 2011: 574, Michelutti 2014: 296-97).

Where the BSP arrived as a new populist force in the late 1980s, the SP is part of an older populist tradition. The socialist-agrarianist opposition emerged at a time when the dominance and elite character of Congress opened a space for populist countermobilisation (Subramanian 2007). Like many agrarian leaders elsewhere (Canovan 1982), Charan Singh was a populist romantic, as evident in Jaffrelot’s (2011: 435-36) summary of his ideology:

[For] Charan Singh, economic rationality is not the only reason for rejecting agricultural cooperatives. Indeed he defends a way of life in addition to vested interests. According to him, “The peasant is an incorrigible individualist, for his avocation … can be carried on with a pair of bullocks in the solitude of Nature without the necessity of having to give orders to or, take orders from anybody” ([C. Singh 1959]: 104). Charan Singh spells out a very romantic view, even a mystique of the kisan, as the man in communion with Nature … In spite of [his] selective defence of the rural folk [favouring landowners], Charan Singh systematically attempted to project himself as the spokesman for village India, against the city-based and parasitic elite. Therefore he presented the village community as forming a harmonious whole.

Here, several core characteristics of populism are in place: Pitting “the people” (villagers) against “the elite” (the urban class), championing the traditional way of life of the “common people” and claiming to pursue politics rooted in “common sense” (the instinctively
individualistic values of the peasant), seeing “the people” as unitary, and personally claiming to represent the “real” people (Canovan 1999, Mudde 2004, Müller 2013). With Singh’s populist ideology came a populist style – his person was more important than his parties, which frequently changed names and structure; and he was a master of mass mobilisation, rallying two million of his rural supporters in Delhi in 1979 (Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 90).

The SP built on this populist tradition, positioning itself as the party of the rural common man opposing the educated Congress elite. Spearheaded by Mulayam, its leaders cultivate images as rustic farmers and are known for their tough, confrontational style (Michelutti 2007 and 2014). Mulayam’s symbolic claim to personify his community is another typical feature of authoritarian populism (Müller 2016: 34-35). However, compared with Kanshi Ram, Charan Singh or Evo Morales, Mulayam is less of a counter-hegemonic populist and more of a traditional political patron. When he formed the SP, Mulayam was already a political veteran. Lacking Ram’s outsider credentials, Mulayam has long been perceived as an arch-typical Indian politician, a nepotistic patriarch who embraces “dirty politics” rather than rallying against them (Guha 2007: 675, 745, Michelutti 2014, Pai 2014).

Lower-caste populism has been a highly successful counterforce against upper-caste hegemony, but unlike in Bolivia, ethnic populism in UP does not challenge institutional deficiencies or clientelism. In Bolivia, populist scepticism toward traditional politics and institutions has undermined some liberal-democratic institutions; but it has also enabled participatory bodies and social movements organisations. Lower-caste populism, however, offers illiberal anti-institutionalism without alternative channels of democratic participation. The BSP and SP encourage their supporters to vote, participate in rallies, and to protest caste discrimination and assert themselves in their local communities; but both parties are built on a model where party supporters are expected to leave policy development fully to the leader. It is a populism from above, clothing clientelist incorporation in a pseudo-democratic language.

Unlike Morales, however, Mayawati and Mulayam have not been able to extend their personalised dominance from party to state. UP’s party system is fiercely competitive, and unlike in Bolivia the lower-caste parties have been unable to build a permanent electoral majority out of the combined majority of subaltern ethnic groups. The BSP and SP won majorities respectively in 2007 and 2012, but neither party retained its majority in the next election. Frequent turnovers have prevented Mayawati and Mulayam from exploiting UP’s weak institutions to consolidate personalised, semi-authoritarian rule of the state, as stronger Chief Ministers in states such as Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have done (Manor 2013: 249).
Competition in UP is, however, severely compromised by the minimal degree of voter influence on policy and the parties’ proneness to splits and defections.

Policy

Examples of universal redistributive policies can be found in the reference cases. In Bolivia, the MAS emerged from the integration of the class-based labour movement and the ethnic indigenous movement (Kohl and Bresnahan 2010: 8). Parts of the program, such as the demand to legalise coca-growing and of communitarian autonomy, were based on the interests of indigenous peoples; but important core issues such as opposing neoliberalism, strengthening the welfare state, autonomy from US influence, and the demand for a new Constituent Assembly were universal and appealed to workers and peasants across ethnic cleavages (Van Cott 2005: 85-95, Gratius 2007: 14-17). In office, the MAS combined institutional decentralisation with an attempt to strengthen state control over the economy, notably by a partial nationalisation of hydrocarbon resources (Gratius 2007: 17, Kohl and Bresnahan 2010: 5). Supported by this increase in state revenues (Riesco 2009: 32), the Morales government pursued redistribution and development through land reform and new universal welfare programs (Gratius 2007: 16-17, Kohl and Bresnahan 2010). The party’s persisting electoral majority indicates that the MAS retains broad, multiethnic support. Economic redistribution has deepened the cleavage between the wealthy, white-majority east and the poor, indigenous-majority west (Gratius 2007: 16-17), but despite polarisation and tensions the breakdown of democracy suggested by classic theories of ethnic politics has not materialised.

In Kerala, the CPI integrated the demands of a wide range of ethnic and nonethnic movements into a class-based united front. Building on economic interdependence and a shared interest in land reform, the Communists successfully found support from different interest-based movements around a universalistic program. In government, the CPI/CPM pursued comprehensive welfare, education, and land reform (Harriss and Törnquist 2016). While India’s public sector generally follows a targeted, charitable approach, providing welfare for selected groups (Jayal 2013a: 163-196, Engelstad 2016); the Keralan Communists laid the foundation of a universal welfare state where education and an adequate standard of living were seen as universal rights. As the focus of the CPM shifted to participation, they retained a universal approach. Although the PPC was designed to enhance participation from specific marginalised groups, its focus was on the multiethnic, geographically defined local community (Heller 2005 and 2013a, Harriss and Törnquist 2016).
In both reference cases, coinciding cleavages of class and ethnicity facilitated integration, allowing the parties to adapt policies that benefited their core constituents without being limited to certain ethnic groups. Tensions between subaltern groups were present in both cases, but the MAS and the CPI/CPM were largely able to overcome them by focusing on shared economic interests and by adapting respectively nationalist and subnationalist ideologies of overarching solidarity. The ethnic MAS and the nonethnic CPI/CPM are very similar in this respect, showing that ethnic politics need not be an obstacle to universalist policies.

In UP, the lower-caste parties have not mobilised on socioeconomic issues. The ambitious land reforms and social programs of Bolivia and Kerala have no parallel there. Despite the caste-class overlap and the fluidity of the ethnic vote, unlike in Kerala the parties of UP were unable to bridge the differences between the (mainly OBC) middle farmers and the (mainly Dalit and MBC) rural labourers, with the former tending to support the SP and the latter the BSP. From the beginning, the BSP and SP pursued formal and informal policies of targeted redistribution benefiting their core ethnic constituencies; although contrary to the predictions of classic ethnopolitical theory these policies have not become more divisive over time. Instead, there has been a significant turn toward universalism, though far less comprehensive than in the reference cases and coexisting with ethnified targeted redistribution (Arnesen 2016).

I have argued earlier (Arnesen 2016) that the lower-caste parties pursue ethnic redistribution through three channels: Reservations, targeted official programs, and informal channels. Dalits and OBCs have had the right to reservations for public employment since, respectively, 1950 and 1992. The 1992 reform left the composition of the OBC list to each state government, allowing them to decide which castes were to be favoured by state employment and which were not. This led to a rush of group demands for OBC status, particularly in Northern states such as UP, where public service is one of few opportunities for decently paid employment (Guha 2007: 599). The OBC list is a powerful tool for politicians, enabling them seek the support of a certain caste by supporting its claim to OBC status, or from castes that are already on the list by opposing further additions (Narayan 2014, J. Singh 2016 [interview]). Reservations have been a key issue in UP since the 1960s, and the lower-caste parties have continued to focus on them. With its roots in the Mandalist movement, the SP has traditionally given high priority to OBC reservations (Jaffrelot 2003: 372-75); and the early BSP governments worked to strengthen the enforcement of existing Dalit reservations (S. Singh and Kumar 2012: 7). However, as nearly all of UP’s lower and intermediate castes have now been given the right to reservations, the benefits from politicising reservations are likely to have diminished (Arnesen 2016).
Indian welfare policies are traditionally targeted and groupist, in which the state has a special responsibility for the welfare of marginalised groups, especially Dalits and tribals (Jayal 2013a: 163-174, Engelstad 2016). Drawing on this tradition, social programs with explicitly ethnic criteria have an unusual legitimacy in the country. With the end of the Congress system and rise of the lower-caste parties, ethnicity-based welfare programs became more common in UP, at the expense of universal programs (S. Singh and Kumar 2012, P. Singh 2015: 165-69). In 1991, Mulayam’s Janata Dal government introduced a program aimed at improving social services in Dalit villages, the Ambedkar Village Program (AVP). When it first came to power in 1995, the BSP claimed ownership of the AVP, and greatly extended its scope and funding (Pai 2002: 126-131). I have previously discussed the program’s ethnic character (Arnesen 2016: 7):

Under the AVP, a large number of Dalit villages were annually selected for one year of additional funding for developmental projects (Pai 2002: 127-29). Village councils (Panchayats) administered the projects, which included development of infrastructure and social services, as well as direct poverty relief and employment programs (Pai 2002: 128, S. Singh and Kumar 2012: 7). The criteria for the AVP was explicitly ethnic: Initially, at least 50% of the villagers needed to belong to the Scheduled Castes (Dalits); in 1997, this was lowered to 30% (Pai 2002: 128). Although some of social programs under the AVP benefited the village as a whole, others, such as the employment programs, were exclusive to Dalits (Singh and Kumar 2012: 7). Under the BSP, funding for other welfare programs was cut to fund expansion of the AVP (Pai 2002: 129). Studying a sample of villages, Pai (2002: 140) found that the main beneficiaries of the AVP were the Chamars (who tend to dominate the Panchayats in Dalit villages), while MBCs and smaller Dalit castes, who are often poorer than the Chamars, were neglected. Poor upper-caste and OBC villages were initially excluded altogether.

The AVP differs from the universalistic redistribution programs of Bolivia and Kerala in two key respects. First, it explicitly favoured one cluster of ethnic groups over others, unlike the Bolivian and Keralan programs that benefited marginalised ethnic groups but were not exclusive to them. Second, the AVP followed the Indian tradition of patronized welfare, framed as a gift from a charitable state (Jayal 2013a: 163-196, Piliavsky 2014, Engelstad 2016); unlike the more rights-based programs in Bolivia and Kerala. Funding was channelled to selected villages, with no attempt to distribute developmental funds evenly across the state (P. Singh 2015: 166). Economic criteria were not applied, and impoverished non-Dalit villages were initially ignored. The AVP had a top-down character, introduced as a governmental initiative rather than a social movement demand. Administration through the Panchayats nevertheless
gave the AVP a decentralised, participatory aspect; but unlike in Kerala the Panchayats of UP are not designed for direct mass participation and lack Kerala’s regulations to ensure influence for marginalised groups. Thus, it is no surprise that Pai (2002: 140) found local evidence that the AVP strengthened the Dalit intracaste hierarchy, by benefitting the Chamars who dominate village life and lead the Panchayats.

In UP, as in most of India, informal channels of redistribution – patronage, clientelism, favouritism, and corruption – have strong traditions, and the lower-caste parties have not changed this. As seen above, they rely on patronage networks, and contributed an ethnification of clientelism. Ethnic favouritism is also common in UP (Farooqui 2016 [interview]). The Yadavisation of the police is the best documented case (Arnesen 2016: 8):

Starting under the SP-BSP government of 1993-95 and continuing under every SP government since, SP authorities have overseen a massive recruitment of Yadavs into the force (Jaffrelot 2003: 373, Singh and Kumar 2012, Verma 2016 [e-mail]). Under the 1993-95 government, 1223 of 3151 new police officers in UP allegedly were Yadavs (Jaffrelot 2003: 373). In 2015, a Delhi newspaper reported that 32 of 42 police stations in Lucknow, UP’s largest city, were headed by Yadavs, and alleged that Yadav police officers were often more loyal to SP leader Mulayam Singh Yadav and his family than to their superiors (*Sunday Guardian* 2015). The Yadavisation process was purely informal and there was no attempt to legitimize it by reservations.

Ethnic parties in UP have thus used both formal and informal channels to distribute public resources to the ethnic groups they represent. These developments are in keeping with the predictions of classic ethnopolitical theory, and are likely to have contributed to further marginalisation of groups outside the core constituencies of the BSP and SP, and to have fuelled interethnic antagonism and undermined development. However, sectional policies favouring narrow groups have always coexisted with universalistic policies, which the lower-caste parties have given higher priority to over time. The BSP government of 2007-12 implemented welfare policies designed to benefit the poor across ethnic cleavages. In a paradigm shift, the government scrapped the Dalit criteria for the AVP and set up a five-year plan in which every village in the state would benefit from the program (S. Singh 2010, S. Singh and Kumar 2012: 10-12, Arnesen 2016). The government initiated some new targeted programs for Dalits (S. Singh 2010: 81), but the party’s main focus had shifted to nonethnic economic redistribution. Due to the class-caste overlap, Dalits continued to be among the main beneficiaries of economic redistribution, but they were no longer explicitly targeted at the expense of other groups. The initiative to shift the party’s direction from pro-Dalit to pro-poor was ambitious, but only
partially successful. Shyam Singh (2010) found that the BSP government made substantial achievements in housing and social security, while neglecting the crucial sectors of health and education.

Compared with the BSP, the SP has never given a high priority to welfare (S. Singh and Kumar 2012: 8-10, Farooqui 2016 [interview]), but the party has attempted to claim ownership of other universal issues. Recently, as part of Akhilesh Yadav’s efforts to reorient the party toward nonethnic developmentalism (Pai 2017), the SP has focused on infrastructure and investment (Farooqui 2016 [interview], J. Singh 2016 [interview]). The SP’s infrastructural and financial policies may not have had much substantial impact (Farooqui 2016 [interview]), but the party’s new focus signals a desire from the electorate and a willingness from the lower-caste parties for universalistic developmental policies. Verma (2014) sees the results of the 2014 national election, in which the BJP won a landslide in UP, as an indicator of the same tendency. The BJP toned down its Hindu nationalism, campaigned on growth and development, and strengthened its lower-caste support. Verma argues that the BJP’s victory signalled an increased willingness from lower castes to vote for policy over identity, and disillusion with the lower-caste parties over their poor developmental record.

There is, however, no indication that the increased emphasis on universal policies have led the lower-caste parties to abandon informal ethnic redistribution. State capacity remains extremely poor, clientelism persists, and ethnic favouritism continued under the 2012-17 SP government (Farooqui 2016 [interview], Verma 2016 [e-mail]). The lower-caste parties appear to be turning from ethnic clientelism to post-clientelism (cf. Manor 2013), redistributing resources through parallel formal and informal structure. Unlike in Bolivia and Kerala, the official policies of the lower-caste parties are designed and implemented in an opaque top-down fashion, reflecting the strategy of the party leadership rather than demands from mass movements and interest organisations. They retain a patronising character, where the state gives and the public receives, and lack a foundation in a systematic developmental program. Meanwhile, due to the prior ethnification of clientelist networks and the persistence of ethnic favouritism, ethnic redistribution continues through informal channels.
8 Conclusion

In Uttar Pradesh, ethnic politics have only to a very modest degree led to democratisation. At the minimal level, lower-caste politics in UP improved descriptive representation of marginalised groups. Beyond this, the promise of the lower-caste revolution to substantially deepen democracy is largely unfulfilled, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Lower-caste politics have become politics as usual, establishing temporary coalitions of convenience between different castes without addressing deeper democratic deficits or the socioeconomic causes of marginalisation. The demographic composition of the political elite has changed, but the elite remains unaccountable and irresponsible to demands from below. The channels of representation remain broken and ineffectual, rendering citizen influence on policy output very low.

This thesis has discussed two overarching hypotheses to explain why the democratising potential of ethnic politics in UP is largely unfulfilled. The discussion finds only qualified support for the first, that problems of who the lower-caste parties represents compromise democratisation. The lower-caste parties are ethnically based parties, associated with Dalits (BSP) or Yadavs (SP). However, both parties depend on external support, and compete actively with each other and other parties over the vote of every ethnic group. Despite the predictions of classic ethnopolitical theory, the emergence of ethnic parties has not led to electoral segmentation. No party can take the vote of any group for granted, and in the last three elections there has been a progressive de-alignment of the ethnic vote.

While electoral competition might have led the ethnic parties of UP to moderate their policies (cf. Chandra 2005), they are not and have never been issue-based broad coalitions. Through their leaders, who symbolically personify both party and caste, they frame themselves as the parties of narrow ethnic groups; while voters outside the core groups are won by tactical multiethnic alliances and incorporation of caste leaders. The lower-caste parties descriptively represent every major ethnic group of UP; but they divide them into two-level hierarchies of core groups and loosely associated supporters. Thus, a large section of the marginalised population – notably MBCs and Muslims – remain without strong political representation. They have descriptive representatives in the legislature, as they did in the Congress era, but were not included in the symbolic transfer of power from upper to lower castes.

The discussion of the how-question reveals a deep crisis of representation, in which the lower-caste parties represent their constituents in a top-down, incorporative fashion. The lower-caste
parties have consistently prioritised clientelist and populist incorporation over integration through institutional reforms, programmatic policies, and democratic or movement-based party organisations. As true products of UP’s fragmented civil society and unaccountable political culture, the lower-caste parties are vertically and poorly organised, leaving them ill-equipped to empower civil society and initiate comprehensive reforms. In Kerala and Bolivia, broad alliances were held together by demands for both institutional and socio-political reform, resulting in substantial democratic transformations. In UP, with its fragmented civil society and poorly organised parties, policy design was left in the hands of the party leadership, whose political priorities never went far beyond descriptive and symbolic representation. The resulting policies lack programmatic foundations and are insufficient to address UP’s severe underdevelopment, and are often designed to benefit one ethnic group at the expense of others. However, contrary to the predictions of classic ethnopolitical theory, the lower-caste parties have given higher priority to universalist policies over time. Universalist measures seem to supplement segmental policies, rather than replace them – signalling that, parallel to the development of post-clientelism suggested by Manor (2013), ethnic politics in North India are turning into post-ethnic politics. Post-ethnic universalist policies in UP are, however, more a populist post-clientelist bid to supplement the traditional segmental and clientelist redistributive schemes of ethnic parties than a result of a comprehensive transformative program, and are accordingly modest and ad-hoc.

The key problem is thus not one of whom the lower-caste parties mobilise, but of how they mobilise them. Unlike the left-wing parties of Kerala and Bolivia, they do not mobilise on a broader ideological or issue-based platform. Instead, they view the electorate through an ethnified groupist lens, building pragmatic multiethnic coalitions locally instead of appealing to interests cutting across ethnic cleavages. Their electoral bids thus combine ethno-symbolic identity politics with pragmatic smallest winning coalitions, while neglecting substantial policies of reform.

My interviewee Adnan Farooqui (2017) told me that UP’s parties lack incentive to champion substantial reforms, as “the socioeconomic indicators are some of the worst in India … so people [are] happy with very little.” Indeed, the lower-caste parties have never offered their voters more than a symbolic change of guards and very limited welfare, provided through formal or informal channels. However, given the lack of channels to influence policy – be it political parties, civil society, or participatory bodies – there are no outlets whatsoever to put pressure on politicians to initiate more substantial reforms. Social pressure on the lower-caste
parties is weak; and the parties themselves have not empowered civil society. Instead, a succession of semi-authoritarian political entrepreneurs – Charan Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Kanshi Ram, and Mayawati – have successfully co-opted the demands of nascent and disorganised lower-caste and peasant social movements, using the movements for their own ends and undermining them as independent actors.

The case of UP warns us against assuming that ethnic politics representing marginalised groups necessarily leads to democratisation. However, the analysis in this thesis suggests that it was not ethnic politics in itself that undermined democratisation of UP. The key difference between UP on one hand and Bolivia and Kerala on the other lies not in the ethnic bid – the Bolivian MAS is an ethnic party, and subnational identity politics have always been central to the Keralan Communists – but in the ability to build coalitions beyond ethnicity and to channel movement demands. A populist, clientelist party in a fragmented society is unlikely to bring about substantial democratisation; regardless of whether the party is ethnic or not. Analyses of ethnic parties should not fall into determinism and consider ethnic politics as necessarily beneficial or detrimental for democracy; instead, the structure of the party itself and its environment should be the object of analysis.
Appendix: Interview guide

1. First, could you tell me a bit about your research interests? What is your relationship with UP politics?
2. I’m interested in getting as complete a picture possible of the politics and policies of the BSP and SP. So I’ve got some general questions and some more specific ones, which I would like to hear your thoughts on. First, some questions on ideology and mobilisation. Do you think ideology plays any part in the BSP’s and SP’s mobilisation of voters, or are they purely about caste and identity?
3. The BSP traditionally presented itself as the party of the “Majority,” that is the 85% that were not of the upper castes. Does the party still use such rhetoric?
4. From what I understand the BSP under Kanshi Ram had a strongly anti-brahmanistic rhetoric. With this in mind, how was the party able to win a large chunk of the Brahmin vote in the early 2000s?
5. How does mobilisation of castes in UP elections work out in practice? How explicit are the parties in appealing to caste identities?
6. The BSP governments of 1995, 1997 and 2002-03 were known as the “Dalit governments.” Was such terminology still in use during the BSP government of 2007-12?
7. Does either party have any significant links to strong economic and industrial interests? Are there any major unions or other civil society organisations affiliated with either party?
8. Are vote banks and clientism still prevalent in UP? Have the lower-caste parties affected the prevalence of clientelism?
9. What are the main social and developmental policies of the current SP government?
10. I have read that under the SP government of 2003-07, Yadavs were recruited to the police in great numbers, leading to concerns of a Yadavisation of the police force. What was the extent of this process, was it reversed under the 2007-12 BSP government, and has it resumed under the current government?
11. Reports on development and economy in UP stresses the urgent need to improve the state’s roads and infrastructure. Have the BSP or the SP addressed this issue?
12. Has there been any significant anti-corruption measures under the recent BSP and SP governments?
13. From what I have read the BSP’s organization is strongly centralised with no checks on the party leadership. Do you agree on this? For comparison, how is the SP organised?
14. Is there any significant opposition to Mayawati in the BSP, and to Mulayam Singh in the SP?
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Interviews


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