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# ELECTORAL POLITICS IN PUNJAB

Pramod Kumar



INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION



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# **ELECTORAL POLITICS IN PUNJAB**

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**2021**



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I am grateful to Paul Wallace and E. Sridharan for their untiring efforts to inspire me to put my thoughts in a cogent manner.



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# I

## **ELECTORAL POLITICS IN PUNJAB (1967 - 2019)**

The history of Punjab is replete with political parties entering into mergers, post-election coalitions and pre-election alliances. Pre-election alliances are a more recent phenomenon, occasional seat adjustments notwithstanding. While mergers have taken place even among parties with a competing support base (Congress and Akali Dal in 1948 and 1956), post-election coalitions and pre-election alliances have been among parties drawing upon well-defined social segments. As such there have been two main groupings: one led by the Congress, partnered by the communists, and the other consisting of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has moulded itself so as to be able to join any grouping as per its needs. Fringe groups that sprout occasionally, position themselves vis-à-vis the main groups to play the spoiler's role in the elections.

These groups are formed around common minimum programmes which have been used mainly to defend the alliances rather than nurture their ideological basis. For instance, the BJP, in alliance with the Akali Dal, finds it difficult to make the anti-terrorist law, POTA, a main election issue since the Akalis had been at the receiving end of state repression in the early 1990s. The Akalis, in alliance with the BJP, cannot revive their anti-Centre political plank. And the Congress finds it difficult to talk about economic liberalisation, as it has to take into account the sensitivities of its main ally, the CPI, which has campaigned against the WTO regime. The implications of this situation can be better understood by recalling the politics that has led to these alliances.

These contexts can be understood against the backdrop of nation-building projects in their interaction with Punjab's political, economic and cultural specificities. This interaction has

shaped and nurtured regional aspirations and political and electoral articulations. This can be categorised around three axes: historically, Punjab has had a culture and language which transcends religious group boundaries; it has a unified politico-administrative unit; and has promoted a modernising culture which has initiated the integration process of diverse religious, caste and other ascriptive group identities. In spite of the process of formulation and reformulation of the composite linguistic-cultural consciousness, the tendency to evolve a unified sub-nationality with a common political goal remained weak in Punjab. This, in a way, provided sufficient space for a competitive multi-party system and emergence of coalition politics.

### **'Dwarfed' Identity Assertions**

The state and its interaction with the structural conditions muted the articulations of a secular Punjabi identity and assertions of communal groups and distinct religious identities. All these identities co-existed simultaneously.<sup>1</sup> To illustrate, linguistic and regional issues were articulated within the communal frame. The most obvious examples of this were the Hindi agitation, the Punjabi Suba movement in the pre-reorganisation phase and Khalistan assertions in the mid-1980s. At the same time, a secular Punjabi identity also coexisted. For example, an estimated 47 per cent of the Punjabi Hindus, according to the 1971 census, mentioned their mother tongue as Punjabi, even though the language question had become communalised, but by 1991 this proportion increased to 84 per cent<sup>2</sup>. The adoption of the Moga Declaration by the SAD and the

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<sup>1</sup> This has posed a dilemma for political analysts to capture competing identities. Although Punjab political history provides evidence to support contradictory viewpoints, namely, that political parties sometimes reflect communal antagonisms and sometimes moderate them, the predominating tendency in Punjab legislative politics has been towards intercommunal political coalition-building, whether this is done by a single broadly aggregative party or by inter-party alliance and coalition. Paul R. Brass. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 362.

<sup>2</sup> Even a pamphlet published by the Shiromani Akali Dal on May 19, 1960, held the view that only a small minority of urban Hindus were opposed to the formation of a Punjabi-

BJP emphasising Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiati is testimony to this fact.<sup>3</sup>

### **Minority-Majority Persecution Complex**

The second axis emerges out of the state's peculiar demographic composition which has provided space for the co-existence of competing identities. Of the three religious groups, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, in 1931 the Sikhs were in a minority in undivided Punjab including Haryana and Himachal Pradesh: the percentage share of Hindus was 28, compared to the Muslims who were 56 and the Sikhs who were 13<sup>4</sup>. This configuration provided a conducive ground for coalition politics in the state as all religious groups considered themselves a minority.<sup>5</sup>

---

speaking state. To quote: "Recent agitation over the Punjabi-Hindi controversy has highlighted the fact that it is the Hindu urbanites living in the cities of Amritsar, Jullundur, Ludhiana and Ambala who alone oppose the formation of the Punjabi-speaking state. These urbanite Hindus do not form the majority of the Hindu population and can in no way form a substantial minority in the Punjabi-speaking zone." *A Plea for a Punjabi State*. (Amritsar: Shiromani Akali Dal, 1960), 27. According to the 1971 Census, the total population of the state was 13,472,972 with 37.54 per cent being Hindus, i.e. 5,057,754. The number stating Hindi as their mother tongue stood at 2,711,490; assuming all these to be Hindus, the percentage of Hindus mentioning Hindi as their mother tongue is estimated at 53.61.

Pramod Kumar et.al. *Punjab Crisis: Context and Trends*. (Chandigarh: Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, 1984), p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> The Moga declaration was adopted on April 14, 1995. To quote from the document, "the spirit of Punjabiati would be strengthened so that these matters get projected as common problems of the entire Punjabis rather than a section thereof." Kanwaljit Singh. *The Policy Programme of Shiromani Akali Dal*. April 14, 1995, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> J.H. Hutton. *Census of India 1931: India: Imperial Tables*, Vol. 1, pt. II, 1933, p. 582.

<sup>5</sup> The argument advanced is that wherever the Hindus and Sikhs are in a minority and the Muslim League ministry is a possibility, it is desirable to join the coalition to protect 'Hindu' and 'Sikh' interests. Veer Savarkar, leader of Hindu Maha Sabha, described its policy in 1943 and later in a telegram to Master Tara Singh: "In the Hindu minorities provinces wherever a Muslim ministry seems inevitable – whether it was sponsored by the Muslim League or otherwise – and Hindu interest can be bettered by joining it, the Hindu Maha Sabha should try as a matter of right to capture as many seats as possible in the ministry and do their best to safeguard the interests of the Hindu minority." He further added, "a coalition ministry if it is actuated by just and patriotic motives can be an effective process which will train us in team work, remove the sense of annihilation and lead to national consolidation in spite of differences of race and creed". Ajit Singh Sarhadi. *Punjabi Suba: the Story of the Struggle*. (Delhi: U.C. Kapur and Sons, 1970), 73.

To illustrate, in 1937 the Akali Dal fought the elections in alliance with the Congress on a Congress-cum-Akali ticket. In the Legislative Assembly they shared seats with the Congress and their representative became leader of the opposition. In 1942, differences arose between the parties on the issue of supporting the Second World War: the Congress opposed participation in the war, while the Akali Dal argued that non-participation would adversely affect the interests of the Sikhs in the army. Consequently, a pact was signed between the Muslim League and the SAD, and the Akali Dal representative S. Baldev Singh joined the Cabinet.

At the time of partition, the migration of population had a significant impact on the future course of political, economic and social events in the state. The Sikh population increased from 13 per cent to 33 per cent and the Hindu population from 28 per cent to 64 per cent in post-partition, pre-linguistic reorganisation Punjab (1961 census). During this period Punjab was divided into two regions, Punjabi-speaking and Hindi-speaking; in 8 of the 12 Punjabi-speaking districts, Sikhs were in a majority.<sup>6</sup>

With the reorganisation of the state in the mid-1960s, the Sikhs became a majority with 58 per cent and the Hindus accounted for 38 per cent<sup>7</sup> of the population (see tables 1.1 and 1.2). This introduced a situation in which both the Hindus and Sikhs continued to suffer from a minority persecution complex but with a difference. Interestingly, the Hindus suffered from a majority-minority complex as they perceived themselves to be a majority in India but a minority in reorganised Punjab; the Sikhs for their part were perceived to have a minority-majority complex, as a majority in Punjab and a minority in India. This complex was not based merely on numbers, but their differing relative presence in various occupations provided the basis for interest articulation along religious group lines even in secular spheres.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 152.

<sup>7</sup> *Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 2017.*

**Table 1.1**  
**Districtwise Population by Religion in Punjab 2011**

District	Total Population	Hindu		Sikh		Muslim		Christian		Other	
		Population (no.)	%age	Population (no.)	%age	Population (no.)	%age	Population (no.)	%age	Population (no.)	%age
Gurdaspur	2298323	1074332	46.74	1002874	43.64	27667	1.2	176587	7.68	16863	0.73
Amritsar	2490656	690939	27.74	1716935	68.94	12502	0.5	54344	2.18	15936	0.64
Tarn Taran	1119627	60504	5.4	1044903	93.33	3855	0.34	6095	0.54	4270	0.38
Kapurthala	815168	336124	41.23	453692	55.66	10190	1.25	5445	0.67	9717	1.19
Jalandhar	2193590	1394329	63.56	718363	32.75	30233	1.38	26016	1.19	24649	1.12
S.B.S. Nagar	612310	401368	65.55	192885	31.5	6829	1.12	1479	0.24	9749	1.59
Hoshiarpur	1586625	1000743	63.07	538208	33.92	23089	1.46	14968	0.94	9617	0.61
Rupnagar	684627	304481	44.47	361045	52.74	14492	2.12	2094	0.31	2515	0.37
S.A.S. Nagar	994628	476276	47.88	478908	48.15	29488	2.96	5342	0.54	4614	0.46
Ludhiana	3498739	1502403	42.94	1863408	53.26	77713	2.22	16517	0.47	38698	1.11
Firozpur	2029074	906408	44.67	1090815	53.76	6844	0.34	19358	0.95	5649	0.28
Faridkot	617508	141363	22.89	469789	76.08	3125	0.51	1227	0.2	2004	0.32
Sri Mukatsar Sahib	901896	254920	28.26	638625	70.81	4333	0.48	1681	0.19	2337	0.26
Moga	995746	158414	15.91	818921	82.24	9388	0.94	3277	0.33	5746	0.58
Bathinda	1388525	380569	27.41	984286	70.89	16299	1.17	2474	0.18	4897	0.35
Mansa	769751	156539	20.34	598443	77.75	10375	1.35	917	0.12	3477	0.45
Sangrur	1655169	389410	23.53	1077438	65.1	179116	10.82	2406	0.15	6799	0.41
Barnala	595527	112859	18.95	467751	78.54	13100	2.2	622	0.1	1195	0.2
Patiala	1895686	783306	41.32	1059944	55.91	40043	2.11	5683	0.3	6710	0.35
Fatehgarh Sahib	600163	152851	25.47	427521	71.23	16808	2.8	1698	0.28	1285	0.21
PUNJAB	27743338	10678138	38.49	16004754	57.69	535489	1.93	348230	1.26	176727	0.64

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab 2017

**Table 1.2**  
**Rural-Urban Population by Religion in Punjab 2011**

Location	Total Population	Hindu		Sikh		Muslim		Christian		Other	
		Population (no.)	%age	Population (no.)	%age	Population (no.)	%age	Population (no.)	%age	Population (no.)	%age
Rural	17344192	4396066	25.35	12348455	71.20	278825	1.61	242977	1.40	77869	0.45
Urban	10399146	6282072	60.41	3656299	35.16	256664	2.47	105253	1.01	98858	0.95
Total	27743338	10678138	38.49	16004754	57.69	535489	1.93	348230	1.26	176727	0.64

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab 2017

## **Caste, Religious and Class Axes**

The third important aspect was the interaction of caste with politics within the broad boundary conditions reformulated by religious reform movements. Punjab has been known for its liberal ritualistic religious practices in relation to caste. Both Sikhism and the Arya Samaj liberated the dalits from stringent purity pollution-based behavioural patterns. This can be termed the regionalisation of caste. For example, in 2011 the dalits constituted nearly 32 (31.94) per cent of the total population of the state, perhaps the highest in the country<sup>8</sup> (2011 census). A unique regional feature is that the dalits share a common cultural reservoir to acquire social parity without accepting the hierarchical system<sup>9</sup>. This has given them greater political and social bargaining capacity without their becoming hostage to any particular dalit party. Therefore, it would be appropriate to see the relationship of these axes with party dynamics and coalition politics.

## **Interface of the 'Axes' with Party Dynamics**

These features have shaped the politics of the state, so that caste has yet to become an idiom of politics, and religious, linguistic and regional identities have become so intermeshed that no one parameter alone has emerged as an exclusive factor in electoral mobilisations and coalitions. For example, the Shiromani Akali Dal's (SAD's) political assertions ranged from religious identity to a secular Punjabi identity, and its birth on January 24, 1921, can be traced to the anti-caste thrust of social and religious interactions.<sup>10</sup> The underlying politics was to attain

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<sup>8</sup> *Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 2017*

<sup>9</sup> Pramod Kumar and Rainuka Dagar. 'Gender in dalit Identity Construction in Punjab' in Harish K. Puri (ed.) *dalits in Regional Context*. (Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> In 1920, at a religious conference where 'amrit parchar' took place, many members of the congregation belonged to the scheduled castes. Some of them had been baptised and were later taken to Sri Darbar Sahib for *ardasa* (prayer) and distribution of *karah parshad*. The irony of the situation was that the priests present at Sri Darbar Sahib refused to allow the participation of these "Harijans" (scheduled castes) who had been baptised in the *ardas*; this annoyed the congregation present, who protested at this un-Sikh-like discrimination and insisted at the participation of the Harijans in the *ardasa*



freedom in political, social and religious domains. However, its core support base has been the Sikhs; its leadership and cadres comes from Sikh Jats with a rural background particularly in the post-reorganisation phase, and electoral support from the rural Sikh Jat peasantry, dalit Sikhs, a section of urban Sikh traders and small commission agents and shopkeepers from small towns.<sup>11</sup> A sample survey of party activists of the SAD in 2004 shows that 42 per cent are farmers, 27 per cent belong to business and industry, and 25 per cent are small shopkeepers. An overwhelming majority of 85 per cent of these are Sikhs (tables 1.3 and 1.4).

**Table 1.3**  
**Occupation and Party-wise Distribution of Activists**

	Congress	SAD (B)	BJP	Akali Dal (Mann)	BSP	CPI (M) / CPI	Total
Executive (business and trade)	24 (38.10)	16 (27.12)	19 (50.00)		3 (9.68)	1 (3.03)	63 (27.75)
Lower executive (teachers, etc.)	1 (1.59)		1 (2.63)		3 (9.68)	5 (15.15)	10 (4.41)
Self-employed (shopkeepers, etc.)	20 (31.75)	15 (25.42)	12 (31.58)		12 (38.71)	16 (48.48)	75 (33.04)
Land owners (5+ acres)	8 (12.70)	23 (38.98)		2 (66.67)			33 (14.54)
Cultivator (< 5 acres)	2 (3.17)	2 (3.39)		1 (33.33)	2 (6.45)	2 (6.06)	9 (3.96)
Labour work (unskilled)	4 (6.35)				2 (6.45)	1 (3.03)	7 (3.08)
Artisans (semi-skilled)			1 (2.63)				1 (0.44)
Retired	4 (6.35)	3 (5.08)	5 (13.16)		8 (25.81)	8 (24.24)	28 (12.33)
Unemployed					1 (3.23)		1 (0.44)
Total	63 (100.00)	59 (100.00)	38 (100.00)	3 (100.00)	31 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	227 (100.00)

Source: Punjab Legislative Assembly.

SSP: Samyukta Socialist Party

RSP: It is not RSP, but PSP and full form is Praja Socialist Party

Note: Figures in parentheses denote the percentage share of the occupation among total activists in the party.

and their sharing in the distribution of the *karah parshad*. Ajit Singh Sarhadi. op.cit. p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Till the mid-1960s a coalition of urban Sikh traders, peasantry and Sikh government employees under the leadership of Master Tara Singh dominated Akali politics. But in the post-reorganisation phase, rural Jat peasantry became dominant both in the Akali Dal and the SGPC.

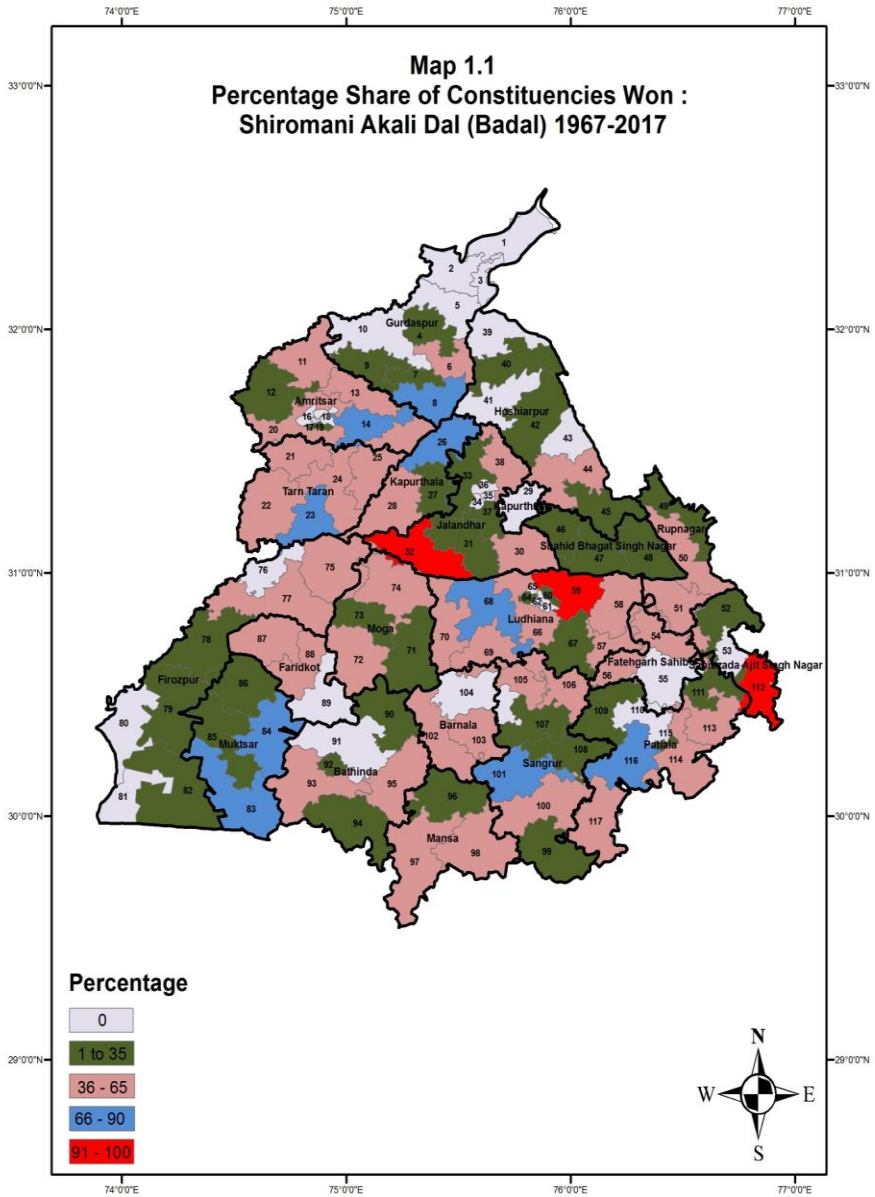
**Table 1.4**  
**Religion and Party-wise Distribution of Activists**

	Congress	SAD (B)	BJP	Akali Dal (Mann)	BSP	CPI (M) / CPI	Total
<b>Sikh</b>	20	50	1	3	6	15	95
	(31.75)	(84.75)	(2.63)	(100.00)	(19.35)	(45.45)	(41.85)
<b>Hindu</b>	42	9	36		25	18	130
	(66.67)	(15.25)	(94.74)		(80.65)	(54.55)	(57.27)
<b>Christian</b>	1		1				2
	(1.59)		(2.63)				(0.88)
<b>Total</b>	63	59	38	3	31	33	227
	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2004

Note: Figures in parentheses denote the percentage share of the occupation among total activists in the party.

An analysis of seats won by the SAD in all elections between 1967 and 2017 shows that it had a clear edge in 12 of the 117 assembly seats and that a majority of these were predominantly rural (Map 1.1). A comparative analysis of the vote share shows that the Akali Dal secured the maximum votes in rural constituencies, i.e., 43 per cent in the 1997 Assembly elections, around 17 per cent in urban constituencies and 33 per cent in semi-urban constituencies in the 2007 Assembly pre-election coalition phase (Table 1.5). As a consequence, it articulates agrarian interests and appropriates Sikh religious symbols to blur the emerging contradiction between the agrarian and other sectors of the economy. However, in the post-terrorism period, urban Hindu traders, in response to the Akali Dal's pre-election alliance with the BJP based on Hindu-Sikh amity, have shown a preference for the Akali Dal. Interestingly, for the first time, the SAD fielded 9 Hindu candidates in 2012 elections. The Akalis' urban vote share in 2007 increased to 17 per cent from 16 per cent in the 1997 assembly elections in pre-election alliance with the BJP.



There has been a qualitative shift in the Akali support base. The first shift took place at the time of the reorganisation of Punjab coupled with the Green Revolution. The rural Jat Sikhs constituted its main support base and its leadership also came from this section.<sup>12</sup> The second shift took place in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star and the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. The Akalis' urban vote had revolved around 5 per cent but in 1985 it touched the 12 per cent mark with the active support of the urban khatri Sikhs (table 1.5, 1.6 and 1.7). The third shift took place after the resurgence of democracy in 1997, whereby a substantial number of urban Hindus supported the Akali Dal<sup>13</sup> (tables 1.8, 1.9, 1.10 and 1.11).

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<sup>12</sup> The Jat Sikh legislators in general and, of the Akali Dal in particular, belonged to the upper strata. The two groups into which the Akalis had split represented different tendencies and styles of functioning. Sant Fateh Singh represented the incremental-conformist group and a section of the religious fundamentalists, whereas the Master Tara Singh Akali Dal represented the extremists and a minority of the religious fundamentalists and incremental conformists. H.S. Deol. "Analysis of Political Elite in Punjab with special reference to the Legislature", Ph.D. thesis submitted to Punjab University, 1979.

<sup>13</sup> Pramod Kumar. 'Transcending the Divide'. *Deccan Herald*, February 16, 1997.

**Table 1.5**  
**Location-wise Major Party and Year-wise Votes Polled, Constituencies Contested and Won**

			BJS/ BJP	CPI	CPM	INC	SAD	PPP	AAAP	LIP	JP/JD	BSP	Others
1997	Rural	1997 Won/ contested	4/6	2/9	0/17	7/62	53/62	-	-	-	0/10	1/41	3/155
		Votes polled( %)	3.65	3.13	2.09	26.34	42.87				0.28	8.27	13.37
	Semi-Urban	1997 Won/contested	9/9	0/5	0/8	4/32	19/26	-	-	-	0/10	0/18	3/112
		Votes polled( %)	12.25	2.69	1.71	25.77	33.44				1.02	6.48	16.64
	Urban	1997 Won/contested	5/7	0/1	-	3/11	3/4	-	-	-	0/8	0/8	1/72
		Votes polled( %)	26.81	3.01		31.44	16.30				0.86	5.55	16.02
2002	Rural	2002 Won/contested	1/6	1/8	0/11	32/61	32/62	-	-	-	-	0/61	4/298
		Votes polled( %)	2.76	2.22	0.45	34.63	35.99					6.26	17.69
	Semi-Urban	2002 Won/contested	2/9	1/2	0/2	19/33	9/26	-	-	-	-	0/29	4/210
		Votes polled( %)	8.16	1.86	0.27	35.46	27.16					4.65	22.45
	Urban	2002 Won/contested	0/8	0/1	-	11/11	0/4	-	-	-	-	0/10	1/71
		Votes polled( %)	18.41	2.75		46.51	8.57					5.52	18.25
2007	Rural	2007 Won/contested	5/6	0/15	0/8	25/70	35/64	-	-	-	-	0/69	5/336
		Votes polled( %)	3.74	0.69	0.31	39.99	41.99					4.54	8.74
	Semi-Urban	2007 Won/contested	7/9	0/9	0/5	17/35	-	-	-	-	-	0/35	0/235
		Votes polled( %)	10.98	0.77	0.27	42.85	33.38					3.67	8.08
	Urban	2007 Won/contested	7/8	0/1	0/1	2/12	3/4	-	-	-	-	0/12	0/95
		Votes polled( %)	29.94	1.09	0.07	40.29	17.14					2.64	8.83
2012	Rural	2012 Won/contested	3/5	0/6	0/6	19/61	38/56	0/47	-	-	-	0/61	1/266
		Votes polled( %)	3.38	0.61	0.21	39.40	41.14	4.77				4.57	5.92
	Semi-Urban	2012 Won/contested	4/8	0/5	0/1	21/41	15/33	0/34	-	-	-	0/41	1/251
		Votes polled( %)	6.47	0.99	0.09	40.08	31.83	6.88				4.25	9.40
	Urban	2012 Won/contested	5/10	0/3	0/1	6/15	3/5	0/11	-	-	-	0/15	1/95
		Votes polled( %)	27.93	1.32	0.08	43.45	12.69	1.66				3.10	9.76
2017	Rural	2017 Won/contested	1/5	0/14	0/6	37/61	11/56	-	12/60	0/2	-	0/59	0/333
		Votes polled( %)	2.46	0.28	0.07	36.90	30.38		24.29	0.44		1.78	3.39
	Semi-Urban	2017 Won/contested	2/8	0/6	0/6	26/41	4/33	-	8/40	1/1	-	0/39	0/220
		Votes polled( %)	5.83	0.12	0.09	38.41	23.57		25.80	0.99		1.39	3.79
	Urban	2017 Won/contested	0/10	0/3	0/0	14/15	0/5	-	0/12	1/3	-	0/13	0/94
		Votes polled( %)	18.65	0.24	0.00	49.11	7.19		15.69	5.88		0.77	2.47

Source: Election Commission Reports Punjab, 1997-2017

**Table 1.6**  
**Location-wise Major Party and Year-wise Votes Polled, Constituencies Contested and Won**

		Year of Election	BJS/BJP	CPI	CPM	INC	SAD/ASD	JP/JD	BSP	Others
1967	Rural	1967 Won/contested	/15	3/14	2/9	29/54	16/35	–	–	6/182
		Votes polled (%)	3.39	6.43	4.50	38.35	24.34			22.99
	Semi-Urban	1967 Won/contested	2/25	1/4	1/3	19/38	8/24	–	–	7/144
		Votes polled (%)	12.10	3.16	2.02	37.80	19.74			25.18
	Urban	1967 Won/contested	7/9	1/1	/1	/10		–	–	2/34
		Votes polled (%)	39.79	6.14	0.80	30.48				22.78
1969	Rural	1969 Won/contested	1/11	2/19	2/8	24/55	23/36	–	–	4/117
		Votes polled (%)	4.79	6.08	4.65	38.44	30.67			15.37
	Semi-Urban	1969 Won/contested	5/11	1/8	0/2	9/38	19/27	–	–	4/77
		Votes polled (%)	9.56	2.81	1.47	39.63	33.23			13.28
	Urban	1969 Won/contested	2/8	1/1	–	5/10	1/2	–	–	1/41
		Votes polled (%)	32.75	5.56		41.88	5.12			14.68
1972	Rural	1972 Won/contested	0/11	7/9	1/10	31/45	14/40	–	–	3/121
		Votes polled (%)	1.36	8.19	4.54	39.53	31.58			14.79
	Semi-Urban	1972 Won/contested	0/13	2/3	0/7	26/35	10/24	–	–	0/93
		Votes polled (%)	4.93	3.96	2.16	46.81	27.21			14.94
	Urban	1972 Won/contested	0/9	1/1	–	9/9	0/8	–	–	0/30
		Votes polled (%)	27.53	7.05		46.31	5.00			14.10
1977	Rural	1977 Won/contested	5/16	4/13	8/8	9/54	43/47	–	–	1/241
		Votes polled (%)	8.05	7.43	5.98	31.07	36.66			10.82
	Semi-Urban	1977 Won/contested	12/15	2/4	–	6/31	14/21	–	–	1/136
		Votes polled (%)	19.43	5.18		36.95	30.05			8.40
	Urban	1977 Won/contested	8/10	1/1	–	2/11	1/2	–	–	0/72
		Votes polled (%)	41.02	6.09		37.79	5.78			9.32

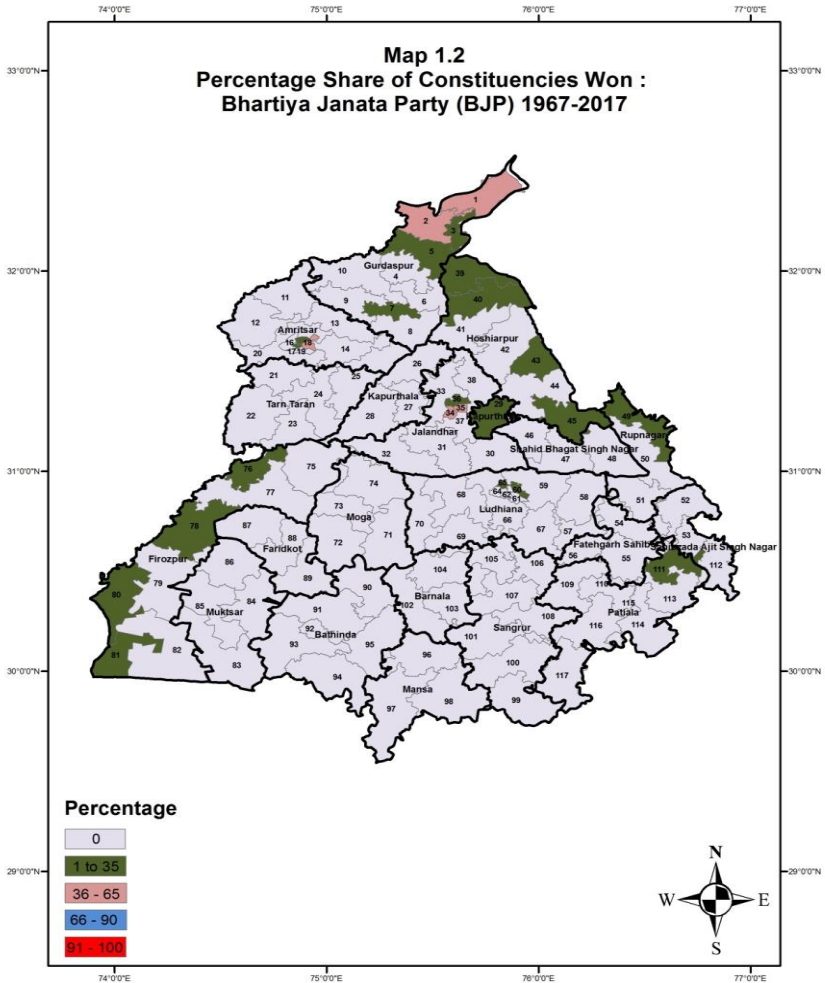
Source: Election Commission Reports Punjab, 1967-77

**Table 1.7**  
**Location-wise Major Party and Year-wise Votes Polled, Constituencies Contested and Won**

			BJS/BJP	CPI	CPM	INC	SAD	JP/JD	BSP	Others
1980	Rural	1980 Won/contested	1/18	7/10	4/11	30/70	28/45	–	–	0/217
		Votes polled( %)	3.24	6.39	6.15	44.59	30.56			9.07
	Semi-Urban	1980 Won/contested	0/13	2/7	1/2	21/35	9/23	–	–	2/159
		Votes polled( %)	7.58	7.53	1.40	44.66	26.54			12.29
	Urban	1980 Won/contested	0/10	0/1	–	12/12	0/5	–	–	0/84
		Votes polled( %)	22.59	3.37		50.62	5.98			17.45
1985	Rural	1985 Won/contested	1/5	1/23	0/20	12/70	53/64	–	–	3/249
		Votes polled( %)	1.58	4.84	2.62	35.96	42.40			12.61
	Semi-Urban	1985 Won/contested	3/10	0/13	0/7	11/35	20/31	–	–	1/188
		Votes polled( %)	7.14	3.82	1.11	39.12	37.33			11.47
	Urban	1985 Won/contested	2/11	0/2	0/1	9/12	0/5	–	–	1/111
		Votes polled( %)	19.47	4.07	0.18	45.67	12.03			18.57
1992	Rural	1992 Won/contested	1/31	3/15	1/13	51/70	2/36	1/21	9/63	2/81
		Votes polled( %)	10.98	4.76	3.23	41.74	6.05	3.04	19.47	10.73
	Semi-Urban	1992 Won/contested	3/23	0/4	0/4	27/34	1/19	0/11	0/33	4/51
		Votes polled( %)	18.20	1.89	2.29	42.97	5.97	1.46	16.41	10.79
	Urban	1992 Won/contested	2/12	1/1	–	9/12	0/3	0/5	0/9	0/28
		Votes polled( %)	29.95	4.16		52.49	0.65	0.93	6.10	5.73

Source: Election Commission Reports Punjab, 1980-92

The BJP has been traditionally seen as a party of urban Hindus. Around 95 per cent of its party activists were Hindus mostly involved in trade and business (50 per cent) followed by small businessmen (32 per cent) (tables 1.3 and 1.4).



An analysis of the Assembly election results between 1967 and 2017 shows that the BJP has its presence in urban and semi-urban constituencies (Map 1.2). Traditionally, the BJP has



opposed the Akali demands of a Punjabi Suba and Sikh homeland. However, in the post-terrorism phase, the changed stance of the BJP from backing a strong Centre to greater autonomy for states, their opposition to Operation Blue Star and the November 1984 riots increased their acceptability among the rural Jat peasantry. It was mainly political considerations rather than electoral arithmetic which nurtured the pre-election alliance. S. Prakash Singh Badal, President of the SAD, was of the view that the SAD's alliance with the BJP was historical and political, but not an opportunistic alliance.<sup>14</sup> Another senior leader of the SAD who was opposed to the alliance, considered it an electoral burden which was diluting the ideological base of the Akali Dal.<sup>15</sup> A quick glance at the data shows that the SAD has gained by the pre-election coalition, but the BJP has suffered major losses. The BJP's loss has been Congress' gain as both parties compete for the same support base. The selective regionalisation of the Indian National Congress has ensured its continuation as a major political party in the state. In other words, its continuation has been shaped by meshing its nation-building ideological thrust with the pragmatic responses of its regional leadership consisting of former Akalis and Hindu Maha Sabhites. This three-pronged dissonance, i.e., pronouncements of its national leaders, Sikh leaders, and Hindu leaders provides much-needed electoral sustenance but also contributes to the existing conflicts.<sup>16</sup>

Paradoxically, the Congress has to compete with a strong regional party, but within the boundaries defined by the

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Prakash Singh Badal, President Akali Dal, February 5, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Captain Kanwaljit Singh, senior Akali leader, December 7, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> To illustrate, the Sachar Formula was adopted by winning the support of the "Akali Congressmen" (who joined the Congress in 1948) and was opposed by the Arya Samajist Hindu Congressmen. The factional fight between the Bhim Sen Sachar group and the Gopi Chand Bhargava group kept conceding demands of the Akali or Hindu Congressmen. The national leadership seem to be distraught by this game. Sardar Patel reported having reprimanded the state leadership. "You do not seem to understand... the political and religious game behind it." Harish K. Puri. "Religion and Politics in Punjab" in Moin Shakir (ed.) *Religion, State and Politics in India*. (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989), p. 331.

national leadership. The only action which seems to have defied this norm has been the Punjab Agreement Repealing Act 2004 on the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) passed by the Punjab Assembly much to the annoyance of the national leadership of the Congress.<sup>17</sup> The main architect of this was the then Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, who happens to be a former Akali.<sup>18</sup> The action was mainly focused on wooing the rural Jat peasantry. Traditionally, the Congress's support base consists of a large majority of Hindu dalits with their 'uncertain religious allegiance', urban Hindu traders, Sikh khatri and migrant landless labourers. A small faction of the rural Jat peasantry also supports the Congress because of village-level factionalism, kinship ties, etc. An analysis of party activists shows that 67 per cent are Hindus. By occupation, the activists are businessmen (38 per cent), small shopkeepers (32 per cent), farmers (16 per cent) and unskilled workers (6 per cent) (table 1.3).

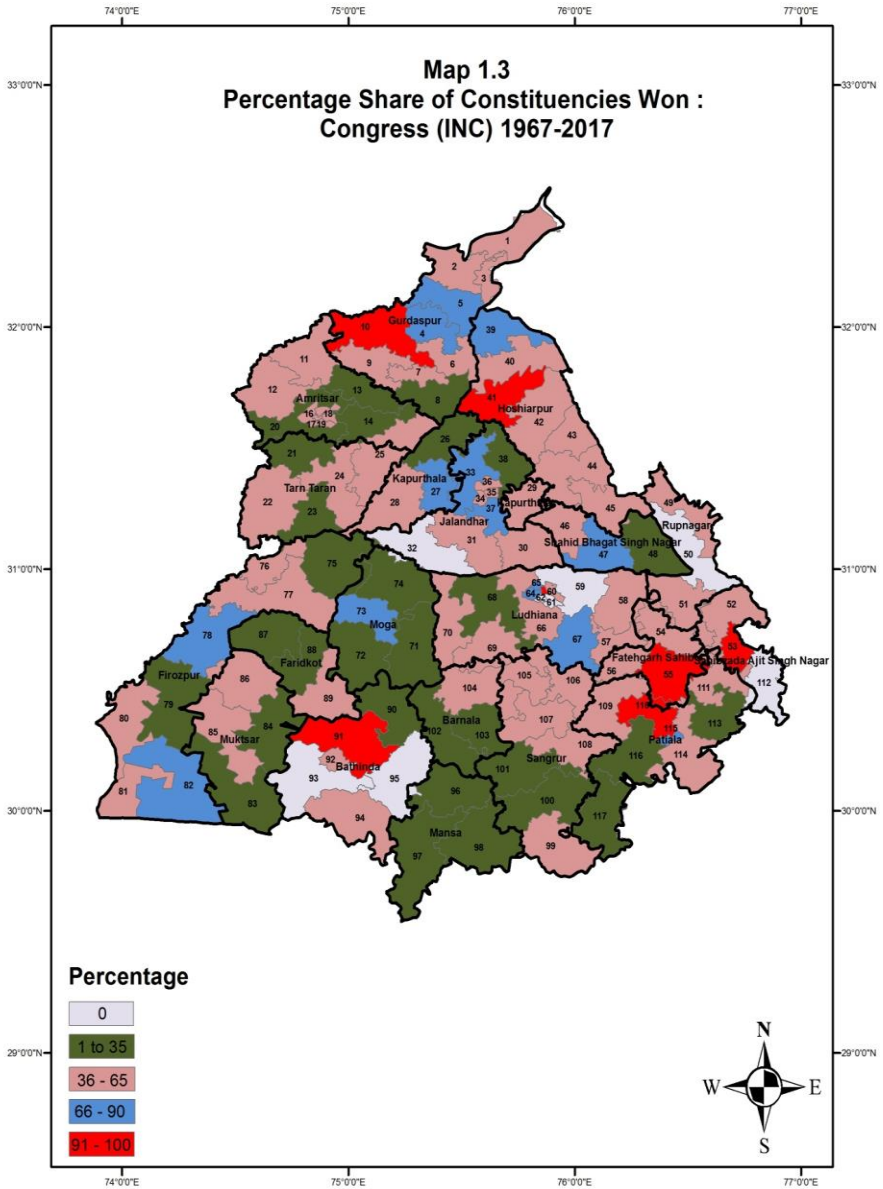
An analysis of the percentage of seats won from 1967 to 2017 shows that the Congress has a strong base in the urban constituencies and the dalit-dominated Doaba region of the state (Map 1.3). Further, the vote share analysis between 1997 and 2017 shows that the Congress secured a maximum of 49 per cent of the votes in the urban constituencies in 2017 and 39 per cent in the scheduled caste-dominated Doaba region in the 2002 elections (tables 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, and 1.10). However, Operation Blue Star and the brutal riots against the Sikhs in 1984 provided content to the anti-Sikh politics of the Congress<sup>19</sup>. Its alliance with the Communist Party in the 1990s was to overcome the accusation of being anti-Sikh and, therefore, communal.

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<sup>17</sup> "SC Orders Centre to Construct SYL Canal". *The Tribune*, June 4, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Stated in an interview by Amarinder Singh, Chief Minister of Punjab, 10 September 2004, "I have to protect the interests of Punjab farmers".

<sup>19</sup> Pramod Kumar. "Electoral Politics in Punjab: From Autonomy to Secession" in Paul Wallace and Ramashray Roy (eds.) *India's 1999 Elections and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Politics*. (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), 379.



**Table 1.8**  
**Region-wise Major Party and Year-wise Votes Polled, Constituencies Contested and Won**

		Year of Election	BJS/BJP	CPI	CPM	INC	SAD/ASD	JP/JD	BSP	Others
1967	Doaba	1967 Won/contested	2/8	/4	1/3	12/23	1/9	–	–	7/87
		Votes polled( %)	8.65	5.95	4.13	38.22	6.65			36.40
	Majha	1967 Won/contested	4/13	1/3	1/2	12/22	5/15	–	–	0/76
		Votes polled( %)	15.15	3.93	3.40	37.82	22.43			17.27
	Malwa	1967 Won/contested	3/28	4/12	1/8	24/57	18/35	–	–	8/197
		Votes polled( %)	8.16	5.42	2.86	36.99	25.19			21.38
1969	Doaba	1969 Won/contested	1/9	1/6	0/4	14/23	5/9	–	–	2/58
		Votes polled( %)	10.95	4.94	4.46	41.61	18.22			19.82
	Majha	1969 Won/contested	3/8	1/6	1/2	7/23	10/14	–	–	1/58
		Votes polled( %)	12.31	12.31	5.28	4.16	40.01			10.44
	Malwa	1969 Won/contested	4/13	2/16	1/4	17/57	28/42	–	–	6/119
		Votes polled( %)	6.90	6.90	4.61	2.08	37.89			14.11
1972	Doaba	1972 Won/contested	0/8	1/2	0/4	20/21	0/11	–	–	2/47
		Votes polled( %)	4.78	3.80	4.78	49.14	12.24			25.26
	Majha	1972 Won/contested	0/13	3/3	0/3	18/19	2/15	–	–	0/46
		Votes polled( %)	9.85	7.50	3.00	46.96	23.19			9.50
	Malwa	1972 Won/contested	0/12	6/8	1/10	28/49	22/46	–	–	1/151
		Votes polled( %)	3.22	7.12	2.80	39.03	34.85			12.97
1977	Doaba	1977 Won/contested	9/14	1/2	3/3	4/21	8/9	–	–	0/117
		Votes polled( %)	21.45	2.98	6.62	34.07	20.62			14.27
	Majha	1977 Won/contested	6/10	1/5	2/2	3/22	14/15	–	–	1/84
		Votes polled( %)	18.77	7.45	3.32	35.02	27.77			7.66
	Malwa	1977 Won/contested	10/17	5/11	3/3	10/53	36/46	–	–	1/248
		Votes polled( %)	11.06	7.59	2.42	32.83	36.90			9.20

Source: Election Commission Report, Punjab, 1967-77

**Table 1.9**  
**Region-wise Major Party and Year-wise Votes Polled, Constituencies Contested and Won**

			BJS/BJP	CPI	CPM	INC/ CONGRESS	SAD	JP/JD	BSP	Others
1980	Doaba	1980 Won/contested	0/13	1/2	1/4	16/25	6/11	–	–	1/90
		Votes polled( %)	6.44	3.52	6.43	45.09	20.83			17.69
	Majha	1980 Won/contested	0/11	2/3	1/3	15/27	9/18	–	–	0/98
		Votes polled( %)	9.76	5.17	3.49	46.13	27.16			8.29
	Malwa	1980 Won/contested	1/17	6/13	3/6	32/65	22/44	–	–	1/272
		Votes polled( %)	5.22	8.03	3.42	44.87	29.06			9.41
1985	Doaba	1985 Won/contested	2/6	0/6	0/8	10/25	11/16	–	–	2/119
		Votes polled( %)	4.64	2.46	2.47	41.25	27.28			21.89
	Majha	1985 Won/contested	2/8	0/7	0/7	10/27	14/21	–	–	1/109
		Votes polled( %)	9.23	4.56	1.78	39.25	35.07			10.12
	Malwa	1985 Won/contested	2/12	1/25	0/13	12/65	48/63	–	–	2/320
		Votes polled( %)	3.61	5.12	1.76	36.14	42.92			10.45
1992	Doaba	1992 Won/contested	0/17	0/5	0/5	19/25	0/8	0/13	6/23	0/45
		Votes polled( %)	13.04	2.14	3.54	42.35	1.80	2.85	25.18	9.11
	Majha	1992 Won/contested	2/16	2/3	0/3	21/27	1/10	0/6	0/21	1/24
		Votes polled( %)	26.39	4.25	1.60	51.93	2.52	2.57	5.60	5.15
	Malwa	1992 Won/contested	4/33	2/12	1/9	47/64	2/40	1/18	3/61	5/91
		Votes polled( %)	14.50	4.23	2.08	41.48	8.11	1.61	15.64	12.35

Source : Election Commission Report, Punjab, 1980-92

**Table 1.10**  
**Region-wise Major Party and Year-wise Votes Polled, Constituencies Contested and Won**

			BJS/BJP	CPI	CPM	INC/ CONGRESS	SAD	PPP	AAAP	LIP	JP/JD	BSP	Others
1997	Doaba	1997 Won/contested	5/8	0/1	0/4	5/25	13/16	–	–	–	0/9	1/22	1/66
		Votes polled( %)	14.77	0.20	1.65	26.67	28.60				0.50	16.98	10.61
	Majha	1997 Won/contested	7/8	0/3	0/8	0/24	18/18	–	–	–	0/6	0/13	2/69
		Votes polled( %)	14.10	2.45	2.22	28.03	37.32				0.31	2.61	12.95
	Malwa	1997 Won/contested	6/6	2/11	0/13	9/56	44/58	–	–	–	0/13	0/32	4/204
		Votes polled( %)	4.07	4.12	1.68	26.05	40.81				0.67	6.02	16.58
2002	Doaba	2002 Won/contested	2/8	0/1	0/4	16/24	7/15	–	–	–	–	0/25	0/138
		Votes polled( %)	10.36	0.33	0.81	39.02	23.34					13.91	12.22
	Majha	2002 Won/contested	0/8	0/2	0/3	17/24	7/19	–	–	–	–	0/18	3/105
		Votes polled( %)	9.00	1.21	0.17	37.58	31.80					1.48	18.75
	Malwa	2002 Won/contested	1/7	2/8	0/6	29/57	27/58	–	–	–	–	0/57	6/336
		Votes polled( %)	2.99	3.06	0.27	34.15	33.34					4.50	21.68
2007	Doaba	2007 Won/contested	7/8	0/1	0/5	4/25	13/17	–	–	–	–	0/25	1/125
		Votes polled( %)	15.96	0.04	0.63	38.30	30.71					8.48	5.87
	Majha	2007 Won/contested	7/8	0/7	0/2	3/27	17/19	–	–	–	–	0/27	0/120
		Votes polled( %)	12.75	1.03	0.12	40.12	36.70					1.87	7.40
	Malwa	2007 Won/contested	5/7	0/17	0/7	37/65	19/58	–	–	–	–	0/64	4/421
		Votes polled( %)	4.27	0.88	0.22	42.02	39.36					3.50	9.75
2012	Doaba	2012 Won/contested	5/7	0/0	0/2	6/23	11/16	0/21			–	0/23	1/106
		Votes polled( %)	13.01	0.00	0.29	37.07	28.29	3.99				12.08	5.28
	Majha	2012 Won/contested	5/8	0/5	0/3	9/25	11/17	0/16			–	0/25	0/103
		Votes polled( %)	12.58	0.79	0.22	41.20	34.64	1.24				1.12	8.21
	Malwa	2012 Won/contested	2/8	0/9	0/4	31/69	34/61	0/55			–	0/69	2/403
		Votes polled( %)	3.56	1.08	0.09	40.63	36.75	6.86				2.98	8.05
2017	Doaba	2017 Won/contested	1/7	0/2	0/5	15/23	5/16	–	2/23	0/1	–	0/22	0/116
		Votes polled( %)	9.34	0.07	0.21	36.99	21.47		23.61	0.01		5.09	3.20
	Majha	2017 Won/contested	1/8	0/6	0/2	22/25	2/17	–	0/25	0/0	–	0/24	0/145
		Votes polled( %)	9.49	0.37	0.05	46.35	25.63		13.80	0.00		0.55	3.76
	Malwa	2017 Won/contested	1/8	0/15	0/5	40/69	8/61	–	18/64	2/5	–	0/65	0/386
		Votes polled( %)	2.94	0.22	0.04	36.82	26.53		27.26	2.00		0.79	3.40

Source : Election Commission Report, Punjab, 1997-2017

**Table 1.11**  
**Caste-wise Party Preference, 1997 (per cent)**

Religion	Akali (B)	BJP
Sikhs	38.00	34.00
Hindu SC	12.00	10.00
Sikh SC	23.00	11.00
Hindus (general)	27.00	45.00

Source: IDC Sample Survey, 1997

The Congress Party's support base has kept changing in response to political developments in the state. In the initial years and till the mid-1960s, the rich and middle peasantry supported the Congress which under the leadership of Partap Singh Kairon initiated reforms in the rural areas.<sup>20</sup> Between 1967 and 1980, its support base shifted to urban Sikhs and Hindus, the scheduled castes and a small section of the Jat peasantry. In 1985, in the post-Operation Blue Star period, a section of urban Sikhs shifted to the Akali Dal.<sup>21</sup> However, in the 1992 elections held against the backdrop of pervasive terrorism most of the elected MLAs were from a rural background and were young. The change in leadership shaped politics from then on and brought about a qualitative shift in the agenda of the Congress Party.

In the 1997 elections, the urban and semi-urban vote bank of the Congress moved away from the party (Table 1.5), but its rural vote share increased from 26 per cent in 1997 to 39 per cent in the 2012 elections and 37 per cent in the 2017 elections. The alliance of the Congress with the Communist Party of India (CPI) was termed political rather than electoral. The CPI has influence among a section of small and marginal peasants, landless labourers in the districts of Faridkot, Sangrur, Bathinda and Ferozepur (southern districts of Punjab) and industrial workers in urban areas.

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<sup>20</sup> Harish K. Puri 1989. op.cit. p. 331

<sup>21</sup> M.S. Dhani. "Religio-Political Mobilisation and Shifts in the Party Support Base in the 1985 Punjab Assembly Elections" in Moin Shakir (ed.) *Religion, State and Politics in India*. (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989), 352.

CPI politics appropriated the pro-minority discourse in response to Hindu communal assertions and highlighted economic demands shorn of religious and communal content. It spearheaded tenant movements and water agitations in different areas of Punjab in the 1950s, and kept the discourse of social and economic justice alive in the state. It secured a maximum of 10 seats in the 1972 elections and entered into an alliance with parties opposed to the Congress, including the BJS, from 1967 to 1977. However, in the 1990s it formed a pre-election alliance with the Congress, which competed for the same support base as the BSP. The BSP used the dalits as political capital for the first time in 1992,<sup>22</sup> but the party has received a declining response in Punjab. For example, in 1992 it secured 16 per cent votes in Punjab, which declined to 6 per cent in 2002 and 4 per cent in the 2007 and 2012 and only 1 per cent in 2017 Assembly elections (Table 1.12). The ideological content of the BSP has been unable to thrive in the regional cultural and economic specificities of Punjab. The opposition to entrenched caste discrimination based on purity-pollution and *Manuvaad* that constitute the BSP's main ideological plank does not find expression in the socio-cultural terrain of Punjab. The 'uncertain religious allegiance' of the dalits made it easy for other political parties in the state to attract their support.<sup>23</sup> Both the Congress and the Akali Dal gave representation to dalits while distributing tickets. From 1967 to 2017, of the 349 scheduled caste MLAs, 39 per cent and 40 per cent were in the Congress and the Akali Dal, respectively. The share of dalits in the BJP was 5 per cent, in the BSP 2.5 per cent and in the

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<sup>22</sup> The BSP was founded in 1984 by Kanshi Ram. Chandra Kanchan. *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 145.

<sup>23</sup> Paul R. Brass on the basis of his study of the Punjab Assembly elections over the period 1952-72 argues: 'A thorough going polarization of Punjab politics has been prevented by the presence of a large Scheduled Caste population, of uncertain religious allegiance, to whom all parties must appeal. Second, the leading secular parties in Punjab, particularly Congress and the CPI, have successfully appealed to both Hindus and Sikhs in the past.' Paul R. Brass. "Ethnic Cleavages in the Punjab Party System, 1952-72" in Myron Weiner and J. Orgood Field (eds.) *Electoral Political in the Indian States: Party Systems and Cleavages*. (Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1975), p. 60.



communist parties [CPI and CPI(M)] 8 per cent (Table 1.13). It is worth noting that a substantial number of scheduled caste legislators are represented in the Akali Dal and Congress. For instance, in 1969, of a total of 25 scheduled caste MLAs, 44 per cent were in the Akali Dal and 40 per cent in the Congress. Similarly in 1977, 1985, 1997, 2007 and 2012 a majority of the scheduled caste legislators were elected as members of the Akali Dal. In 1967, 1972, 1980, 1992, 2002 and 2017 elections, too, a majority of the elected scheduled caste legislatures were in the Congress (Table 1.13). Interestingly, in 1997 and 2007 around 14 per cent of the elected scheduled caste members were from the BJP.

Table 1.12  
Election and Electoral Coalitions in Punjab 1967-2019

Year	Parliament				Assembly			
	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote
		No.		%		No.		%
1967	BJS	8	1	12.49	BJS	49	9	9.84
	ADM	7	0	4.42	ADM	61	2	4.2
	ADS	8	3	22.61	ADS	59	24	20.48
	CPI	3	0	4.28	CPM	13	3	3.26
	CPM	2	0	1.89	RPI	17	3	1.79
	INC	13	9	37.31	PSP	9	0	0.51
	Others	9	0	7.69	CPI	19	5	5.2
	IND	25	0	9.32	INC	102	48	37.45
				Others	18	1	1.22	
				IND	255	9	16.05	
1969					BJS	30	8	9.01
					SAD	65	43	29.36
					CPI	28	4	4.84
					CPM	10	2	3.07
					SSP	7	2	0.83
					SP	6	1	0.91
					INC	103	38	39.18
					Others	62	2	3.92
				IND	160	4	8.89	
1971	BJS	5	0	4.45				
	SAD	12	1	30.85				
	CPI	2	2	6.22				
	CPM	3	0	2.2				
	INC	11	10	45.96				
	Others	11	0	5.82				
	IND	39	0	4.5				
1972					BJS	33	0	4.97
					SAD	72	24	27.64
					CPM	17	1	3.26
					CPI	13	10	6.51
					INC	89	66	42.84
					Others	39	0	2.49
				IND	205	3	12.29	
1977	SAD	9	9	42.3	SAD	70	58	31.41
	CPI	3	0	1.65	JNP	41	25	14.99
	CPM	1	1	4.94	CPM	8	8	3.5
	INC	13	0	34.85	CPI	18	7	6.59
	Others	8	3	12.97	INC	96	17	33.59
	IND	45	0	3.29	Others	14	0	0.33
				IND	435	2	9.58	

*Electoral Politics in Punjab (1967 - 2019)*

Year	Parliament				Assembly			
	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote
		No.		%		No.		%
1980	JNP	9	0	9.97	BJP	41	1	6.48
	SAD	7	1	23.37	SAD	73	37	26.92
	CPI	1	0	1.27	CPI	18	9	6.46
	CPM	1	0	2.53	CPM	13	5	4.06
	INC (I)	13	12	52.45	INC	117	63	45.19
	BSP	1	0	0.07	Others	84	0	4.36
	Others	10	0	5.03	IND	376	2	6.52
	IND	105	0	5.31				
1985	BJP	3	0	3.39	BJP	26	6	4.99
	SAD	11	7	37.17	SAD	100	73	38.01
	CPI	3	0	3.84	CPI	38	1	4.44
	CPM	3	0	2.98	CPM	28	0	1.92
	INC	13	6	41.53	INC	117	32	37.86
	Others	2	0	2.24	Others	6	1	1.09
	IND	39	0	8.85	IND	542	4	11.69
1989	BJP	3	0	4.17				
	SAD (B)	9	0	5.38				
	SAD	4	0	1.27				
	SAD (M)	8	6	29.19				
	CPI	4	0	2.1				
	CPM	3	0	3.9				
	INC	13	2	26.49				
	BSP	12	1	8.62				
	JD	4	1	5.46				
	Others	28	0	0.71				
IND	139	3	12.72					
1992	BJP	9	0	16.51	BJP	66	6	16.48
	SAD	3	0	2.58	SAD	58	3	5.2
	CPI	1	0	1.57	CPI	20	4	3.64
	CPM	3	0	3.98	CPM	17	1	2.4
	INC	13	12	49.27	INC	116	87	43.83
	BSP	12	1	19.71	BSP	105	9	16.32
	JD	4	0	1.3	JD	37	1	2.15
	JP	1	0	0.93	Others	9	2	0.74
	Others	3	0	0.13	IND	151	4	9.24
IND	32	0	4.01					
1996	BJP	6	0	6.48				
	SAD (M)	7	0	3.85				
	SAD	9	8	28.72				
	BSP	4	3	9.35				
	CPI	3	0	1.6				
	CPM	3	0	2.68				
IND	13	2	35.1					

*Electoral Politics in Punjab*

Year	Parliament				Assembly			
	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote
		No.		%		No.		%
	JD	1	0	2.66				
	JP	1	0	0.03				
	Others	31	0	2.01				
	IND	181	0	7.51				
1997					BJP	22	18	8.33
					SAD	92	75	37.64
					CPM	25	0	1.79
					CPI	15	2	2.98
					INC	105	14	26.59
					BSP	67	1	7.48
					JD	27	0	0.56
					JP	1	0	0.01
					SAD (M)	30	1	3.1
					Others	65	0	0.65
				IND	244	6	10.87	
1998	BJP	3	3	11.67				
	SAD	8	8	32.93				
	JD	1	1	4.18				
	CPI	1		3.4				
	CPM	3		1.06				
	INC	8		25.85				
	BSP	4		12.65				
	SAD (M)	4		2.73				
	Others	21	0	0.64				
	IND	49	1	4.91				
1999	BJP	3	1	9.16				
	SAD	9	2	28.59				
	DBSM	1		2.71				
	SAD (M)	1	1	3.41				
	CPI	1	1	3.74				
	CPM	1		2.18				
	INC	11	8	38.44				
	BSP	3		3.84				
	JD(S)	2		0.03				
	JD(U)	2		0.1				
Others	29	0	5.34					
IND	57		2.45					
2002					BJP	23	3	5.67
					SAD	92	41	31.08
					DBSM	2	0	0.33
					SAD (M)	84	0	4.65
					CPM	13	0	0.36
				CPI	11	2	2.15	

*Electoral Politics in Punjab (1967 - 2019)*

Year	Parliament				Assembly			
	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote
		No.		%		No.		%
					INC	105	62	35.81
					BSP	100	0	5.69
					JD (S)	4	0	0.03
					JD (U)	2	0	0.01
					Others	213	0	2.94
					IND	274	9	11.27
2004	BJP	3	3	10.48				
	SAD	10	8	34.28				
	SAD (M)	6	0	3.79				
	CPI	1	0	2.55				
	CPM	1	0	1.81				
	INC	11	2	34.17				
	BSP	13	0	7.67				
	JD (S)	1	0	0.01				
	Others	26	0	2.5				
	IND	70	0	2.75				
2007					BJP	23	19	8.21
					SAD	94	49	37.19
					CPI	25	0	0.75
					CPM	14	0	0.28
					BSP	116	0	4.1
					INC	117	44	40.94
					SAD (M)	37	0	0.51
					Others	191	0	1.23
				IND	438	5	6.79	
2009	BJP	3	1	10.06				
	SAD	10	4	33.85				
	SAD (M)	3	0	0.36				
	CPI	2	0	0.33				
	CPM	1	0	0.14				
	INC	13	8	45.23				
	BSP	13	0	5.75				
	Others	59	0	1.94				
	IND	114	0	2.33				
2012					BJP	23	12	7.18
					SAD	94	56	34.73
					CPI	14		0.82
					CPM	9		0.16
					BSP	117		4.29
					INC	117	46	40.09
					PPOP	92		5.16
					Others	612	3	7.56

Year	Parliament				Assembly			
	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote	Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote
		No.		%		No.		%
2014	BJP	3	2	8.77				
	SAD	10	4	26.37				
	CPI	5		0.4				
	CPM	3		0.13				
	INC	13	3	33.19				
	BSP	13		1.91				
	AAAP	13	4	24.47				
	OTHERS	75	0	1.15				
	IND	118	0	3.61				
2017					BJP	23	3	5.43
					CPI	23	0	0.22
					CPM	12	0	0.07
					INC	117	77	38.77
					SAD	94	15	25.42
					AAAP	112	20	23.88
					LIP	6	2	1.23
					BSP	111	0	1.53
				Others	647	0	3.43	
2019	BJP	3	2	9.74				
	SAD	10	2	27.76				
	INC	13	8	40.58				
	AAAP	13	1	7.46				
	CPI	2	0	0.31				
	CPM	1	0	0.08				
	BSP	3	0	3.53				
	OTHERS	233	0	10.54				

Source: Election Commission Reports 1967-2019

To sum up, in Punjab the inter-party relationships can be contextualised along three axes. The muted identity assertions are signposts within which religious minorities and castes along with their demographic positioning shape intra- and inter-party interactions. This has also led to the defining of the regional space giving rise to a strong regional party. Regional interests became a filter for the national parties in the context of political competition and found an escape route in mergers, i.e., the Indian National Congress and the Akali Dal. The national and regional parties in competition for social segments having a bearing on electoral arithmetic resorted to post-election coalitions or pre-election alliances, i.e., the BJP and the SAD.

Table 1.13  
Caste, Year and Party-Wise Distribution of MLAs, 1967-2017 (number and %)

	BJP				CPI				CPM				INC				SAD			
	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT
1967			9		2	1	1	1				3	12	5	11	20	6			18
			8.65		1.92	0.96	0.96	0.96				2.88	11.54	4.81	10.58	19.23	5.77			17.31
			100.00		40.00	20.00	20.00	20.00				100.00	25.00	10.42	22.92	41.67	25.00			75.00
1969	1		6	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	10	5	8	15	11	3	2	27
	0.96		5.77	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96			0.96	9.62	4.81	7.69	14.42	10.58	2.88	1.92	25.96
	12.50		75.00	12.50	25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00	50.00			50.00	26.32	13.16	21.05	39.47	25.58	6.98	4.65	62.79
1972					2	1	2	5	1				14	7	19	26	6			18
					1.92	0.96	1.92	4.81	0.96				13.46	6.73	18.27	25.00	5.77			17.31
					20.00	10.00	20.00	50.00	100.00				21.21	10.61	28.79	39.39	25.00			75.00
1977	4	3	16	2	4	1	1	1	5			3	3	3	6	5	15	2	2	39
	3.42	2.56	13.68	1.71	3.42	0.85	0.85	0.85	4.27			2.56	2.56	2.56	5.13	4.27	12.82	1.71	1.71	33.33
	16.00	12.00	64.00	8.00	57.14	14.29	14.29	14.29	62.50			37.50	17.65	17.65	35.29	29.41	25.86	3.45	3.45	67.24
1980		1			4	1	1	3	3			2	13	8	23	19	9	3		25
		0.85			3.42	0.85	0.85	2.56	2.56			1.71	11.11	6.84	19.66	16.24	7.69	2.56		21.37
		100.00			44.44	11.11	11.11	33.33	60.00			40.00	20.63	12.70	36.51	30.16	24.32	8.11		67.57
1985	1		5		1							10	2	15	5	18	4	3		48
	0.85		4.27		0.85							8.55	1.71	12.82	4.27	15.38	3.42	2.56		41.03
	16.67		83.33		100.00							31.25	6.25	46.88	15.63	24.66	5.48	4.11		65.75
1992			6		1	1	1	1		1		20	9	22	36	1				2
			5.13		0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85		0.85		17.09	7.69	18.80	30.77	0.85				1.71
			100.00		25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00		100.00		22.99	10.34	25.29	41.38	33.33				66.67
1997	4	2	12		1	1						1		4	9	23	7	4		41
	3.42	1.71	10.26		0.85	0.85						0.85		3.42	7.69	19.66	5.98	3.42		35.04
	22.22	11.11	66.67		50.00	50.00						7.14		28.57	64.29	30.67	9.33	5.33		54.67
2002		1	2		2							14	5	21	22	12	4			25
		0.85	1.71		1.71							11.97	4.27	17.95	18.80	10.26	3.42			21.37
		33.33	66.67		100.00							22.58	8.06	33.87	35.48	29.27	9.76			60.98
2007	4	1	13	1								7	2	11	24	16	6	2		25
	3.42	0.85	11.11	0.85								5.98	1.71	9.40	20.51	13.68	5.13	1.71		21.37
	21.05	5.26	68.42	5.26								15.91	4.55	25.00	54.55	32.65	12.24	4.08		51.02
2012	3		7	2								10	3	12	21	21	3	7		25
	2.56		5.98	1.71								8.55	2.56	10.26	17.95	17.95	2.56	5.98		21.37
	25.00		58.33	16.67								21.74	6.52	26.09	45.65	37.50	5.36	12.50		44.64
2017	1		2									22	5	26	24	3				1
	0.85		1.71									18.80	4.27	22.22	20.51	2.56				0.85
	33.33		66.67									28.57	6.49	33.77	31.17	20.00				6.67
TOTAL	18	8	78	6	17	8	7	12	10	1		9	136	54	178	226	141	32	21	304
	1.32	0.59	5.71	0.44	1.25	0.59	0.51	0.88	0.73	0.07		0.66	9.96	3.96	13.04	16.56	10.33	2.34	1.54	22.27
	16.36	7.27	70.91	5.45	38.64	18.18	15.91	27.27	50.00	5.00		45.00	22.90	9.09	29.97	38.05	28.31	6.43	4.22	61.04

Contd..

Electoral Politics in Punjab

	BSP				AAP				OTHER				ALL PARTY				TOTAL	
	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT	SC	OBC	OTHER	JAT		
1967									3	2	5	5	23	8	26	47	104	
									2.88	1.92	4.81	4.81	22.12	7.69	25.00	45.19	100.00	
									20.00	13.33	33.33	33.33	22.12	7.69	25.00	45.19		
1969									1	2	1	5	25	11	18	50	104	
									0.96	1.92	0.96	4.81	24.04	10.58	17.31	48.08	100.00	
									11.11	22.22	11.11	55.56	24.04	10.58	17.31	48.08		
1972										1		2	23	9	21	51	104	
										0.96		1.92	22.12	8.65	20.19	49.04	100.00	
										33.33		66.67	22.12	8.65	20.19	49.04		
1977												2	31	9	25	52	117	
												1.71	26.50	7.69	21.37	44.44	100.00	
												100.00	26.50	7.69	21.37	44.44		
1980												1	29	14	24	50	117	
										0.85	0.85	24.79	11.97	20.51	42.74	100.00		
										50.00		50.00	24.79	11.97	20.51	42.74		
1985												2	2	1	29	9	54	117
										1.71	1.71	0.85	24.79	7.69	21.37	46.15	100.00	
										40.00	40.00	20.00	24.79	7.69	21.37	46.15		
1992	8	1							2		3	2	32	12	32	41	117	
	6.84	0.85							1.71		2.56	1.71	27.35	10.26	27.35	35.04	100.00	
	88.89	11.11							28.57		42.86	28.57	27.35	10.26	27.35	35.04		
1997	1									1	1	5	30	11	21	55	117	
	0.85									0.85	0.85	4.27	25.64	9.40	17.95	47.01	100.00	
	100.00									14.29	14.29	71.43	25.64	9.40	17.95	47.01		
2002									1	1	1	6	29	11	24	53	117	
									0.85	0.85	0.85	5.13	24.79	9.40	20.51	45.30	100.00	
									11.11	11.11	11.11	66.67	24.79	9.40	20.51	45.30		
2007									2	2		1	29	11	26	51	117	
									1.71	1.71		0.85	24.79	9.40	22.22	43.59	100.00	
									40.00	40.00		20.00	24.79	9.40	22.22	43.59		
2012												1	34	7	26	50	117	
										0.85	1.71	29.06	5.98	22.22	42.74	100.00		
										33.33	66.67	29.06	5.98	22.22	42.74			
2017					9		7	4				2	35	5	36	41	117	
					7.69		5.98	3.42				1.71	29.91	4.27	30.77	35.04	100.00	
					45.00		35.00	20.00				100.00	29.91	4.27	30.77	35.04		
TOTAL	9	1			9		7	4	9	13	13	34	349	117	304	595	1365	
	0.66	0.07			0.66		0.51	0.29	0.66	0.95	0.95	2.49	25.57	8.57	22.27	43.59	100.00	
	90.00	10.00			45.00		35.00	20.00	13.04	18.84	18.84	49.28	25.57	8.57	22.27	43.59		

Source: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Compendium of Who's Who of Members (1960-2002), Chandigarh: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Secretariat, 2003; Election Commission Reports, Punjab (1967-2017)

Note: Parenthesis figures pertain to percentage of representation of MLAs from party total



## **COALITION POLITICS: ELECTORAL OVERVIEW**

Coalition politics in Punjab follows a history of electoral alliances ranging from mergers in the post-partition phase to the more recent pre-election alliances. The electoral coalitions can be mapped in four distinct phases: the politics of mergers, 1947 to 1966; the reorganisation of Punjab, 1966 to 1980; from autonomy to secession, 1980 to 1992; and resurgence of democracy and a composite Punjabi identity, post-1992. Politics in post-Independence India and partitioned Punjab was shaped by issues related to identity politics and competition for political power. The questions of separate religious identity, linguistic identity, communal and sectarian mobilisation, and secular class-mobility factors, remained dominant in the political discourse.

In the first phase between 1947 and 1966, the two main competing political parties merged, whereas parties representing sectional interests resorted to agitational politics. The Indian National Congress and SAD merged in 1948 and again in 1956. The merger was guided by the politics of accommodation by the dominant party and shifting the arena of political activity from popular movements to elite manoeuvring. The parties that merged soon de-merged, but a majority of the leaders active in legislative politics continued to function in the Congress as was the case in the pre-Independence phase. The politics of merger reduced the Akali vote share from 15 per cent in 1952 to 12 per cent in 1962.<sup>24</sup> The CPI continued to agitate for the economic interests of the peasants and landless labourers, while the Bharatiya Jana Sangh continued to agitate for the interests of urban Hindus. The support base of the Jana Sangh increased from 5 per cent in 1952 to 9 per cent in 1962, while that of the CPI increased to about 10 per cent in the Punjabi-speaking rural areas. The overall increase for the CPI in

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<sup>24</sup> Pramod Kumar et.al. 1984. op.cit. p. 45.

the then Punjab was from 5 per cent in 1952 to 7 per cent in 1962.

The second phase (1966-80) marked the end of one-party dominance in Punjab. Re-organisation of the state in 1966, the introduction of the Green Revolution strategy and the demographic transformation to a Sikh majority state initiated a new process of political alliances and economic differentiation. Political discourse revolved around restructuring of Centre-state relations and anti-Congressism.

In this phase, four coalition governments were formed and each of them was a post-election coalition. The first post-election coalition was formed after the fourth general election in 1967 under the Chief Ministership of Gurnam Singh consisting of an ideologically diverse united front of parties opposed to the Congress. This minority coalition lasted only for eight months and fell after the defection of 17 SAD members of the Legislative Assembly (Graph 1.4). The main opposition party, the Congress, gave outside support to the Akali breakaway group and a minority government under the Chief Ministership of Lachman Singh Gill was formed on November 25, 1967. The Congress withdrew support after nine months.

The third coalition was formed after the mid-term elections in February 1969, in which the Akali Dal and Jana Sangh were the main partners. The minority coalition government was headed by S. Gurnam Singh. The Jana Sangh withdrew support after 13 months when differences arose among the coalition partners over issues like language, Centre-state relations and the status of Chandigarh.

The fourth minority coalition government came into being after the removal of S. Gurnam Singh as Chief Minister. S. Prakash Singh Badal was sworn in as the Chief Minister on March 27, 1970, with a new agenda for the coalition government. The Jana Sangh withdrew from the coalition in June 1970, on the

question of the jurisdiction of Guru Nanak Dev University, however, the main differences were on issues relating to the transfer of some of the Punjabi-speaking areas to Punjab. This minority coalition lasted for 15 months. The post-election coalitions were formed either to keep a political formation out of power or to put together a convenient power-sharing arrangement. These coalitions were unstable marriages of convenience between political parties.

The third phase (1980-92) in Punjab politics brought about a qualitative shift in the mechanics of government formation. The political discourse moved away from autonomy to secession on a communal basis. Competitive electoral and moderate politics suffered a severe set-back and violence became the dominant mode of articulation of grievances. Popularly elected governments were dismissed and elections were postponed. Elections were held to legitimise non-democratic and communal politics in 1985, 1989 and 1992. An important lesson learnt was that democracy was the only antidote to terrorism.<sup>25</sup> The revival of the democratic process witnessed a major shift in the political agenda.

The fourth phase (since 1992) witnessed a major shift in the political agenda of the parties. The Akali Dal shifted its stance from Sikh identity to Punjabi identity, from the human rights of 'Khalistan' activists to peace at any cost, and from state autonomy to co-operative federalism. Similarly, the BJP moved from a strong Centre to greater autonomy for states. The Congress apologised for Operation Blue Star and the brutal riots of 1984. In view of these shifts and lessons learnt from the decade of terrorism, the political parties entered into pre-election alliances.<sup>26</sup> In the 1997 Assembly elections, both the Akali Dal and BJP on the one hand and the Congress and CPI on

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<sup>25</sup> Pramod Kumar. 'Need for Reposing Faith in People'. *The Tribune*, May 13, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> In the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, the Akali Dal entered into a pre-election alliance with the BSP and seat adjustment with the BJP. The alliance adversely affected the Congress Party's performance and resulted in an erosion of its support base among the Scheduled Castes. (Of the 13 parliamentary seats, the SAD won 8 and the BSP 3).

the other formed pre-election coalitions. It was an oversized coalition of the Akali Dal and BJP (in which the former had a majority on its own) which emerged victorious and it completed its full term.<sup>27</sup>

The Akali Dal-BJP alliance performed better because it provided the Akali Dal with the much-needed political space at the national level to shed its anti-national image, and gave the BJP a political plank to counter the Congress and Left propaganda that its politics was anti-minority. The political parties, having recovered from the terrorism phase, started carving out their own autonomous space. The SAD's pre-Blue Star politics of emphasising Sikh identity coupled with anti-incumbency led to a massive defeat of the coalition in the 1999 election.<sup>28</sup>

In the 2002 elections, pre-election alliances (similar to those in 1997) were formed between the Akali Dal and BJP on the one hand and the Congress and CPI on the other. The Congress formed the government with outside support from the CPI. It was a single-party majority government, but the merger of the two-member legislative wing of the CPI into the Congress created fissures in the alliance between the two parties. Consequently, in the 2007 Assembly elections the Congress and CPI did not enter into a pre-election alliance. However, the SAD and BJP entered into a pre-election coalition and formed a minimal winning coalition government.

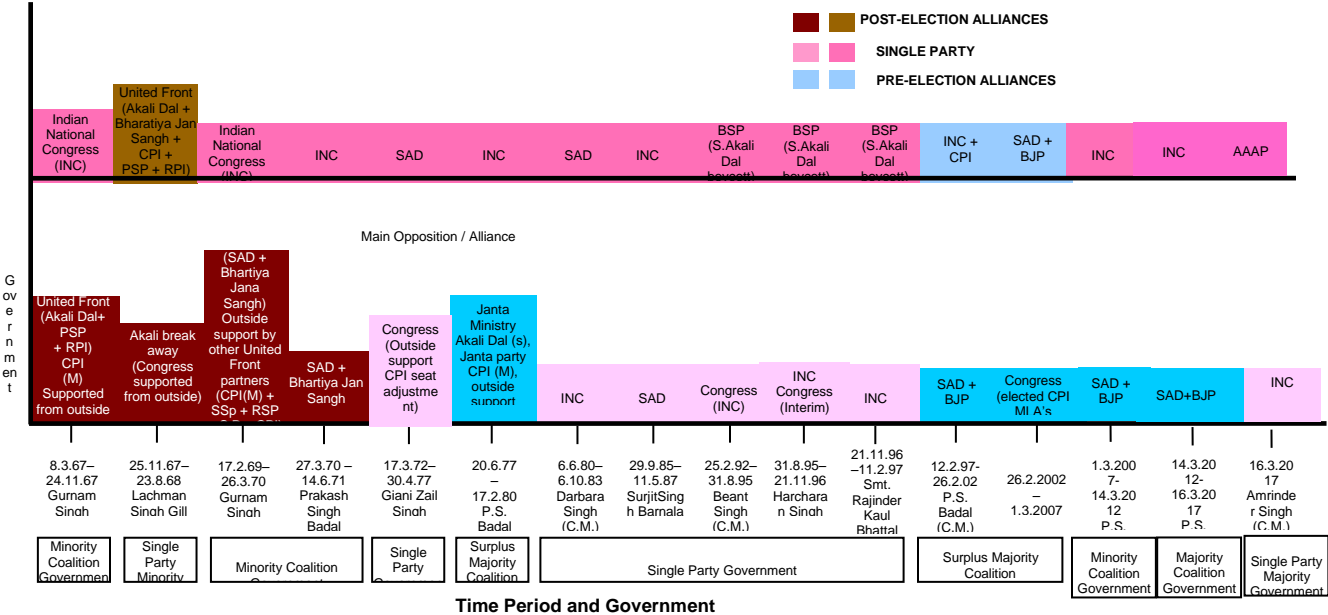
In the section that follows, we analyse the dynamics of these mergers, post-election coalitions and pre-election alliances.

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<sup>27</sup> That the SAD and the BJP formed the ministry together irrespective of the fact that the SAD was in majority shows that the alliance was based on mutual understanding and to advantage Punjab. (Interview with Sukhbir Singh Badal, SAD Member of Parliament, January 2006.) In the 1998 parliamentary elections, the Akali Dal entered into an alliance with the BJP. The SAD won the largest number of seats, i.e. 8, and polled 33 per cent of the votes; the BJP won 3 seats and polled 12 per cent of the votes. The Congress, BSP, and the communists entered into a pre-election alliance and could not win a single seat.

<sup>28</sup> In the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, the pre-election SAD-BJP alliance failed miserably with the Congress-CPI alliance winning 9 seats.

**Chart 1.1**  
**Post-Election Alliances, Single Party and Pre-Election Alliances**



## **POLITICS OF MERGER: 1947 to 1966**

In the first phase, from 1947 to the 1966, one-party dominance blocked the assertion of regional interests as anti-national. The aura of the national freedom movement led to the Congress Party hegemony of the entire political spectrum. The politics of co-optation of regional interests was practised by the Congress to maintain its hold on power. It encouraged the Akali Dal to merge with it first in 1948 and then in 1956. The partition of Punjab necessitated consensus-based political governance, and the Akali Dal legislative wing elected in 1946 was invited to merge with the Congress.

The Akali Dal contested the 1946 elections in opposition to the Congress. In the 175-member Punjab Assembly, the Akali Dal won 22 of the 32 seats reserved for Sikhs, the Congress won 51 seats including 10 reserved for Sikhs; the Unionist Party won 20 seats including 15 reserved for Muslims; Independent Christians won 1; Independent Labour 2; Independent Dalits 1; Anglo-Indians 2; and the Muslim League won 75 seats (Brass, 1974: 358).<sup>29</sup>

A coalition ministry was formed under the leadership of Sir Khizr Hayat Khan, consisting of the Unionist Party, Congress and Akali Dal. However, the ministry submitted its resignation on 3 March, 1947 and Governor's Rule was promulgated in the state. After Independence, the Congress, Akali representatives and six Independent MLAs formed the ministry under the leadership of Gopi Chand Bhargava. The SAD passed a resolution on 22 April 1949 withdrawing from the Congress Government after the Constituent Assembly turned down safeguards for the Sikhs<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Gur Rattanpal Singh. *The Illustrated History of the Sikhs*. (Chandigarh: Akal Printmatics, 1979), 84

Paul Brass. 1974. op.cit. p 358.

<sup>30</sup> The Sikh members of the Assembly prepared a charter of demands in November 1948 which was not accepted. The demands were:

1. Representation for Sikhs on the basis of the 1941 Census, without excluding Sikhs who had migrated to other provinces.
2. Sikhs should be given 5 per cent representation in the Central cabinet.

Master Tara Singh made a statement on October 19, 1949, that 'every minority except the Sikhs had been given justice. The Muslims demanded Pakistan and they got it.'<sup>31</sup> The SAD adopted a resolution and directed its MLAs to leave the Congress on 20 July, 1950. Interestingly, only one MLA resigned from the Congress Legislative Party. The Akali Dal fought the 1952 general elections on the demand for a Punjabi Suba with an emphasis on the creation of a Punjabi-speaking province.<sup>32</sup> During this period in Punjab the issue of states' reorganisation on a linguistic basis acquired communal overtones. Though the Akali leaders emphasised language as the basis for the division of the state, at the popular plane they tended to mix religion with language.<sup>33</sup>

The indoctrination that the Sikhs were a single political entity with common secular interests provided continuity to the pre-partition politics of the Akali Dal. The growing strength of Master Tara Singh among the various occupational groups created the fear that the movement for a separate independent Sikh state might become stronger. To counter the demand for a

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3. Sikhs should have one minister and one deputy minister in the Central cabinet.
  4. The post of Governor and premier of the province should alternatively go to a Hindu and a Sikh.
  5. Sikhs should have 50 per cent representation in the provincial cabinet.
  6. Gurgaon district and Loharu state should be separated from east Punjab.
  7. 40 per cent of the services should be reserved for Sikhs.
  8. If the above demands were rejected the Sikhs should be allowed to form a new province of 7 districts, i.e., Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ambala.

Ajit Singh Sarhadi. 1970. op.cit. p. 167

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 190.

<sup>32</sup> "The SAD is in favour of the formation of provinces on a linguistic and cultural basis throughout India, but holds it as a question of life and death for the Sikhs that a new Punjab be created immediately." Ajit Singh Sarhadi. 1970. op.cit. p. 221.

<sup>33</sup> The SGPC which was under the control of 'nationalist Sikhs' was captured by the Akalis. In 1955, the Akali Dal won 112 seats and the Khalsa Dal supported by the Congress won only 3 of the 132 contested seats. This convinced the Congress of the growing strength of the Akalis, and in December 1953 the Government of India appointed the State Reorganisation Commission. In 1954, the Akalis launched a vigorous agitation for a Punjabi Suba. They launched processions in Ludhiana (on the eve of Guru Gobind Singh's birthday) and in Amritsar (the Hola Mohalla procession) on December 1954 and March 1955, respectively.

Punjabi Suba raised by the Akali Dal led by Master Tara Singh, an agitation for Hindi was launched, which advocated a 'Maha Punjab' irrespective of language. Communal overtones in this were explicitly visible, though there was not much tension between the two communal groups. The increasing strength of the Akali Dal alarmed the Congress leadership.

In 1956 an understanding was reached between the ruling Congress Party and the Akali Dal, after which several of the Akali Dal stalwarts joined the Congress.<sup>34</sup> The Akalis accepted the regional plan at their meeting on 30 September 1956. The new state was to be divided into the so-called Punjabi-speaking and Hindi-speaking regions and two regional committees consisting of the members of the legislature belonging to the respective regions were to be constituted.

The Akalis did not contest the second general election held in 1957. But due to internal compulsions and dissensions among them, the understanding they had with the Congress did not last long. The Akali Dal decided to take part in politics on its own and asked its members in the Congress to return to their parent organisation. Of the 28 Akali MLAs who had joined the Congress, only 7 returned to the Akali fold.<sup>35</sup> It is relevant to note that most of the Akalis who joined the Congress in 1937, 1948 and 1956 did not return to the Akali fold. Prominent among them were Pratap Singh Kairon (later Chief Minister of the Congress government), Gurmukh Singh Musafir (later

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<sup>34</sup> The State Reorganisation Commission recommended the merger of Punjab, PEPSU and Himachal Pradesh. PEPSU was merged with Punjab in 1956. The new state was divided into the so-called Punjabi-speaking and Hindi-speaking regions, and two regional committees consisting of the members of the legislature belonging to the respective regions, were set up. In October 1956, a convention was held at Amritsar attended by the members of the Akali Dal Working Committee, the Akali MLAs from Punjab and PEPSU, the Jathedars and other prominent leaders. It formally resolved to amend the Constitution of the Akali Dal to continue its activities towards the religious, educational and economic welfare of the Sikhs. (Interview with Captain Kanwaljit Singh, General Secretary, SAD on December 7, 2005.)

<sup>35</sup> Baldev Raj Nayar. *Minority Politics in the Punjab*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 125.



President of the Congress Party), S. Swaran Singh (later India's foreign minister in the Congress government), and Baldev Singh (later India's defence minister). It is interesting that most of the 'Sikh' leaders in the Congress have had a stint in the Akali Dal.<sup>36</sup> The success of the Akalis in the SGPC elections encouraged them to launch agitations for a Punjabi Suba in 1959 and 1961.<sup>37</sup>

The failure of the 1961 morcha discredited Master Tara Singh's leadership. The 1962 general election was projected by the Congress as a referendum on the Punjabi Suba issue, a challenge which was accepted by the Akali Dal. The latter's defeat in the general election demoralised its leadership; they won only 19 of the 154 seats and lost even in the Punjabi-speaking areas. Master Tara Singh was held responsible for this defeat and was accused of sacrilege because he had broken his fast unto death.

The data indicate that the Akali Dal lost considerable electoral support in the 1962 elections. The erosion in their support base led to renewed attempts to accelerate the process of communalisation, and they again raised the demand for a Punjabi Suba. The political demography of Punjab was not considered favourable by the Akali Dal in its bid to capture political power in the state; hence the demand for a Punjabi Suba.

The split in the Akali Dal in 1962 facilitated the concentration of power in the hands of those speaking for the rural Jat peasantry in the organisation. In January 1965, the Sant Akali Dal won 95 of the 138 seats in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) elections, delivering a crushing defeat to the Master Akali Dal. It also increased its share of political power.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* p. 129.

<sup>37</sup> In January 1960, elections to the SGPC were held. Giani Kartar Singh opposed Master Tara Singh but failed miserably as he could win only 4 seats against 132 seats of the Akali Dal out of a total of 140 seats.

<sup>38</sup> In the 1950s when Master Tara Singh (a khatri himself) was president of the SGPC, the non-Jat Sikhs controlled 54.6 per cent of the key positions. Now, the SGPC came under

This coincided with the reorganisation of the state on a linguistic basis in September 1966 and the initiation of the Green Revolution. This was the beginning of coalition politics with anti-Congressism as its main plank.

### **THE REORGANISATION OF PUNJAB: 1967 TO 1980**

In the period 1967 to 1980, the Fourth and Fifth State Assemblies of Punjab witnessed three coalitions and one minority government. The three coalition governments were formed by the Akalis with the support of its main coalition partner, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The single-party minority government was that of a breakaway group of the Akalis supported by the Congress.

This phase is characterised by the establishment of a Sikh majority with the reorganisation of Punjab on the basis of language. The numerical dominance of the Sikhs as a single political entity was now unchallenged, and the electoral dominance of the Congress receded. The other factor that had an overarching impact on state politics during this period was the initiation of the Green Revolution agricultural development strategy. The Green Revolution strategy empowered the Sikh Jat peasantry, but led to differentiations between the peasantry and the trading classes. This phase then witnessed a shift in political discourse from political deprivation of the 'minorities' to economic discrimination. Therefore, while the demand for a separate Sikh state could not find expression, greater state autonomy became an issue for emerging agrarian interests. This issue was, however, raised by the Akalis in 1973 and acquired the character of a movement in 1978.

The first coalition was formed after the fourth general election in 1967. In this election, the Congress won 48 seats in the 104-member state legislative assembly. The Akali Dal (Sant Fateh

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the control of the Jat Sikhs whereby the influence of non-Jat Sikhs diminished drastically.

Singh) secured 24 seats, the Jana Sangh 9, the CPI 5, the CPI(M) 3, the Republican Party 3, and the Akali Dal (Master Tara Singh) 2 (Table 1.12). A united front of all the parties was formed with S. Gurnam Singh as their leader. A minority coalition government was formed with a combination of divergent ideological groups with the sole purpose of keeping the Congress out. A common programme was adopted at Khanna which read:

“Whereas we stand for amity and goodwill among all sections of Punjabis irrespective of caste or creed, and promise to take steps to strengthen the new state of Punjab economically and politically, we resolve to oppose all separatist trends and moves aimed at weakening the unity and integrity of the country.”<sup>39</sup>

A common minimum programme was evolved to provide stability to the government. Similarly, ministry formation was guided by the principle of giving adequate representation to coalition partners.<sup>40</sup>

The election results mirrored the support bases of the political parties and an effort was made to reflect these in government formation. For instance, the Akali Dal won the highest number of seats, 18 of the 24 seats and polled the highest share of votes, 25 per cent, from the Malwa region, compared to 7 per cent and 22 per cent from Doaba and Majha, respectively (Table 1.8). The Jana Sangh reflected its strong urban hold by securing 40 per cent of the votes polled from the urban seats contested, with a negligible count of 3 per cent from the rural constituencies and only 12 per cent in the semi-urban constituencies of Punjab (Table 1.6). The CPI made its mark in its pocket borough. The support base of the coalition partners is further reflected in the MLAs’ backgrounds in terms of caste,

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<sup>39</sup> “Sangh-Akali Bid to Form Government: Complete Accord Reached”. *The Tribune* (Ambala), March 2, 1967.

<sup>40</sup> S. Gurnam Singh’s speech in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha on 26 March 1970. The Chief Minister emphasised that he had made every effort to accommodate the coalition partner.

occupation, religion and formation of ministry. Around 67 per cent of the Akali Dal MLAs were from an agricultural background and 75 per cent belonged to the rural Jat community (Table 1.13); dalits including Mazhabis and Ramdasias constituted 25 per cent, while the representation of the urban Sikh trading community was a mere 4 per cent.

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the post-coalition partner of the SAD, had more legislators from trading and industrial backgrounds; more than 56 per cent of its legislators belonged to the urban khatri caste and 22 per cent were from the urban bania castes. This is a reflection of its support base among the urban Hindus. The CPI had more legislators from an agricultural background but belonging to the mazhabi Sikh and rai Sikh castes. The Congress had 42 per cent of its MLAs from the rural Jat peasantry, with twice the number of legislators from the scheduled castes compared to the Akali Dal (Table 1.13). The representation of urban khatri traders in the Congress was competing with the Jana Sangh. The coalition represented a demarcated electoral support base in the allocation of ministerial berths. The negotiations between the SAD and Jana Sangh responded to the leadership considerations of S. Gurnam Singh and consequently the Jana Sangh got the best deal in Cabinet formation.<sup>41</sup> With two ministers, it had charge of the ministries of finance, industry, excise and taxation, local bodies and health. However, this coalition proved unstable and could last only eight months.

According to Akali activists the concentration of power in the Jana Sangh ministry led to discontent among the Akali legislators. The Congress saw an opportunity and assured support to the disgruntled Akalis if they defected and formed their own ministry.<sup>42</sup> In November 1967, a breakaway Akali

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<sup>41</sup> "In 1967 the Jana Sangh had two ministers but held all the relevant portfolios like finance, industry, health, excise and taxation, local bodies, etc." (Interviews with Balramji Das Tandon, senior BJP leader, October to December 2005.)

<sup>42</sup> The Chief Minister preferred Jana Sangh ministers to the Akali ministers and was not partial to the Akali Jathedars. This created resentment among the senior Akali ministers and Akali Jathedars who were not prepared to tolerate it for long. The Congress

group led by Lachhman Singh Gill formed a single-party minority government with outside support from the Congress. The United Front with the Akali Dal, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, CPI, PSP and RPI formed the opposition. This government was also shortlived and survived only nine months with the Congress withdrawing support.

The fifth state Assembly witnessed the second post-election coalition led by the Akali Dal with Gurnam Singh as Chief Minister. The main alliance partner was the Bharatiya Jana Sangh with outside support from the other United Front partners — the CPI (M), SSP, RSP, SP and CPI. The Akali-Jana Sangh alliance forged an agreement on the language question.<sup>43</sup> Technically, this coalition was a minority coalition since the Akali Dal and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) had 51 of the 52 seats required to form the government, with outside support from the Left parties. The seat distribution in the government was: 43 with SAD, 8 with the BJS, 4 with CPI, 2 with CPI (M) and 38 with Congress. The percentage of votes obtained by the SAD in Punjab was 29.36; this is perhaps the only time semi-urban voters eclipsed the vote share of the rural constituencies when they drew 33 per cent of the votes compared with 31 per cent of the rural vote. The vote share of the Jana Sangh as a subsidiary partner was 9 per cent (Table 1.12).

The elected members continued to reflect the traditional support base of their representative parties. The Akali Dal had as many as 60 per cent of its MLAs belonging to the peasantry, with only 5 per cent drawn from the trading and industrial occupations. Somewhat out of tune with its customary base, in the 1969 elections the BJS had 37 per cent of its MLAs from an agricultural background, and regionally had 50 per cent of its MLAs from Malwa rather than its domain of Majha or Doaba

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government in the Centre contacted S. Lachhman Singh Gill the seniormost Akali minister in Front government and offered him unconditional support if he defected along with a considerable number of MLAs, and offered all the defectors ministerships. S. Narinder Singh Bhuler. *White Paper on Sikh Issues*. Batala, 1983, vol. 1, p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> Devinder Pal Sandhu. *Sikhs in Indian Politics: Study of a Minority*. (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1992), 113.

(Table 1.8). Demarcations on the basis of religion were most stark and most reflective of the social base of the party. None of the 43 Akali MLAs was a Hindu and the BJS had only one Sikh legislator out of 8 (Table 1.14). The shift in representation in the Akali political leadership became apparent as 63 per cent of the legislators were rural Jat peasants and 25 per cent were dalits (Table 1.13). In contrast, in the BJS a majority of 62 per cent of the MLAs were from the Hindu bania/khatri caste. The Congress reflected its wider social base as its elected members came from the scheduled and backward castes (39 per cent), or were Hindu and Sikh khatri (21 per cent) or Sikh Jats (39 per cent) (Table 1.13). While the Congress did have a dominant representation of the dominant castes, i.e., the peasantry (53 per cent), it differed from the other parties by having an equitable distribution of votes polled among the rural, semi-urban and urban constituencies, increasing its vote share towards the urban areas (38 per cent in rural, 40 per cent in semi-urban and 42 per cent in urban) (Table 1.6). But its regional share in this election came starkly from Doaba which accounted for 42 per cent of the votes polled, with only 4 per cent and 2 per cent from Majha and Malwa (Table 1.8). The 1969 coalition was short-lived with the Jana Sangh withdrawing its support within 13 months over differences on language, Centre-state relation and the status of Chandigarh. This was a minority coalition government ridden with factionalism in the Akali Dal<sup>44</sup>, high expectations among the Jana Sangh and the fear of defections in the shadow of the numerical strength of the Congress.

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<sup>44</sup> "Keeping in view the mandate and decision of the Akali Dal, I brought the Bill in the Legislative Assembly for abolition of the Legislative Council. Sant Chanan Singh came to Chandigarh and persuaded the members not to abolish the Council.... Even after that both Sants tried their utmost to flout the decision of the legislators and the Shiromani Akali Dal by persuading several members of the Parliament to see that Council was not abolished." From the speech by the outgoing Chief Minister Gurnam Singh on the floor of the Assembly on 26 March 1970. S.C. Arora. *Turmoil in Punjab Politics*. (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1990), 132.

Table 1.14  
Year and Party-wise Distribution of Hindu and Sikh MLAs

Year	BJP			BSP			CPI			CPM		
	HINDU	SIKH	OTHER	HINDU	SIKH	OTHER	HINDU	SIKH	OTHER	HINDU	SIKH	OTHER
<b>1967</b>	9						1	4			3	
% out of total MLAs	8.65						0.96	3.85			2.88	
% out of party MLAs	100.00						20.00	80.00			100.00	
<b>1969</b>	7	1					2	2			2	
% out of total MLAs	6.73	0.96					1.92	1.92			1.92	
% out of party MLAs	87.50	12.50					50.00	50.00			100.00	
<b>1972</b>							3	7			1	
% out of total MLAs							2.88	6.73			0.96	
% out of party MLAs							30.00	70.00			100.00	
<b>1977</b>	19	6					2	5		1	7	
% out of total MLAs	16.24	5.13					1.71	4.27		0.85	5.98	
% out of party MLAs	76.00	24.00					28.57	71.43		12.50	87.50	
<b>1980</b>	1						1	8			5	
% out of total MLAs	0.85						0.85	6.84			4.27	
% out of party MLAs	100.00						11.11	88.89			100.00	
<b>1985</b>	6							1				
% out of total MLAs	5.13							0.85				
% out of party MLAs	100.00							100.00				
<b>1992</b>	6			4	5		2	2			1	
% out of total MLAs	5.13			3.42	4.27		1.71	1.71			0.85	
% out of party MLAs	100.00			44.44	55.56		50.00	50.00			100.00	
<b>1997</b>	17	1		1			1	1				
% out of total MLAs	14.53	0.85		0.85			0.85	0.85				
% out of party MLAs	94.44	5.56		100.00			50.00	50.00				
<b>2002</b>	2	1					1	1				
% out of total MLAs	1.71	0.85					0.85	0.85				
% out of party MLAs	66.67	33.33					50.00	50.00				
<b>2007</b>	17	2										
% out of total MLAs	14.53	1.71										
% out of party MLAs	89.47	10.53										
<b>2012</b>	10	2										
% out of total MLAs	8.55	1.71										
% out of party MLAs	83.33	16.67										
<b>2017</b>	3											
% out of total MLAs	2.56											
% out of party MLAs	100.00											
<b>Total</b>	97	13		5	5		13	31		1	19	
% out of total MLAs	7.11	0.95		0.37	0.37		0.95	2.27		0.07	1.39	
% out of party MLAs	88.18	11.82		50.00	50.00		29.55	70.45		5.00	95.00	

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## Electoral Politics in Punjab

Year	INC			OTHER			SAD			AAP			Total
	HINDU	SIKH	OTHER	HINDU	SIKH	OTHER	HINDU	SIKH	OTHER	HINDU	SIKH	OTHER	
<b>1967</b>	16	31	1	7	8		1	23					104
% out of total MLAs	15.38	29.81	0.96	6.73	7.69		0.96	22.12					100.00
% out of party MLAs	33.33	64.58	2.08	46.67	53.33		4.17	95.83					100.00
<b>1969</b>	13	25		2	7			42	1				104
% out of total MLAs	12.50	24.04		1.92	6.73			40.38	0.96				100.00
% out of party MLAs	34.21	65.79		22.22	77.78			97.67	2.33				100.00
<b>1972</b>	27	38	1	1	2			24					104
% out of total MLAs	25.96	36.54	0.96	0.96	1.92			23.08					100.00
% out of party MLAs	40.91	57.58	1.52	33.33	66.67			100.00					100.00
<b>1977</b>	8	9			2		1	57					117
% out of total MLAs	6.84	7.69			1.71		0.85	48.72					100.00
% out of party MLAs	47.06	52.94			100.00		1.72	98.28					100.00
<b>1980</b>	34	28	1		2			37					117
% out of total MLAs	29.06	23.93	0.85		1.71			31.62					100.00
% out of party MLAs	53.97	44.44	1.59		100.00			100.00					100.00
<b>1985</b>	22	10		3	2		2	70	1				117
% out of total MLAs	18.80	8.55		2.56	1.71		1.71	59.83	0.85				100.00
% out of party MLAs	68.75	31.25		60.00	40.00		2.74	95.89	1.37				100.00
<b>1992</b>	31	55	1	4	3			3					117
% out of total MLAs	26.50	47.01	0.85	3.42	2.56			2.56					100.00
% out of party MLAs	35.63	63.22	1.15	57.14	42.86			100.00					100.00
<b>1997</b>	5	9		2	5		3	71	1				117
% out of total MLAs	4.27	7.69		1.71	4.27		2.56	60.68	0.85				100.00
% out of party MLAs	35.71	64.29		28.57	71.43		4.00	94.67	1.33				100.00
<b>2002</b>	29	32	1	1	8		1	40					117
% out of total MLAs	24.79	27.35	0.85	0.85	6.84		0.85	34.19					100.00
% out of party MLAs	46.77	51.61	1.61	11.11	88.89		2.44	97.56					100.00
<b>2007</b>	7	36	1	1	4		5	44					117
% out of total MLAs	5.98	30.77	0.85	0.85	3.42		4.27	37.61					100.00
% out of party MLAs	15.91	81.82	2.27	20.00	80.00		10.20	89.80					100.00
<b>2012</b>	12	33	1	1	2		9	46	1				117
% out of total MLAs	10.26	28.21	0.85	0.85	1.71		7.69	39.32	0.85				100.00
% out of party MLAs	26.09	71.74	2.17	33.33	66.67		16.07	82.14	1.79				100.00
<b>2017</b>	26	50	1		2		4	11		1	19		117
% out of total MLAs	22.22	42.74	0.85		1.71		3.42	9.40		0.85	16.24		100.00
% out of party MLAs	33.77	64.94	1.30		100.00		26.67	73.33		5.00	95.00		100.00
<b>Total</b>	230	356	8	22	47		26	468	4	1	19		1365
% out of total MLAs	16.85	26.08	0.59	1.61	3.44		1.90	34.29	0.29	0.07	1.39		100.00
% out of party MLAs	38.72	59.93	1.35	31.88	68.12		5.22	93.98	0.80	5.00	95.00		100.00

Source: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Compendium of Who's Who of Members (1960-2002), Chandigarh: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Secretariat, 2003.

Election Commission Reports, Punjab (1967-2017)

Sikhs were predominantly represented in the Akali Party, while Hindus were predominant in the BJS/BJP. Both religions find representation in the Congress, as also in the BSP (religion permeates the caste base in Punjab).



At the time, there were 28 ministers for the ministry. Around 50 per cent of the Jana Sangh and Akali Dal MLAs became ministers (Table 1.15). The allocation of portfolios to the Jana Sangh was reduced even though they had more ministers. The important departments of finance, excise and taxation and health were not allocated to them which could have been the reason for their eventual withdrawal of support. The then Chief Minister Gurnam Singh made a statement on the floor of the Assembly which reinforced this interpretation:

My honourable Jana Sangh members created a lot of noise over the allocation of finance to another colleague who does not belong to their party. I must take the House into confidence that at no stage was it agreed that the finance portfolio would be given to the Jana Sangh. It was my prerogative as the Chief Minister and I exercised it. Nevertheless, beneath this demand for key portfolios by the Jana Sangh, in reality is the desire to use the state machine to rehabilitate themselves among the people.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Speech made by outgoing CM Gurnam Singh on the floor of the assembly on 26.3.1970.

*Electoral Politics in Punjab*

Table 1.15  
Election Year-wise, Ministerial Representation According to Party and Region

YEAR		Akali				BJS/BJP				INC				Total (SAD+BJP+INC)			
		MAJHA	MALWA	DOABA	Total	MAJHA	MALWA	DOABA	Total	MAJHA	MALWA	DOABA	Total	MAJHA	MALWA	DOABA	Total
1969	MINISTERS	4	15	5	24	2	1	1	4					6	16	6	28
	MLAs	10	28	5	43	3	4	1	8					13	32	6	51
	**	40.00	53.57	100.00	55.81	66.67	25.00	100.00	50.00					46.15	50.00	100.00	54.90
1972	MINISTERS									4	8	5	17	4	8	5	17
	MLAs									18	28	20	66	18	28	20	66
										22.22	28.57	25.00	25.76	22.22	28.57	25.00	25.76
1977	MINISTERS	1	7	3	11	1	2	2	5					2	9	5	16
	MLAs	14	36	8	58	6	10	9	25					20	46	17	83
		7.14	19.44	37.50	18.97	16.67	20.00	22.22	20.00					10.00	19.57	29.41	19.28
1980	MINISTERS									2	10	4	16	2	10	4	16
	MLAs									15	32	16	63	15	32	16	63
										13.33	31.25	25.00	25.40	13.33	31.25	25.00	25.40
1985	MINISTERS	6	18	4	28									6	18	4	28
	MLAs	14	48	11	73									14	48	11	73
		42.86	37.50	36.36	38.36									42.86	37.50	36.36	38.36
1992	MINISTERS									8	14	9	31	8	14	9	31
	MLAs									21	47	19	87	21	47	19	87
										38.10	29.79	47.37	35.63	38.10	29.79	47.37	35.63
1997	MINISTERS	9	17	7	33	2	3	3	8					11	20	10	41
	MLAs	18	44	13	75	7	6	5	18					25	50	18	93
	*	50.00	38.64	53.85	44.00	28.57	50.00	60.00	44.44					44.00	40.00	55.56	44.09
2002	MINISTERS									8	10	7	25	8	10	7	25
	MLAs									17	29	16	62	17	29	16	62
										47.06	34.48	43.75	40.32	47.06	34.48	43.75	40.32
2007	MINISTERS	5	6	2	13	2		3	5					7	6	5	18
	MLAs	17	19	13	49	7	5	7	19					24	24	20	68
		29.41	31.58	15.38	26.53	28.57	0.00	42.86	26.32					29.17	25.00	25.00	26.47
2012	MINISTERS	3	8	3	14	1	2	1	4					4	10	4	18
	MLAs	11	34	11	56	5	2	5	12					16	36	16	68
		27.27	23.53	27.27	25.00	20.00	100.00	20.00	33.33					25.00	27.78	25.00	26.47
2017	MINISTERS									5	11	1	17	5	11	1	17
	MLAs									22	40	15	77	22	40	15	77
										22.73	27.50	6.67	22.08	22.73	27.50	6.67	22.08

Note: Percentages mentioned are per cent of ministers selected out of total MLAs of particular region.

\*\* 5 MIA from other parties joined the Akali Dal in 1969

\* 1 MLA from another party shifted to the Akali Dal in 1997

Source: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Compendium of Who's Who of Members (1960-2002), Chandigarh: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Secretariat, 2003  
Election Commission Reports, Punjab (1967-2017)

Further executive business in the Assembly centred on the coalition's concern over economic development and on Centre-state relations and language.<sup>46</sup> While economic development was the rallying point, the language issue and Centre-state relations remained contentious among the coalition partners. This along with factionalism within the Akali Dal led to the downfall of the Gurnam Singh ministry.

A third coalition, also a minority coalition government, came into being within the fifth state assembly itself after S. Gurnam Singh was replaced by Prakash Singh Badal as Chief Minister, who was sworn in with a new agenda for the coalition government.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "I frankly tell the House that though the Jana Sangh in Punjab had staged a right-about-turn on its attitude towards the Punjabi language after the creation of the Punjabi-speaking state, their outlook on this crucial question is still revolving in the old grooves. Though they claim that Punjabi should be given the status of a state language and should be developed as a lever to unify the Punjabi-speaking people irrespective of their religion, they in their own way are persisting in the policy of making Punjab a bilingual state. Naturally, I opposed all the attempts of the Jana Sangh leaders in this direction, though all along I did my best to promote Hindi as the national Language." From the speech by the outgoing Chief Minister Gurnam Singh on the floor of the Assembly on 26 March 1970.

<sup>47</sup> The agenda included the following:

1. Besides steps to "restore Hindu-Sikh unity, the government will develop and promote Punjabi as the state language and Hindi as the national language.
2. Educational facilities will be extended both in the rural and urban areas with a view to achieving full literacy in the state within the next few years.
3. The government will root out corruption from public life as well as from the administration.
4. It will try to bridge the gap between the common man and the administration.
5. Special emphasis will be placed on schemes for the welfare of members of the scheduled castes and the backward classes.
6. Immediate steps will be taken to distribute the evacuee lands to landless Harijans. A sizeable revolving fund will be created for their welfare schemes.
7. In the field of agriculture, a new strategy will be evolved to maintain Punjab's position as the granary of India and also to promote the cultivation of commercial crops. Small land-owners will be given special incentives.
8. The programme for rural electrification and also rural development works and the construction of link roads in the state will be streamlined with a view to electrifying every village and connecting every village with main roads.
9. A blueprint for the growth of industries, particularly large and medium-scale industries both in the private and public sectors, will be prepared and special incentives will be given to new industrial entrepreneurs.

The Jana Sangh bargained for three cabinet berths and one minister of state and they received the ministries of finance and industry with the change in the leadership of the Akali Dal Legislative Party. Akali factions, clamouring for ministerial berths, threatened to destabilise the government. The Chief Minister amended the rules to co-opt these legislators as chairpersons of financial corporations which were earlier treated as offices-of-profit.<sup>48</sup> The Jana Sangh again withdrew support to the coalition over the issue of the transfer of Punjabi-speaking areas to Punjab. The withdrawal was sparked by the question of Guru Nanak Dev University's jurisdiction and the exclusion of Hindi language by Punjabi University.

The 1977 election was unique in that it was an anti-Emergency election that saw the Janata Party and its allies voted to power in the Lok Sabha and state Assembly. A surplus majority coalition government of Akali-Janata-CPI (M) was formed. The Akali Dal also fought under the banner of the Janata Party. The Akalis won 58 seats, the Janata Party 25, CPI 7 and CPI (M) 8 (Table 1.12). The Janata Party coalition in Punjab was led by the SAD Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal and had the smallest ministry (16) with only 20 per cent of its MLAs provided with ministerial berths, in contravention of the trend in coalition governments. The legislature saw dissensions on account of intra-party Akali factionalism (Akali-Nirankari conflict and limits to state autonomy) as well as clashes of interests between the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the SAD.<sup>49</sup>

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10. Industrial workers, government employees and teachers will be given a fair deal, and all loopholes in the existing legislation relating to them will be plugged.

11. Efforts will be made to remove anomalies in the Pay Commission and Kothari Commission grades.

S.C. Arora 1990. op.cit. p. 129

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 130.

<sup>49</sup> It was primarily the intra-party conflict among the coalition partners which continued to rock the workings of the ruling alliance. The inter-party differences and ideological incompatibilities of the two partners did not pose a serious obstruction to the working of the coalition. Arun Mehra. "Akali-Janata Coalition: An Analysis." *Punjab Journal of Politics*, 9(1), 1985, p. 85.

These post-election coalitions revolved around anti-Congress and anti-Centre sentiments. The Akali Dal supported by the Sikh majority of the newly organised state found itself within striking distance of forming a government. The other parties in the state such as the Jana Sangh and CPI rallied to ally with and support the Akalis as an alternative to the Congress in a post-election coalition. Such coalitions were marked with the cooption of leaders representing divergent ideological frameworks and regional interests. These were marriages of convenience of party leaderships with the sole aim of capturing power, with their ranks regarding each other with suspicion due to the clash of ideological moorings. Even in the CPI's support base, the inherent contradiction between the landed peasantry and landless workers resulted in a decline in this base. Despite stark differentiation in religious symbolism, economic issues cut across religious divides to regroup people on the basis of their agrarian and trade interests.

Legislators and ministers were considered to be representing clearly differentiated groups in Akali-led coalitions, whereas in the Congress government diverse elements were not presented as representing social differentiations, but as articulating specific cultural and linguistic interests in the decision-making process. These coalitions brought about competition between a single party and a multi-party alliance. The post-election coalition brought into focus elite manoeuvrings rather than massification of democracy. To illustrate, a large number of offices-of-profit were declared offices-of-non-profit in the 1970s to accommodate legislators. This distorted governance in the state with disproportionate discretion granted to legislators. The legislature became an arena for raising contentious ideological issues to appeal to differentiated support bases.

### **From autonomy to secession: 1980s to 1990s**

This phase is characterised by an assertion of demands for state autonomy. The differentiation in the economy was sharpened

with the political assertion of the Sikh Panth. Three simultaneous trends emerged during this period which were: demands for state autonomy without unduly disturbing existing political arrangements; the demand for self-determination within the constitutional framework; and the slogan of a separate Khalistan. The path of development and the denial of the legitimate cultural and economic claims of the people sharpened political assertions. Their range, from state autonomy to the demand for Khalistan, reflected the factionalism in the Akalis and their inability to congregate under one banner. Political demagogues used communal and religious symbols to outdo and eliminate each other with a view to increasing their support base for greater leverage in politics. They provided an ideological cover for the use of violence. The differentiation in the economy sharpened political assertions but the political process represented sectional interests.

Demands were articulated by using methods ranging from peaceful to just short of physical violence, to even violent acts. The first major agitation after 1980 was launched in February 1982 against a bus fare hike by the Akalis, CPM, CPI and Janata Party. These parties laid siege to the state Assembly and the Governor could not open the budget session for over two hours.

The Congress Party, which was faction ridden, allowed the situation to drift and then degenerate into communal conflict. In the meantime, sacrileges were committed in religious places; the demand was made for relaying the Gurbani from the Golden Temple, and banning the sale of tobacco, meat and liquor in Amritsar. However, all these assertions to a very significant extent could not adversely affect the four-party opposition alliance. In April 1982, Indira Gandhi came to Kapoori village in Punjab to formally launch the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) project. The four-party alliance sensed Indira Gandhi's strategy to use this plank to win the Haryana Assembly election slated for May

that year and, therefore, launched an agitation in Kapoori against the project.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, the ruling party also started appeasing the extremist elements in the Akali Dal, like Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, with disastrous consequences. Sant Bhindranwale started questioning the SGPC leadership. In order to counter the threat posed by the extremists, moderates within the Akali Dal shifted the venue of the agitation from Kapoori to the Golden Temple. This was the end of the four-party alliance, and further led to the communalisation of the secular SYL canal project. The Akali Dal continued its agitation but called it a *dharma yudh* (religious struggle) from August 4, 1982. Akali volunteers continued to court arrest off and on. Even after the arrest of over 200,000 persons, no compromise could be reached.

It is this state of affairs that enhanced the appeal of the militants among the middle and small peasantry. The agitation started waning because of increasing state repression and factional fights within the Akali Dal. In response, the Akali leadership took specific protest measures, such as a *rasta roko* (road block) agitation on April 4, 1983, declaring a protest day on July 17, and a *rail rook* (rail stoppage) on August 29. Efforts were made to stop work in all offices.

For its part, the Congress allowed the situation to drift. It half-heartedly pressed for or offered negotiations and blamed the Akali Dal and the rest of the opposition for blocking solutions to the economic demands being raised. However, the ruling party unilaterally accepted the religious demands of the Akali Dal on February 27, 1983. It was an attempt to shelve real issues such as the demand for more autonomy, water and territorial adjustments. This move had two outcomes:

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<sup>50</sup> Pramod Kumar. 'Punjab Crisis: A Political Diagnosis'. *Mainstream*, November 14, 1987, p. 18.

- (a) It made it difficult for the Akalis to mobilise support for other economic demands. Acceptance of religious demands further aggravated the problem as the Akali Dal-L raised new demands to protect and promote the economic and political interests of the rural elite. For instance in January 1984 the Akali Dal-L raised a demand for the amendment of Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, a demand which it had not raised in any of its earlier resolutions or charters of demands; and
- (b) It helped the Congress establish its bona fides with the Akali support base.

The demand for an independent Sikh state could not find effective expression in political discourse as it was a slogan raised by marginal politicians rather than mainstream political forces. The demand for Khalistan did not acquire mass support despite the protagonists' brutal and senseless killings and ruthless political and administrative initiatives. Nonetheless, Operation Blue Star of 1984, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in November 1984, and the subsequent anti-Sikh riots did thwart the democratic process.

Despite these events, attempts were made to hold elections to legitimise non-democratic and communal politics in the state. The 1985, 1989, and 1992 elections were held against this background. The 1985 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections took place in the context of the Rajiv-Longowal Accord signed in 1984, while the 1989 Lok Sabha elections were held against the backdrop of failure to honour the Accord.<sup>51</sup> In the 1985

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<sup>51</sup> S.S. Barnala, then Akali Chief Minister, was alleged to be appeasing the militants, so the Congress government at the Centre dismissed the ministry. Moderate leaders like Prakash Singh Badal and G.S. Tohra were arrested and hundreds of others sent to distant Jodhpur jail to languish in detention for some years. Liberals who had full faith in the system were isolated and those nursing serious grievances against the system were patronised. This approach was adopted to counter people who were a potential threat to the legislative power of the ruling party at the Centre. Political rivals (even when they subscribed to the same political beliefs) were attacked and political forces representing extreme views were patronised. President's Rule was thought to be the most conducive,



Assembly elections, the Congress secured 32 seats with 38 per cent votes and the Akalis secured 73 seats with 38 per cent votes<sup>52</sup> (Table 1.12). In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, the Akali Dal (Mann) won 6 seats with 29 per cent votes.

Elections to the state Assembly were postponed on the pretext that the gun would influence voting and the victorious militants would dictate terms. This was an afterthought to rationalise the success of the Mann-led Akali Dal in the 1989 election and to ward off future electoral losses of the same shattering magnitude. Incidentally, parties opposing the election secured more than 61 per cent of the votes. In these elections, the agenda of peace was dominant and was reflected in the signing of the Rajiv-Longowal Accord in 1985, creating conditions for the political participation of hardliners in Sikh politics in 1989 and providing a façade of representative politics in 1992. The 1992 elections were boycotted by the Akali Dal resulting in a turnout of only 24 per cent. It was therefore rightly labelled as an “apology for a representative character of democratic polity.”<sup>53</sup>

During the destabilisation of the democratic polity in the violent phase of militancy and state responses, the 1985-89 and 1992 elections were used to revive legislative politics. In fact the issues in the 1992 elections were the restoration of peace, unemployment and better returns for farmers rather than state autonomy or the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.

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if not the sure instrument, to put down militancy. That these measures failed is not a surprise.

<sup>52</sup> The massive Akali victory of 1985 should not be seen as an expansion of the support base of the SAD, since in aggregate it polled only one per cent more votes than the Congress (I). Jatinder Kaur. *Punjab Crisis: The Political Perceptions of Rural Voters*. (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989), 126.

<sup>53</sup> Pramod Kumar and Yogendra Yadav. “The Real Contest in Punjab.” *The Tribune*, February 9, 1992.

## **The Resurgence of Democracy and a Punjabi Identity: Post-1990 Phase**

The triumph of democracy and assertion of the people's agenda for peace over that of factional party interests characterised the politics of this period. The Akali Dal was quick to respond to the people's demand for peace within the framework of its identity-based politics by widening its agenda from politico-religious identity confined to the Sikh identity to the broader agenda of Punjabiya. The SAD President, Prakash Singh Badal, brought the notion of Punjabi unity to the centrestage of Punjab politics mainly to draw legitimacy for the party's slogan of ensuring lasting peace in the state. This gave the Akali Dal an added advantage over the Congress which was seen as anti-Sikh after its role in the November 1984 riots. It is against this background that the Akali Dal structured its campaign with a major focus on anti-Congressism. Prakash Singh Badal asked 'all Punjabis to join hands in the massive task of social restructuring and economic rebuilding by making sure that an anti-people and anti-Punjab Congress regime is routed in the state, lock stock and barrel.'<sup>54</sup>

The main plank of the Akali Dal was that the unity of all Punjabis was the only dependable basis for lasting peace and there could be no social and political stability without Punjabi unity. This seems to have been prompted by the fact that during the phase of terrorism, legitimate demands like state autonomy, a greater share in river waters and the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab had degenerated into the movement for "Khalistan" which played havoc with people's lives. Both the single-party governments stuck to the people's agenda of peace: the Beant Singh government promoted prosperity with peace, while there was a marginal shift in the Congress agenda's emphasis in the post-Beant Singh phase from pro-market reforms to economic

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<sup>54</sup> From a statement issued by Prakash Singh Badal at a meet at the Press Club, November 9, 1996.

subsidies for most sections of society. The concessions covered the peasantry, landless labourers, dalits and urban traders.

The revival of democratic politics and institutions was accompanied by a resurgence of Punjabi identity. Political parties which had historically articulated the language question along communal lines shifted their stance. For instance, the Akali Dal-BJP in their Common Minimum Programme (1997) asserted, "Punjabi being our mother tongue is the state language of Punjab, every Punjabi is proud of the richness of the Punjabi language and culture." This was a major shift because the underlying thrust of the dominant political discourse in the pre-1992 phase was that Punjabi was the language of the Sikhs and the Hindus never owned Punjabi as their language. In addition, the Akali Dal in its policy programme adopted on 14 April 1995 emphasised disputes over the apportionment of river waters and allocation of Punjabi-speaking territories as discrimination against Punjab, rather than against the Sikhs (as it used to in its pre-1992 resolutions), and linked the prices of agricultural products with the price index. To quote:

Over the decades, Punjab has continually been a victim of the discriminatory and repressive policies of the Centre, in particular the rights of Punjab in respect to its left-out territories and the river waters have been ruthlessly suppressed and undermined ... For pursuance of the above objectives, the spirit of Punjabi-ism would be strengthened so that these matters get projected as common problems of the entire Punjabis rather than a section thereof <sup>55</sup>.

The resolution implies that the demands raised pertain to Punjabis, and that their non-acceptance is discrimination against Punjabis rather than Sikhs. Further, that the struggle for

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<sup>55</sup> Kanwaljit Singh. 1995. op.cit.

realisation of these demands had to be launched in the spirit of Punjabi-ness rather than as Khalistanis or Sikhs.

Another major shift in the political discourse was on issues relating to greater autonomy for the states. The BJP changed its position from calling for a strong Centre to greater autonomy for states in its 1997 election. To quote:

We [BJP] shall pursue with the Centre for the implementation of the main recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission<sup>56</sup>,

- (a) Restoring the balance of resources in favour of the states;
- (b) Ending the misuse of Article 356 of the Indian Constitution;<sup>57</sup> and
- (c) Consulting states on the choice of governors.

All these issues were incorporated in the Common Minimum Programme 1997 evolved by the Akali-BJP alliance. However, it was interesting to note that the thrust of the Akali Dal agenda changed from anti-centrism to co-operative federalism. To quote:

The Akali-BJP government has opened a new chapter in Centre-state relations, ushering in the age of co-operative federalism in the country. The era of confrontation has been effectively ended and replaced with a forward-looking thrust on working together for the overall good of the state and the nation.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The Sarkaria Commission was set up on June 9, 1983 to restructure India's Centre-state relations.

<sup>57</sup> Article 356 of the Indian Constitution deals with measures in the event of a failure of the constitutional machinery in a state

<sup>58</sup> *Akali Dal Election Manifesto, 1998.*

This position marked a radical shift from the anti-Centre stance of its 1973 autonomy resolution and later its 1985 memorandum to the Sarkaria Commission. Further, there was a noticeable shift in the Akali Dal (Badal) resolutions and assertions with an emphasis on human rights. The main plank of the Akali Dal was that the unity of all Punjabis would become a reality only if lasting peace was ensured.<sup>59</sup> There was also a pragmatic consideration of cementing the Akali-BJP alliance which demanded that human rights be played down and peace be reinforced at any cost:

Peace in Punjab is very dear to us. We will make all endeavours to ensure peace and harmony that will last. The unity of all Punjabis could be the only true and dependable basis of lasting peace and there can be no social and political stability without Punjabi unity.<sup>60</sup>

This gave the Akali-BJP alliance an advantage over the Congress which was seen as anti-Sikh due to its role in Operation Blue Star and the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. The Congress continued to harp on the restoration of peace as its main achievement; whereas the Akali Dal-BJP alliance presented the maintenance of peace as their main agenda. The Congress wanted to take credit for the restoration of peace, but was reluctant to own the manner in which peace was brought about, particularly when a large number of policemen were being hauled up by the

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<sup>59</sup> "In the following year when elections for the state Assembly were held, 'peace' continued to be the core issue. Recognising the changing political scene at the national level, and the growing significance of the BJP, the Badal Akali Dal did everything possible to consolidate its alliance with the state unit of the BJP. It merely abandoned its politics of regional identity and spoke a very different language." Surinder S. Jodhka. "Return of the Region: Identities and Electoral Politics in Punjab." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(3), 2005, p. 227.

<sup>60</sup> Statement issued by Prakash Singh Badal at a press meeting at the Chandigarh Press Club, November 1996.

judiciary.<sup>61</sup> This ambivalent position led to a shift in the mood of the electorate.

For the smooth functioning of the pre-election alliance between the Akalis and BJP a committee was constituted to allocate seats. The main criteria listed by the committee to allocate seats were of 'status-quo claim' and an ideological support base<sup>62</sup>. The BJP staked its claim to 34 seats and was allocated 22 for 1997 and 23 seats for the 2002, 2007 and 2012 Assembly elections. In 2012, it exchanged 2 of the 23 allocated seats, i.e., Batala and Garhshankar, with Amritsar (East) and Ludhiana (West) with the SAD. Thus, most of the BJP seats were urban and had Hindu candidates. The Akalis, on the other hand, were confined to their traditional support base in the rural and semi-urban areas and the Malwa region of the state. The 'status-quo claim' was based on the following principles;

- (a) Seats which *had been contested* by one of the coalition partners in previous elections. From this quota 14 and 42 seats were allocated to the BJP and the Akali Dal, respectively.
- (b) Seats which the coalition partners had contested against each other in previous elections were allocated on the basis of the *number of times a seat was contested by a party irrespective of the outcome*. There were 23 seats in this category. The BJP had contested more often from 9 constituencies compared to the Akali Dal. In the 1997 elections it was allocated 8 seats and in the 2002 elections it was allocated 9 seats from this category. Of the remaining 14 seats, the BJP staked its claim to 7 seats, but

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<sup>61</sup> Sarbjit Pandher. "A Peace Card Which May Spell Trouble." *The Hindu* (New Delhi), January 25, 1997.

<sup>62</sup> For the 1997, 2002 and 2007 Assembly elections a committee consisting of Captain Kanwaljit Singh and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa of the SAD and Balramji Das Tandon and Madan Mohan Mittal of the BJP was constituted to decide about seat-sharing. However in 2012 the decision on seat-sharing was taken by a committee chaired by then Chief Minister S. Prakash Singh Badal, with Ashwani Kumar the BJP State President and Balramjit Das Tandon a senior BJP leader as members.

its claim was not conceded. There were 3 seats which were contested by both parties an equal number of times and the Akali Dal was ahead of the BJP in 2; the remaining seat was rural and closer to the Akali ethos. The other four seats were contested more often by the SAD.

- (c) There were 38 seats which the BJP and SAD had contested, but not in opposition to each other. The BJP staked its claim to 4 constituencies, but the SAD had contested 3 of these more often, so the seats were allocated to the latter, and one seat remained contentious.

An analysis of seat-sharing in terms of bargaining power of coalition partners shows that the BJP managed 12 seats (120 per cent) beyond its quota in the 1997 elections compared to its performance in the 1996 parliamentary elections, whereas, the SAD managed 17 seats (17 per cent) beyond its quota (Table 1.16).

**Table 1.16**  
**Bargaining Power of Alliance Partners:**  
**Seats allocated to Alliance Partners beyond Normal Quota**  
**(1997 Assembly Election based on 1996 Parliament Election)**

Alliance in 1997 Assembly Election	No. of Seats Contested in 1997 Assembly Election	Performance in 1996 in Assembly Segments of Parliamentary Election		
		Winner	Runner-up	Seats Managed Beyond Quota
BJP	22	2	8	12 (120%)
SAD	92	59	16	17 (23%)
CPI	15	0	0	15
Congress	105	32	77	-4 (4%)

Source : Election Commission Reports, 1996-1997

The Akali Dal-BJP pre-election coalition won the 1997 elections. This was an oversized coalition in which, for the first time in the electoral history of Punjab, the Akali Dal had such a large majority it could have formed the government on its own. The SAD won 75 seats out of the 92 contested seats and polled 38 per cent votes (Table 1.12). It maintained its dominance in the rural areas with 53 legislators (71 per cent), in the semi-urban areas with 19 MLAs (25 per cent) and in the urban areas with 3 MLAs (4 per cent) (Table 1.5). A majority of these were Sikh Jats

(55 per cent) and agriculturists (60 per cent) (Table 1.13). The BJP as a minority partner in the coalition won 18 of the 22 contested seats with 8 per cent votes. Its MLAs were mostly Hindus belonging to the khatri and bania castes (61 per cent) involved in trade and the professions. The party continued to provide representation to scheduled castes and backward castes, which constituted around 33 per cent of its legislators (Table 1.13). Whereas, in SAD, the urban Hindus, traders and professionals, were in a minority. Interestingly, 31 per cent of the MLAs belonged to the scheduled castes and 9 per cent to the backward castes (Table 1.13). The urban khatri also found representation in the Akali Dal. In other words, the SAD represented a wide social spectrum. While a majority of the BJP legislators, i.e., 14 (78 per cent) were from the urban and semi-urban areas, 4 won from the rural areas (Table 1.5).

It would be worthwhile to examine the links between social categories and legislative representation with the ministerial representation in this cabinet. This was a jumbo cabinet with 41 ministers. Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal allocated berths to its coalition partner, the BJP, in proportion to the MLAs elected. The SAD had 81 per cent of the legislators and its share in the cabinet was 80 per cent; the BJP had 19 per cent of the legislators and its share in the cabinet was 19 per cent (Table 1.15). The wide spectrum of social representation of the SAD MLAs influenced its decision on the allocation of portfolios.

The portfolios on which the BJP had traditionally staked its claim, such as finance, industry, excise and taxation, were kept with the SAD, and specifically shifted into the domain of the Chief Minister and his loyalists, even though the BJP leadership negotiated for their traditional portfolios to cater to their support base. To quote, a senior BJP leader: 'We have put forward our claims for local bodies, industry, finance, housing and urban development, food and civil supplies, excise and



taxation, and health in this order of priority.<sup>63</sup> A senior Akali leader in an interview mentioned that the BJP's claim for the finance ministry was discussed in the Akali Dal's Political Affairs Committee (PAC), but was unanimously rejected. The BJP retained some of its traditional departments like local bodies, health and family welfare, and also got other portfolios like food and supplies, forest, legislative and legal affairs, education and excise and taxation (Minister of State), rural development and panchayats (Minister of State).

This clearly indicated that the respective traditional support bases of the political parties had branched into other sectors of the economy and that the pre-election coalition worked more to the advantage of the major partner, especially if it is an oversized coalition. As is evident, the BJP's bargaining capacity was much higher in the post-election coalitions particularly when the Akali Dal was faction-ridden.

The other competing coalition, the Congress and CPI, could not register its presence among their diverse social, economic and regional support bases. The Congress won 14 seats with 26 per cent votes (Table 1.12), of which only 3 were urban and 4 were semi-urban seats (Table 1.5): it also could elect only 7 per cent of its legislators from the scheduled castes, and its vote share was lowest till then.

In the 2002 election, the Congress and CPI pre-election coalition formed the government. This was mainly because the Akali-BJP coalition was formed around a common minimum programme, which was used to defend the alliance rather than nurture the ideological position carved out in 1997. The process of redefining religious identities and building bridges with the Sikh

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<sup>63</sup> "In 1967 the ministerial allocations were according to our choice. In 1997 claims were registered but the portfolios of industry and finance could not be given to the Bharatiya Janata Party as the CM kept industry, and finance was allocated to a senior Akali leader. The allocation of the finance portfolio was not contested as the state finances were in doldrums." From interviews with Balramji Das Tandon, senior BJP leader, October to December, 2005.

fundamentalist fringe elements sharpened factionalism within the SAD and alienated a large section of urban voters.<sup>64</sup> The noticeable shift from Punjabi identity to reinforcement of Sikh identity made urban Hindu voters align with the Congress Party. The efforts of the SAD to represent a large section of the scheduled castes in the legislature in 1997 suffered a set-back as its policies like free power to landowning peasants made rural-based scheduled caste apathetic to the SAD-BJP alliance. A sample survey in 2004 showed that 39 per cent of the SAD workers and 34 per cent of the BJP workers perceived communal amity as the basis of a coalition (Table 1.17) whereas 27 per cent of the Congress workers and 52 per cent of CPI workers stated that the Akali-BJP alliance was a ruse to exploit religious sentiments. The politics of confrontation of the then Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal with Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the then SGPC President, and Bhai Ranjit Singh, the Akal Takht Jathedar, led to divisions within the Akali support base,<sup>65</sup> but did not weaken the alliance. In this election the BJP was allocated 23 seats against 22 seats in the 1997 elections.

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<sup>64</sup> Pramod Kumar. 2003. op.cit. p. 384.

<sup>65</sup> P.S. Verma. "Akali-BJP Debacle in Punjab: Wages of Non-performance and Fragmentation." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(50), 1999, pp. 3519-3531.

**Table 1.17**  
**Party Activist Perception on Basis of Coalition Between BJP and**  
**Akali Dal (Badal)(number, % of responses)**

Party	Amity Between Hindus and Sikhs	Electoral Arithmetic	Anti- Congress	Promotes Interests of Upper Castes	Exploits Religious Sentiments	National Development	Traditional Allies	No Idea	Good Governance	Total
Congress	2	23	4		17			17		63
	(3.17)	(36.51)	(6.35)		(26.98)			(26.98)		(100.00)
SAD (B)	27		8			11	15		8	69
	(39.13)		(11.59)			(15.94)	(21.74)		(11.59)	(100.00)
BJP	15	2	4			12	7		4	44
	(34.09)	(4.55)	(9.09)			(27.27)	(15.91)		(9.09)	(100.00)
Akali Dal (Mann)		1						2		3
		(33.33)						(66.67)		(100.00)
BSP	1	14		5	5			6		31
	(3.23)	(45.16)		(16.13)	(16.13)			(19.35)		(100.00)
CPI (M) / CPI		9		3	17			4		33
		(27.27)		(9.09)	(51.52)			(12.12)		(100.00)
Total	45	49	16	8	39	23	22	29	12	243
	(18.52)	(20.16)	(6.58)	(3.29)	(16.05)	(9.47)	(9.05)	(11.93)	(4.94)	(100.00)

Source: Party Activists Survey, 2004

The seat-sharing principle was based on the status-quo claim as in the 1997 elections. The bargaining power of the alliance partners indicates that the BJP managed to win 3 seats or 12 per cent less than its quota compared to its performance in the Assembly segments in the 1999 parliamentary elections. The SAD managed to win 16 seats or 21 per cent over its quota.

**Table 1.18**  
**Bargaining power of different alliance partners:**  
**Proportions of seats allocated to alliance partners beyond normal quota**  
**(2002 Assembly Election Based on 1999 Parliament Election)**

Alliance in 2002 Assembly Election	No. of Seats Contested in 2002 Assembly Election	Performance in 1999 in Assembly Segments of Parliamentary Election		
		Winner	Runner-up	Seats Managed Beyond Quota
BJP	23	11	15	-3 (-12)
SAD	92	22	54	16 (21%)
CPI	11	8	1	2 (22%)
Congress	105	66	33	6 (6%)

Source : Election Commission Reports, 1999-2002

The CPI-Congress alliance proved to be more beneficial to the CPI as it could manage to win 2 seats (22 per cent) beyond its quota and the Congress won 6 seats (6 per cent) beyond its quota (Table 1.18). The state Congress leadership was opposed to any alliance with the CPI and to the fact that so many seats had been allocated to the CPI.<sup>66</sup> It was the direct intervention of the Congress High Command which made this alliance functional. On the other hand, the CPI leadership opined that it had been allocated seats for which it had not staked a claim, for instance, Pakakalan instead of Khanna, and Panjgrahin instead of Rampura Phul. And in three constituencies<sup>67</sup> Congress rebel

<sup>66</sup> The Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh was not in favour of allocating 11 seats to the CPI. "Every single seat allotted to the CPI is to add to the tally of the SAD". Interview with Captain Amarinder Singh, 10 September 2004. In a press statement on 23 August, 2006, Captain Amarinder Singh stated that, "I have told party president Sonia Gandhi that an alliance with the left parties – CPI and CPI (M) – will not benefit the Congress in any manner since their votes do not get transferred to us". "I was the PCC president then and I had a harrowing time trying to convince the left leaders to send their cadres for Congress support but they failed to do so." from 'Captain Dullo Don't See Right on Left'. *Hindustan Times*, August 24, 2006.

<sup>67</sup> These constituencies were Sri Hargobindpur, Mansa and Dhuri.

candidates were in the contest. Interestingly, 21 per cent of the Congress Party activists reported that the alliance was based on the decision of the central leadership. In contrast, 91 per cent of the CPI activists felt that the coalition was to fight communal forces (Table 1.19). The SAD (78 per cent) and BJP (84 per cent) viewed the Congress-CPI coalition as mere electoral arithmetic.

**Table 1.19**  
**Party Activist Perception on Basis of Coalition between Congress and CPI or CPI (M)**

If yes, give name of party	To Oppose Communal Parties	No Idea	Electoral Arithmetic	No Other Party Ready for Coalition	Decision of Central Leadership	Natural Allies / Same Ideology	Ideological Commonalities
Congress	30	2	8	2	13	12	67
	(47.62)	(3.17)	(12.70)	(3.17)	(20.63)	(19.05)	(100.00)
SAD (B)	1	5	46	7	4		63
	(1.69)	(8.47)	(77.97)	(11.86)	(6.78)		(100.00)
BJP		4	32	2	4		42
		(10.53)	(84.21)	(5.26)	(10.53)		(100.00)
Akali Dal (Mann)		2				1	3
		(66.67)				(33.33)	(100.00)
BSP	1	8	20	2	3		34
	(3.23)	(25.81)	(64.52)	(6.45)	(9.68)		(100.00)
CPI (M) / CPI	30		3				33
	(90.91)		(9.09)				(100.00)
Total	62	21	109	13	24	13	242
	(27.31)	(9.25)	(48.02)	(5.73)	(10.57)	(5.73)	(100.00)

Source: Party Activist Survey, 2004

If we analyse the election in terms of votes polled we find that the Akali vote bank remained intact but was divided between the SAD (Badal) which secured 31 per cent votes and the Akali Dal (Tohra) which got 5 per cent votes in the 2002 elections; the SAD won 41 seats. There was a major shift in the vote banks of upper caste Hindus and scheduled castes, which adversely affected SAD's main ally, BJP which won only 3 seats and 6 per cent votes. Shifts in urban Hindu votes and actionalism within the Akalis led to a defeat for the Akali Dal (Badal)-BJP alliance.<sup>68</sup> The SAD suffered a defeat in the semi-urban areas and the BJP was routed in the urban areas.

The Congress formed the government in the state with the outside support of its electoral ally, the CPI. This was a single-

<sup>68</sup> If the share of votes of the BJP, Akali Dal (B) and Akali Dal (Tohra) were added and converted into seats, the Akali Dal and BJP would have formed the government.

party majority government as the Congress had won 62 seats with 36 per cent votes, and the CPI won 2 of the 11 seats allocated (Table 1.12). The Congress made significant improvements in all three cultural zones of the state. It fielded 44 Sikh Jat candidates and 21 won. The Congress gained largely from the urban electorate as it was seen to pursue policies against Sikh extremism even though the urban votes polled declined. The Congress elected almost equal numbers of Sikh Jats and urban khatri and banias, followed by a smaller number of people from the scheduled castes.

In the 2007 election, the Congress and CPI could not enter into an alliance, mainly because of the opposition of the state-level Congress leadership, particularly the then Chief Minister, Captain Amarinder Singh. In a press statement, he said that the Left parties had failed to transfer their votes to the Congress in the 2002 Assembly elections and had collected their workers from all over the state to work only in constituencies where their candidates had been fielded.<sup>69</sup> The Left parties attributed the break in the alliance to differences on policies. The CPI (M) General Secretary Prakash Karat stated that the Left mantra for the polls would be to defeat the SAD-BJP combine and expose the Congress. "We will give a call for the defeat of the SAD-BJP combine and expose the Congress which for the past five years has been pursuing policies that have been harmful to the state as well as the people."<sup>70</sup> The impact of this break in the alliance was visible in the political agenda advocated by the Congress. The Congress Party's political campaign lost its *aam admi* (common man) thrust. For example, one of the advertisements released by the Congress government claimed it had "inspired top industrial houses to invest Rs. 86,161 crore in 282 mega projects, thereby generating 20 lakh jobs". It was also claimed that if the Akali Dal was brought back to power, land prices would crash. A large section of the voters, i.e., 53 per cent, as per a sample survey,

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<sup>69</sup> Raveen Thukral. "Captain Dullu Don't See Right on Left". *The Hindustan Times*, August 24, 2006.

<sup>70</sup> "No Alliance with Congress: Karat". *The Hindustan Times*, October 11, 2006.

mentioned that the increase in land prices had no impact on them as they had no stake in land; 30 per cent stated that it had benefited land speculators and illicit businessmen; around 12 per cent said that the increase had benefited rich peasants; and 5 per cent were of the view that it had made it impossible for the common man to own a shelter (Table 1.20).

**Table 1.20**  
**Impact of Rise in Land Prices**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>No stakes in land</b>	164	52.90
<b>Rich land owners</b>	39	12.58
<b>Land speculators and illicit businessmen</b>	93	30.00
<b>Difficult to own a shelter</b>	14	4.52

Source: Field Survey, February 2007

Such a claim was contrary to the ideological filter of the *aam admi* as used by the Congress-CPI alliance in previous elections. Those who did not have the means might be deprived by the rising prices of land of even owning a shelter or a house. The irony of the situation was that the compensation received by farmers, ranging from Rs. 40 lakh to Rs. 60 lakh for an acre of land, was not adequate to get them a shelter of five marlas on the same land. Had the Congress Party aligned with the Communists it may not have marketed this as its main electoral plank. Further, an alliance with the Communists might have checked the Congress Party's vacillation between a religious identity and a secular Punjabi identity. The Congress Party focused more on the rural Jat peasantry and the Sikh identity by highlighting the termination of the river waters agreement and its overactive participation in the religious celebrations of the Sikhs and the SGPC elections.

These policies and pronouncements had an adverse impact on the poll performance of the Congress in the 2004 parliamentary elections. In these elections the urban and dalit votes shifted away from the Congress. The 2007 and 2012 Assembly election results can be seen against the background of the 2004 parliamentary election. The Congress Party's vote share in the semi-urban constituencies in the 2004 parliamentary election decreased from

40 per cent to 35 per cent and in the urban constituencies from 54 per cent to 48 per cent compared to the 1999 parliamentary elections. However, in 2007 and 2012 the Congress Party regained its vote share in the semi-urban constituencies which increased from 35 per cent (2002) to 43 per cent (2007) and to 40 per cent (2012). But, in the urban constituencies it decreased from 47 per cent (2002) to 40 per cent (2007) and 43 per cent (2012) (Table 1.5). Interestingly, the Congress Party's rural vote share has been steadily increasing since 1997, from 26 per cent to 35 per cent in 2002, 40 per cent in 2007 and 39 per cent in the 2012 Assembly elections. Traditionally, its core support base consists of a large majority of Hindu dalits with their uncertain religious allegiance, urban Hindu traders and migrant landless labourers. The shift from a Punjabi identity to a narrow religious identity testifies to the fluid response of the voters. In this context, alliances between political parties if reflective of existing social dynamics have the potential to change election outcomes. And to also changes the political discourse – from identity politics, say, to citizen rights, from pro-rich to *aam admi* (common person), from strong Centre to decentralisation, and so on. For instance, an alliance between the Congress Party and the Communist parties has the capacity to create a pro-poor constituency apart from enabling a transfer of votes to each other. In a sample survey conducted before the 2007 elections, around 26 per cent mentioned that an alliance between the Congress and the Communist parties could be politically formidable, i.e., the lack of an alliance should work to the advantage of the SAD-BJP alliance; 10 per cent said that it would work to the advantage of the Congress; and 64 per cent said that it would make no difference (Table 1.21).

**Table 1.21**  
**On lack of Congress-CPI Alliance**

	Frequency	Per cent
<b>Advantage Congress</b>	32	10.32
<b>Disadvantage Congress and CPI</b>	80	25.81
<b>No impact</b>	198	63.87
<b>Total</b>	310	100.00

Source: Field Survey, February 2007



The election results showed that the Congress Party won 7 of the 11 seats which in the 2002 elections were allocated to the CPI, whereas the Communists acted as a spoiler for the Congress in four seats, i.e., Batala, Balachaur, Dina Nagar and Bhadaur. It is clear that the alliance between the Congress and the Communists had political advantages rather than merely electoral advantages. Therefore, the impact of the alliance should be measured in the political domain rather on an electoral arithmetic scale.

In the 2012 elections, a third front emerged in Punjab under the banner of the Sanjha Morcha. At the core of the Sanjha Morcha was the People's Party of Punjab (PPP) led by Akali rebel four-time legislator Manpreet Badal. The communist parties forged an alliance with the PPP to form the Sanjha Morcha. In a survey conducted before the elections, a majority of the respondents mentioned that the absence of an alliance between the communist parties and the Congress would work to the disadvantage of the Congress and to the advantage of the PPP; only 20 per cent mentioned it would work to the advantage of the SAD (Table 1.22).

**Table 1.22**  
**On Lack of Alliance Congress – Sanjha Morcha 2012**

	Frequency	Per cent
Advantage Congress	50	10
Disadvantage Congress, CPI and People's Party	125	25
Advantage People's Party	200	40
Advantage SAD	100	20
No impact	25	5
<b>Total</b>	500	100

Source: Field Survey, January 2012

The election results showed that the PPP proved to be a wild card. It secured 5 per cent of the votes, which adversely affected the fortunes of the Congress candidates in 10 constituencies and in 13 constituencies it worked to the disadvantage of the SAD. Clearly, a pre-election alliance of the Congress and the Saanjha Morcha would have electorally benefited the Congress.

The Akali-BJP pre-election coalition formed the government after both the 2007 and 2012 Assembly elections. In the 2007 elections, the SAD-BJP alliance won 68 seats and 45 per cent of the total votes polled; the Congress won 44 seats with 41 per cent of the votes; and the communist parties could not win a single seat, but secured one per cent of the votes. (The alliance articulated its 1997 election plank of *Punjabiyyat* (Punjabi identity) and peace, along with a focus on inflation, corruption and mega projects.) In 2012 the SAD-BJP alliance won the same number of seats with 3 per cent fewer votes compared to the 2007 elections. In terms of seats won compared to the 2007 election, the SAD contested 94 seats and won 56 seats with a gain of 7 seats and its coalition partner the BJP contested 23 seats and won 12 seats with a loss of 7 seats. The Congress registered its win in 46 constituencies with a gain of 2 seats over the previous election. The newly formed People's Party of Punjab (PPP) with its alliance with the Left parties could not win a single seat. The distinct feature of this election was the SAD's non-Panthic thrust in the election campaign with an emphasis on development and governance reforms. In these elections, the SAD made no emotional appeals about danger to the "Sikh Panth".

The assertions of Dera Sacha Sauda in the 2002 and 2007 elections against the SAD and in favour of the Congress, and the frenzy against the followers of the Dera Sacha Sauda as before the 2009 Parliament elections, had to a large extent subsided by the 2012 elections. In the 2007 elections the Political Affairs Wing of the Dera Sacha Sauda sect (founded by Shyam Mastana in 1948) issued a directive to its followers to vote in favour of the Congress Party. For the first time in Punjab a religious sect openly supported a political party (other than the SAD). This brought the Dera into direct conflict with the SAD, and led to the defeat of several SAD candidates in the south-western districts of the state, a traditional stronghold of the Akalis.<sup>71</sup> The

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<sup>71</sup> The Akalis-BJP blamed the religious sect for their poor show in Malwa in 2007, *Indo-Asian News Service*, 28 February (FACTIVA); Lionel Baixas, "The Dera Sacha Sauda Controversy and Beyond". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 40. October 6, 2007, pp. 4059-4065.

SAD, however, won the elections. The SAD-BJP alliance openly criticised the Dera Sacha Sauda for having “behaved like a political party.” After the elections, in the second week of May 2007, the Dera Chief Baba Gurmit Ram Rahim allegedly imitated the most revered tenth Sikh Guru (from the seventeenth century) which led to large-scale violence against the Dera.<sup>72</sup> The stand-off between the Dera Sacha Sauda Chief Gurmit Ram Raheem and the highest Sikh temporal seat the Akal Takht and the Punjab Chief Minister led the BJP to issue a warning to the SAD to restore peace in the state, or the BJP may have to review its alliance with the SAD. Despite initial laxity the state government defused the tensions and restored peace in the state. The SAD was caught between its obligation to its support base amongst followers of the Sikh religion and the influence of the Dera in around 33 constituencies. The compulsions of the SAD-BJP coalition also played a crucial role in bringing moderation to the relationship between the institutionalised Sikh religion and Dera Sacha Sauda. In 2010, the SAD president categorically stated that ‘the SAD has never shown any intolerance towards any sect. Our regular visits to these religious sects clearly prove that we have not nurtured any vendetta. It is the endeavour of the Akali Party to provide peaceful and conducive conditions to all religions, sects and castes.’<sup>73</sup>

In the post-1997 phase the SAD-BJP alliance started nurturing a new constituency around communal amity and peace. In 2007, their politics evolved from peace to development and governance.<sup>74</sup> The SAD further added another dimension in its politics by co-opting the urban Hindu businessmen into their party and government. A number of prominent urban Hindus were given party positions and a leading industrialist was made head of the planning process in the state. Further, the dalits

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<sup>72</sup> Jaideep Sarin. “Most in Punjab had Nothing to do with Faith Frenzy”, *The Hindustan Times*, 19 May, 2007.

<sup>73</sup> From a series of 71 interviews with Sukhbir Singh Badal, SAD President in October 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Manifestos of the SAD (2007 and 2012)

(particularly the balmikis and mazhabis) were targeted for receiving social security benefits. In other words, a systematic social reengineering was initiated bringing both the urban Hindus and dalits into its fold. It is against this backdrop that, to the discomfort of the Congress, a 'Sikh' Prime Minister could not emerge as a vote catcher. Most of the election rallies addressed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh were thinly attended and without the usual Punjabi enthusiasm. The fact that Manmohan Singh has never presented himself as a 'Sikh', but as a professional economist, cannot be denied. Therefore, the extent to which he mirrors the economic reforms agenda along with his opposition to free electricity and water to the farmers may have distanced him from the common man. Similarly, the shift from Sikh identity to Punjabi identity has pushed leaders like Uma Bharti and Narendra Modi to the margins of electoral politics in Punjab.

The electoral agenda had an impact on the outcomes of both the 2007 and the 2012 elections, and also shaped the alliance between the SAD and BJP. For instance, in a sample survey in 2007, a majority of SAD supporters (72 per cent) considered an alliance with the BJP a symbol of communal amity rather than an electoral arrangement (Table 1.23). Similarly, in 2012 a significant number of SAD supporters considered an alliance essential for communal amity. In contrast, a majority of the BJP supporters, 85 per cent in 2007 and 58 per cent in 2012, considered it an electoral necessity (Table 1.24). However, in 2012, an increased number of BJP supporters, i.e., 42 per cent, considered it a political alliance for maintaining communal amity.

**Table 1.23**  
**On SAD-BJP Coalition (SAD Supporters)**

	2007		2012	
	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
<b>Electoral liability</b>	63	20.32	150	30
<b>Electoral savvy</b>	24	7.74	20	4
<b>For communal amity</b>	223	71.94	330	66
<b>Total</b>	310	100.00	500	100.00

Source: Field Surveys, 2007 and 2012

**Table 1.24**  
**On SAD-BJP Coalition (BJP Supporters)**

	2007		2012	
	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
For community amity	43	13.87	210	42
Electoral liability	2	0.65	-	-
Electorally useful	265	85.48	290	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2007 and 2012

**Table 1.25**  
**Bargaining power of Alliance Partners: Proportions of seats Allocated Beyond Normal Quota (2007 Assembly Election based on 2002 Assembly Election)**

Alliance in 2007 Assembly Election	No. of Seats Contested in 2007 Assembly Election	Performance in 2002 Assembly Election		
		Winner	Runner-up	Seat Managed Beyond Quota
BJP	23	3	18	2 (10%)
SAD	94	41	44	9 (11%)

Source: Election Commission Reports, 2002-07

In 2007 and 2012, seat-sharing was based on the status-quo claim, as it was in the 1997 and 2002 elections. The bargaining power of the alliance partners in 2007 indicates that the BJP could manage to get 2 seats (10 per cent) beyond its quota share compared to its performance in the Assembly elections of 2002. The SAD could get 9 seats (11 per cent) beyond its quota (Table 1.25). In 2012, the BJP got the same number of seats as per its quota of 2007 elections and the SAD got one seat (one per cent) beyond its quota.

If we analyse the elections in 2007 in terms of votes polled and seats won, the SAD managed to get 37 per cent votes and 49 seats and the BJP polled 8 per cent votes and got 19 seats; the Congress managed to get 41 per cent votes and 44 seats. In 2012, the SAD managed to get 35 per cent votes and 56 seats and the BJP polled 7 per cent votes and got 12 seats; the Congress managed to get 40 per cent votes and 46 seats (Table 1.12). In both these elections, the SAD could not get a majority on its own and therefore became dependent on the BJP to form a government. In the 2007 Assembly elections, the SAD did not perform well in its traditional support base of the Malwa region as many of the SAD stalwarts suffered a defeat here. In 1997 it had won 44 seats in this region which declined to 19 seats in the 2007 elections (Table 1.10). In the 2007 elections, however,

open support for the Congress from the popular religious sect Dera Sacha Sauda<sup>75</sup> contributed to the defeat of the SAD. But in the 2012 elections, the SAD improved its tally from 19 to 34 seats and could neutralise the Dera Sacha Sauda factor in this region. In 2007, there were around 37 seats under the influence of the Dera of which the Congress could win around 65 per cent; in 2012, however, the SAD could win 54 per cent of these seats. In the other two regions, i.e., Doaba and Majha, the trends of the 1997 elections were repeated. The Congress did not learn from the Akali-BJP alliance in 2002 and its own defeat in the 2004 parliamentary elections that it was not electoral wisdom to cater to sectional interests and indulge in identity politics. It made inroads into the Akali Dal bastion, but suffered a major loss within its own support base of dalits, urban traders, slum dwellers, etc. The Congress suffered a defeat in the semi-urban areas and was routed in the urban constituencies. In 2012 it gained 2 seats and the SAD lost 2 in Doaba; similarly, in Majha the Congress gained 6 seats and the SAD lost 6 seats, while in Malwa, the Congress lost 6 seats and the SAD gained 15 seats.

The SAD could get only 25 Sikh Jats elected in 2007 and in 2012, compared to 41 in the 1997 elections. In 2007, the Congress managed to have almost an equal number of Sikh Jats elected as the SAD, and in 2012 this rose significantly to 21 Sikh Jats elected on the Congress ticket. This clearly signifies that the Sikh Jats are not exclusive supporters of the SAD. This shift was also significant in the post-Blue Star phase. In contrast, the number of dalit MLAs in the Congress fell from 14 in 2002 to 7 in 2007 and 10 in 2012. The BJP maintained its tally of 4 Dalit legislators in 2007, which fell to 3 in 2012. The number of Dalit MLAs in the SAD decreased from 23 in 1997 to 16 in the 2007 elections. In 2012, the SAD registered an increase of 5 legislators compared to the 2007 elections (Table 1.13). It is interesting to note that the main political parties evenly represent the caste configuration.

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<sup>75</sup> Raveen Thukral. "Sirsa Dera Add Spice to Malwa Contest". *The Hindustan Times*, February 9, 2007.

The linkages between the social matrix and legislative representation in terms of religious affiliation has shown that the number of Hindu MLAs increased in the SAD in the 2012 and 2007 elections over the 2002 and 1997 elections. While a majority of the BJP MLAs were Hindus from the khatri, brahmin and bania castes (68 per cent in 2007 and 58 per cent in 2012), a majority of the SAD MLAs were rural-based (71 per cent in 2007 and 68 per cent in 2012), with the semi-urban (22 per cent in 2007 and 27 per cent in 2012) and urban constituencies (6 per cent) carrying far less weight. Interestingly, the 2012 elections gave increased representation to the urban areas compared to the 1997 elections: the number of BJP MLAs from the urban areas increased from 28 per cent in 1997 to 37 per cent in 2007 elections and 42 per cent in 2012 elections. It also gave greater representation to the rural areas which increased from 22 per cent in 1997 to 26 per cent in 2007 and 25 per cent in 2012. Both parties now represented a wider social spectrum than before (Table 1.5).

Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal was authorised to give representation to its coalition partner the BJP. The SAD has 72 per cent of the legislators and its share in the Cabinet is 72 per cent; similarly, the BJP has 28 per cent of the legislators and its share in the Cabinet is 28 per cent. In 2012, the SAD had 82 per cent of the legislators and its share in the Cabinet was 78 per cent; while the BJP had 18 per cent of the legislators and its share in the Cabinet was 22 per cent.

The BJP, however, did negotiate for portfolios that were linked with the urban areas.<sup>76</sup> It staked its claim to portfolios like industries, excise and taxation, local bodies, health, transport and urban development; while it obtained local bodies, health and family welfare, forests and medical education, industries and commerce, it could not get urban development, excise and taxation. It also staked its claim to Deputy Chief Minister's post.

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<sup>76</sup> Gautam Dheer. "SAD-BJP Fissures on Portfolios". *The Indian Express*, March 3, 2004.

In terms of regional representation, the 2012 ministry gave greater representation to Malwa and reduced its representation of both the Doaba and Majha region, compared to 2007. The SAD, however, gave proportionately higher representation to Malwa (31 per cent), Doaba (15 per cent) and Majha (29 per cent) in 2007. The BJP, for its part, gave greater representation to Doaba (43 per cent) and Majha (29 per cent) from among the MLAs elected from each region. In 2012 in terms of regional representation, 22 per cent of the ministry was from Majha, 56 per cent from Malwa and 22 per cent from Doaba. The SAD gave proportionately higher representation to Malwa (24 per cent), Doaba (27 per cent) and Majha (27 per cent), while the BJP gave greater representation to Doaba (20 per cent) and Majha (20 per cent) from among the MLAs elected from each region (Table 1.15).

In 2007 the coalition gave greater representation to the rural areas (50 per cent) followed by the semi-urban (39 per cent) and urban (11 per cent) areas. The pattern was repeated in 2012, with higher representation given to the rural areas (61 per cent) followed by the semi-urban (28 per cent) and urban (11 per cent) areas. The SAD for its part gave a proportionately higher representation to the semi-urban areas (36 per cent), followed by the rural (26 per cent) areas from among the MLAs elected from these regions in 2007. In 2012, SAD's representation was highest from the rural areas (29 per cent), followed by the semi-urban areas (20 per cent) with no representation from the urban areas; thus it gave no representation to any of its urban MLAs in the ministry. In 2007, the BJP gave higher representation to MLAs from the semi-urban areas (43 per cent) followed by the urban areas (28 per cent) and no representation to its rural elected MLAs, a pattern it followed in 2012, when its MLAs from the semi-urban areas accounted for 50 per cent, followed by those from the urban areas with 40 per cent, and no representation to rural elected MLAs (Table 1.26).



**Table 1.26**  
**Election Year-Wise Ministerial Representation by Party and Location**

YEAR		Akali				BJS/BJP				INC				Total (SAD+BJP+INC)			
		RURAL	SEMI URBAN	URBAN	Total	RURAL	SEMI URBAN	URBAN	Total	RURAL	SEMI URBAN	URBAN	Total	RURAL	SEMI URBAN	URBAN	Total
1969	MINISTERS	13	10	1	24	1	1	2	4					14	11	3	28
	MLAs	23	19	1	43	1	5	2	8					24	24	3	51
	**	56.52	52.63	100.00	55.81	100.00	20.00	100.00	50.00					58.33	45.83	100.00	54.90
1972	MINISTERS									6	8	3	17	6	8	3	17
	MLAs									31	26	9	66	31	26	9	66
										19.35	30.77	33.33	25.76	19.35	30.77	33.33	25.76
1977	MINISTERS	6	5		11	1	2	2	5					7	7	2	16
	MLAs	43	14	1	58	5	12	8	25					48	26	9	83
		13.95	35.71	0.00	18.97	20.00	16.67	25.00	20.00					14.58	26.92	22.22	19.28
1980	MINISTERS									9	4	3	16	9	4	3	16
	MLAs									30	21	12	63	30	21	12	63
										30.00	19.05	25.00	25.40	30.00	19.05	25.00	25.40
1985	MINISTERS	22	6		28									22	6		28
	MLAs	53	20		73									53	20		73
		41.51	30.00	#DIV/0!	38.36									41.51	30.00		38.36
1992	MINISTERS									15	12	4	31	15	12	4	31
	MLAs									51	27	9	87	51	27	9	87
										29.41	44.44	44.44	35.63	29.41	44.44	44.44	35.63
1997	MINISTERS	23	10		33		6	2	8					23	16	2	41
	MLAs	53	19	3	75	4	9	5	18					57	28	8	93
	*	43.40	52.63	0.00	44.00	0.00	66.67	40.00	44.44					40.35	57.14	25.00	44.09
2002	MINISTERS									14	5	6	25	14	5	6	25
	MLAs									32	19	11	62	32	19	11	62
										43.75	26.32	54.55	40.32	43.75	26.32	54.55	40.32
2007	MINISTERS	9	4		13		3	2	5					9	7	2	18
	MLAs	35	11	3	49	5	7	7	19					40	18	10	68
		25.71	36.36	0.00	26.53	0.00	42.86	28.57	26.32					22.50	38.89	20.00	26.47
2012	MINISTERS	11	3		14		2	2	4					11	5	2	18
	MLAs	38	15	3	56	3	4	5	12					41	19	8	68
		28.95	20.00	0.00	25.00	0.00	50.00	40.00	33.33					26.83	26.32	25.00	26.47
2017	MINISTERS									6	7	4	17	6	7	4	17
	MLAs									37	26	14	77	37	26	14	77
										16.22	26.92	28.57	22.08	16.22	26.92	28.57	22.08

Source: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Resume,

Punjab Vidhan Sabha Compendium of Who's Who of Members (1960-2002)

Note: Percentages mentioned are per cent of ministers selected out of total MLAs of particular location.

\*\* 5 MLAs from other parties joined the Akali Dal in 1969; \* 1 MLA from another party shifted to the Akali Dal in 1997

Interestingly, the representation of the Jats (a peasant caste) continued to be highest, i.e., 55 per cent, in 2007 and 61 per cent in 2012 in the respective ministries. However, the representation of the dalits declined from 22 per cent in 1997 to 11 per cent in 2007 and 17 per cent in 2012, that of the backward castes increased to 11 per cent in 2007 from 7 per cent in 1997, but again declined to 6 per cent in 2012 (Table 1.27). The SAD gave proportionately higher representation to the Jat MLAs, 40 per cent in 2007 and 44 per cent in 2012, but this is lower than the 49 per cent representation in the 1997 ministry. There is a noticeable decrease in the representation of dalits MLAs in the ministry, from 35 per cent in 1997 to 6 per cent in the 2007 and 10 per cent in 2012 (Table 1.27).

**Table 1.27**  
**Election Year-Wise Ministerial Representation by Party and Caste**

YEAR	MINISTERIAL STATUS	Akali					BIS/BJP					INC					Total (SAD+BJP+INC)				
		SC	OBC	JAT	OTHER	Total	SC	OBC	JAT	OTHER	Total	SC	OBC	JAT	OTHER	Total	SC	OBC	JAT	OTHER	Total
<b>1969**</b>	MINISTERS	3	4	4	17	24	1			3	4						4	4	17	3	28
	% from total minister	12.50	16.67	70.83		100.00	25.00			75.00	100.00						14.29	14.29	60.71	10.71	100.00
	MLAs	11	3	27	2	43	1		1	6	8						12	3	28	8	51
	% from total MLA	25.58	6.98	62.79	4.65	100.00	12.50		12.50	75.00	100.00						23.53	5.88	54.90	15.69	100.00
	%of minister from MLAs	27.27	133.33	62.96		55.81	100.00			50.00	50.00						33.33	133.33	60.71	37.50	54.90
<b>1972</b>	MINISTERS																2	1	8	6	17
	% from total minister																11.76	5.88	47.06	35.29	100.00
	MLAs																14	7	26	19	66
	% from total MLA																21.21	10.61	39.39	28.79	100.00
	%of minister from MLAs																14.29	14.29	30.77	31.58	25.76
<b>1977</b>	MINISTERS	1	2	8		11	1		1	3	5						2	2	9	3	16
	% from total minister	9.09	18.18	72.73		100.00	20.00		20.00	60.00	100.00						12.50	12.50	56.25	18.75	100.00
	MLAs	15	2	39	2	58	4	3	2	16	25						19	5	41	18	83
	% from total MLA	25.86	3.45	67.24	3.45	100.00	16.00	12.00	8.00	64.00	100.00						22.89	6.02	49.40	21.69	100.00
	%of minister from MLAs	6.67	100.00	20.51		18.97	25.00		50.00	18.75	20.00						10.53	40.00	21.95	16.67	19.28
<b>1980</b>	MINISTERS																3	2	7	4	16
	% from total minister																18.75	12.50	43.75	25.00	100.00
	MLAs																13	8	19	23	63
	% from total MLA																20.63	12.70	30.16	36.51	100.00
	%of minister from MLAs																23.08	25.00	36.84	17.39	25.40
<b>1985</b>	MINISTERS	6	1	18	3	28											6	1	18	3	28
	% from total minister	21.43	3.57	64.29	10.71	100.00											21.43	3.57	64.29	10.71	100.00
	MLAs	18	4	48	3	73											18	4	48	3	73
	% from total MLA	24.66	5.48	65.75	4.11	100.00											24.66	5.48	65.75	4.11	100.00
	%of minister from MLAs	33.33	25.00	37.50	100.00	38.36											33.33	25.00	37.50	100.00	38.36
<b>1992</b>	MINISTERS																8	4	11	8	31
	% from total minister																25.81	12.90	35.48	25.81	100.00
	MLAs																20	9	36	22	87
	% from total MLA																22.99	10.34	41.38	25.29	100.00
	%of minister from MLAs																40.00	44.44	30.56	36.36	35.63
<b>1997*</b>	MINISTERS	8	3	20	2	33	1			7	8						9	3	20	9	41
	% from total minister	24.24	9.09	60.61	6.06	100.00	12.50			87.50	100.00						21.95	7.32	48.78	21.95	100.00
	MLAs	23	7	41	4	75	4	2		12	18						27	9	41	16	93
	% from total MLA	30.67	9.33	54.67	5.33	100.00	22.22	11.11		66.67	100.00						29.03	9.68	44.09	17.20	100.00
	%of minister from MLAs	34.78	42.86	48.78	50.00	44.00	25.00			58.33	44.44						33.33	33.33	48.78	56.25	44.09
<b>2002</b>	MINISTERS																5	2	10	8	25
	% from total minister																20.00	8.00	40.00	32.00	100.00
	MLAs																14	5	22	21	62



A comparative analysis of the SAD-led coalition with the Congress-led coalition in terms of their reflecting social coalition in the cabinet yields the following trends:

- (a) The Akali-BJP coalition gave higher representation to Sikhs, whereas the Congress tried to balance it.
- (b) The Akalis overrepresented their stronghold the Malwa region and the Congress overrepresented the Doaba and Majha regions.

The impact of pre-election coalitions was that they introduced competition into the hitherto exclusive support bases of the political parties. The major parties, the Congress and Akalis, increased their vote share in each others' strongholds. For instance, the Akalis increased their support in the urban and semi-urban areas, the three cultural zones and the other-than-Sikh Jat castes. The Congress expanded its base in rural Punjab. These two parties having diluted their ideological positioning, relied on policy interventions.<sup>77</sup> The BJP could not compensate for its ideological compromise with proactive policy interventions to keep its support base intact. There has been a sense of neglect and a perception of relative deprivation among the urban voters. The social spectrum was represented in the legislature but power-sharing at the level of the executive was seen to be discriminatory by a section of dalits. Their assertions have become visible in non-electoral spaces.

The culture of coalition formation has its roots in the pre-Independence phase. The Congress and Muslim League were the two nuclei around which coalition politics revolved. The Akali Dal and Hindu Maha Sabha clearly stated that to protect

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<sup>77</sup> The continuation of coalition politics in Punjab has not only witnessed competitive populism but on a positive note has led to the 'gradual discarding of radical stances by political parties all over the state'. This has been evident from the manifestos of the Akali Dal and its ally BJP which aim to maintain 'peace, brotherhood, communal harmony, socio-economic welfare, all-round development and sustainable and profitable agriculture through diversification'. Ashutosh Kumar. "Electoral Politics in Punjab: Study of Akali Dal". *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(14-15), 2004, p. 1519.

the interests of their support bases they might even form a coalition with the Muslim League. After Independence, in partitioned Punjab, the SAD merged with the Congress twice and added a regional flavour to the national politics of the Congress. For instance, factions in the Congress supported the Punjabi Suba and Save Hindi agitations, whereas, the mandate of the Indian National Congress was to oppose both. This politics of merger was replaced by coalition politics in the reorganised state of Punjab.

Therefore, it would be appropriate to characterise the 1967-80 phase as the initiation of coalition politics which coincided with the decline of one-party dominance in legislative politics. The decline of one-party dominance initiated two distinct trends in the party dynamics in Punjab: the effective number of parties by seats increased in the post-election coalition phase (3.5 in 1967 and 3.2 in 1969, and in the pre-election coalition phase it was 2.4 in 2002, 2.9 in 2007 and 2.5 in the 2012 elections); the effective number of parties by votes the highest, 4.5 in the 1967 elections (Table 1.28).

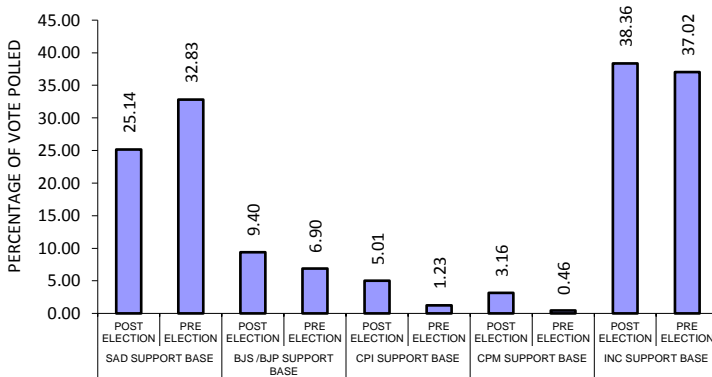
**Table 1.28**  
**Taagepera and Shugart Index for General Assembly Elections in Punjab, 1967 to 2017**

<b>Election Year</b>	<b>Effective Number of Parties by Votes</b>	<b>Effective Number of Parties by Seats</b>
<b>1967</b>	4.5	3.5
<b>1969</b>	3.9	3.2
<b>1972</b>	3.5	2.1
<b>1977</b>	4.0	3.1
<b>1980</b>	3.4	2.5
<b>1985</b>	3.3	2.1
<b>1992</b>	3.9	1.8
<b>1997</b>	4.2	2.2
<b>2002</b>	4.1	2.4
<b>2007</b>	3.1	2.9
<b>2012</b>	3.4	2.5
<b>2017</b>	3.6	2.1

Source: Calculated from data from the *Election Commission Report, 1967 – 2017*

It can, therefore, be hypothesised that at the micro-level political parties follow the strategy of expansion in post-election coalitions and the strategy of consolidation in pre-election coalitions. However, the Congress remained capable of forming a government on its own, averaging above 30 per cent of the votes, while the SAD needed a coalition partner to be electorally viable and politically stable. It is interesting to note that only the SAD base, with a 25 per cent vote share in the post-election coalition phase, increased to 33 per cent in the pre-election coalition phase (Graph 1.1), while the support base of the BJP, CPI and Congress decreased in pre-election coalition politics.

**GRAPH - 1.1**  
**PARTY WISE SUPPORT BASE**  
**[POST ELECTION (1967 - 1969) TO PRE ELECTION COALITION (1997-02-07-12-17)]**



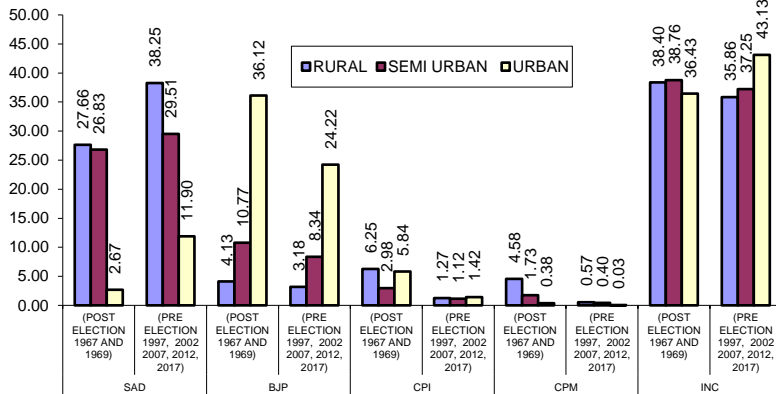
Based on constituency wise data for assembly elections

**PRE AND POST COILATION SUPPORT BASE**

Source : Election Commission Report, Punjab 1967-2017

The BJP support base declined as it underplayed its ideological thrust and could not make policy interventions for its urban base through executive decisions. The Congress gained in the urban areas not because of executive decisions but because it was seen to pursue anti-Sikh politics. In the absence of urban-centric policy interventions the urban votes polled continued to decline (Graph 1.2).

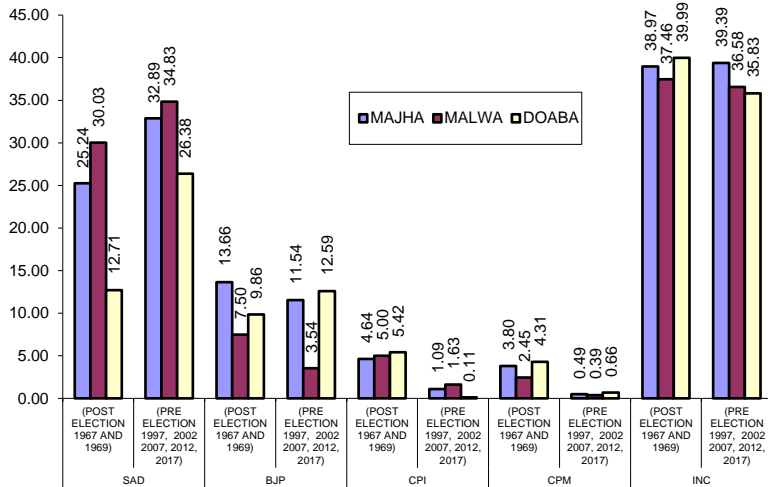
**Graph 1.2**  
**Party-wise Support Base by Location 1967-2017**



Source : Election Commission Report, Punjab 1967-2017

The pre-election coalition phase helped the SAD to increase its support base outside its stronghold Malwa, into Doaba and Majha (Graph 1.3).

**Graph 1.3**  
**Party-wise Support Base by Region, 1967-2017**



Source: Election Commission Report, Punjab 1967-2017



In so far as the representation of social diversity in the legislature and cabinet is concerned, there are imbalances. For example, out of the 1,365 MLAs in the state from 1967 to 2017, a plurality, i.e., 44 per cent were from the rural Jat peasants, whereas 26 per cent were dalits, 9 per cent OBCs and 22 per cent were urban traders (khatris) (Table 1.13). The representation of rural Jat peasants is much higher than their population share. The representation of various caste groups in the legislature became more diverse in the pre-election coalition phase as compared to the post-election coalition phase; for example, the Sikh Jat peasants had a greater share in the Akali Dal than in the pre-election coalition phase. In fact, in the pre-election coalition phase the SAD had a more even representation of dalits and OBCs, and the BJP had more dalits and OBCs and a relatively lower share of urban khatri and bania traders. This clearly shows that pre-election coalitions capture the social spectrum in a more inclusive manner.

In 1969, the SAD gave less representation to BJP MLAs than it did in the 1997 and 2007 pre-election coalitions. Interestingly, the share of ministers in the SAD was higher in the pre-election coalitions than in the post-election coalitions, but social diversity was better represented in the cabinet in the pre-election coalitions. The share of Jats in the ministry declined from 64 per cent in 1969 to 51 per cent in 1997, 55 per cent in 2007, 61 per cent in the 2012 and 41 per cent in the 2017 elections (Table 1.29) while the share of the dalits in the ministry increased to 22 per cent in 1997 but again decreased to 17 per cent in the 2012 and 18 per cent in the 2017 elections. In the post-election coalitions, the SAD gave higher representation to rural Jats than to the dalits. The BJP tried to accommodate the dalits and Jats to increase its support base, but in the pre-election coalitions the BJP negotiated higher representation for urban traders. Further, in the post-election coalitions, higher representation was given to legislators from Doaba, where the coalition base was weak, while in the pre-election coalitions regional representation was proportionate to the number of MLAs.

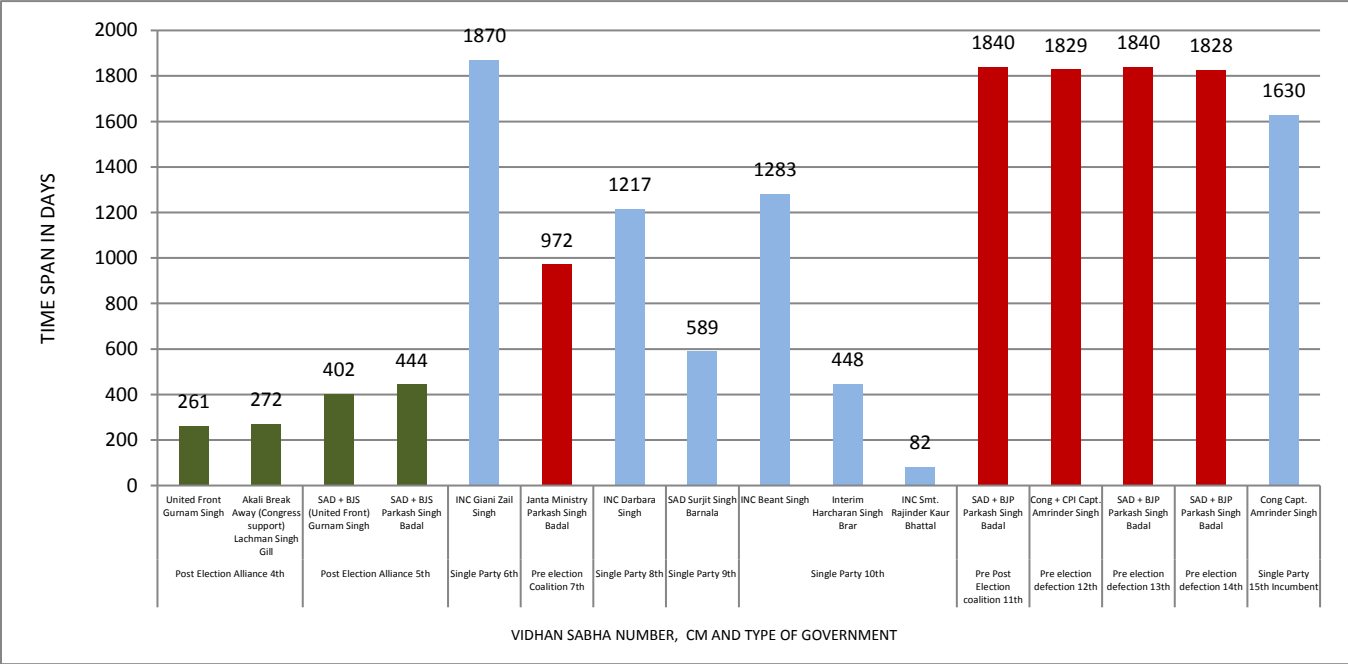
**Table 1.29**  
**Year and Caste-wise Distribution of Council of Ministers**  
**at Initial Constitution of Ministries**

Year	SC	OBC	Other	Jat	Total
<b>1969</b>	4	4	2	18	28
	14.29	14.29	7.14	64.29	100.00
<b>1972</b>	2	1	5	9	17
	11.76	5.88	29.41	52.94	100.00
<b>1977</b>	2	2	3	9	16
	12.50	12.50	18.75	56.25	100.00
<b>1980</b>	3	2	5	6	16
	18.75	12.50	31.25	37.50	100.00
<b>1985</b>	6	1	9	12	28
	21.43	3.57	32.14	42.86	100.00
<b>1992</b>	8	4	8	11	31
	25.81	12.90	25.81	35.48	100.00
<b>1997</b>	9	3	8	21	41
	21.95	7.32	19.51	51.22	100.00
<b>2002</b>	5	2	8	10	25
	20.00	8.00	32.00	40.00	100.00
<b>2007</b>	2	2	4	10	18
	11.11	11.11	22.22	55.56	100.00
<b>2012</b>	3	1	3	11	18
	16.67	5.56	16.67	61.11	100.00
<b>2017</b>	3		7	7	17
	17.65		41.18	41.18	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>255</b>
	<b>18.43</b>	<b>8.63</b>	<b>23.14</b>	<b>49.80</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source : *Punjab Vidhan Sabha Compendium of Who's Who of Members* (1960-2007), Chandigarh: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Secretariat, 2003; *Election Commission Reports*, Punjab (1967-2012) Resume, Punjab Legislative Assembly

The coalitions have tended to give relatively even representation to the social spectrum in government formation, which in turn has had an impact on durability. The post-election coalitions in Punjab were the least durable as is evident from the number of days the ministries could last, while the pre-election coalitions have completed their full terms (Graph 1.4).

**Graph 1.4**  
**Durability of Government and Tenure**



Source : Resume of the Punjab Assembly

Coalition politics has mirrored the changing character of Indian democracy. With the introduction of economic reforms, populist electoral promises are not in convergence with the economic policy framework. In other words, in the earlier phase, populist electoral promises were ideologically in convergence with the policy framework, but in the later phase they diverged from the policy framework. This shift created a crisis of trust in the leadership and party system. Political parties started relying excessively on electoral arithmetic through the appropriation of social segments and the pro-poor discourse.<sup>78</sup>

Additionally, the alliance of the Congress with the CPI was to provide content to its pro-*aam admi* and anti-communal stance. It is worth noting that the Congress in Punjab is branded a communal party.

The Congress-CPI alliance is guided more by immediate political and electoral needs. It is for this reason that the local Congress and CPI leadership were not inclined to enter an electoral alliance, and consequently in the 2007 elections an alliance did not materialise between them. On the other hand, the Akali-BJP coalition has arisen from a historical context. It has shown a tendency to evolve broad boundary conditions for links between social diversity, and electoral and executive coalitions. It is within these boundary conditions that the dynamics of

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<sup>78</sup>For example, the Congress Party in Punjab was caught between Assembly election (2002) and Parliamentary elections (2004) and became a victim of the paradox between electoral promises and the government mandate. In the 2002 Assembly elections its promise of free electricity to farmers contributed to its victory over its opponent the Akali Dal. The election manifesto committee was headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh, present Prime Minister of India. After coming to power, it started implementing the mandate of the government to introduce economic reforms and consequently it performed poorly in the 2004 Parliamentary elections. The Congress Party was quick to announce the implementation of sops like free electricity in the wake of the forthcoming Assembly elections, but this was opposed by Dr Manmohan Singh. It also passed the Punjab Repealing Act of 2004 on SYL, much to the annoyance of the central leadership. In other words, the Congress in competition with a regional alliance started appropriating the anti-Centre constituency in the state.

coalition takes place, i.e., from pre-electoral seat-sharing to cabinet formation.

Another trend which acquired currency in the coalition era is that fragmented ideological spaces are increasingly replaced by socially differentiated but unified political spaces. These differentiations are articulated in policy interventions to compensate for the absence of identitarian mobilisations. For instance, the SAD has formulated policies which are consistent with its social base; on the other hand, the BJP did not make much effort in this direction and lost its electoral base to the Congress, which led to the weakening of the Akali-BJP coalition.

## II CHANGING CONTOURS OF PUNJAB POLITICS (2017 - 2019)

Parliamentary elections in 2014 witnessed a distinct trend in Punjab compared to the rest of India. In 2014, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) sprung a surprise by winning seats. And, surprisingly, Bhartiya Janata Party's (BJP) stalwart Arun Jaitley was defeated from Amritsar constituency by Capt. Amarinder Singh of the Congress party (Indian National Congress, INC). In the 2017 assembly elections, while the Congress Party was routed in other parts of India, it won with a thumping majority in Punjab. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, the Modi wave bypassed Punjab, the AAP became history and Punjab limped back to bipolar politics. Are Punjab polls swinging like a pendulum creating waves of different parties within a short span? Has the political culture and terrain of Punjab become an ideological freak or, more likely, rudderless?

### **Crowding of the Electoral Space: From Manifestos to Menu-festos**

Historically, Punjab elections have been a bipartisan affair. The main opposition was supposed to be the major beneficiary of the anti-incumbency vote. However, in the 2017 assembly and 2019 parliamentary elections, there was also a third party, the AAP, and a third front consisting of AAP dissenters, wayward Akalis, religious fundamentalists and do-gooder politicians. These elections were also different as all the three political formations had high stakes. The Congress party's resurgence at the national level largely depended on Punjab. For AAP, victory in Punjab would have provided the much needed fodder to Kejriwal's (supreme leader of AAP) ambition to launch himself as a prime ministerial choice. For the Akalis, these elections were a fight for their survival and to save their alliance with the BJP.

Unlike the Akalis and the Congress, the new incumbent AAP did not have any historical baggage nor any historical advantage either. And unlike Delhi, Punjab did not have a large footloose population – as the people of the State had their culture and history.<sup>i</sup> Both the Congress and the Akalis have regional flavour to their advantage, while the AAP was yet to evolve a regional identity of its own. The only advantage that it had was their anti-drug and anti-corruption political stance.

Further, the judgment that quashed the 2004 Water Termination Act passed by the Punjab Legislature denying the neighbouring state of Haryana its share of water led by Capt. Amarinder Singh, then Congress Chief Minister of Punjab, had added another dimension to the political theatrics. The AAP could not take a forceful position as the states of Delhi and Haryana were also stakeholders in this conflict. However, it is also a fact that the termination of all agreements including that of 1981 by the Punjab assembly in 2004 did not make the Congress Party lose elections in Haryana in 2004 and it won elections in Punjab in 2007. It appears that after 50 years of the water sharing dispute, people seem to have become indifferent to the political rhetoric, judicial and administrative diversions on this issue.

This election also witnessed blatant promises made by the political parties. In its election campaign, the Congress promised to send the competing leadership to jail for their alleged misdeeds rather than activating the justice-delivery system, empty or false promises like a farmers' debt waiver, one government job for each family; and eradicating the drug crisis within a month. SAD promised to dole out *aata-dal*, sugar, utensils including pressure cookers, gas, stoves, *shagun* at the time of marriage, bicycles for the girls, pension to the farmers, incentives for the suicide victims of the farmers' families, and houses for the homeless.

The AAP, in continuation with the 2014 parliament elections and 2015 Delhi assembly elections, used its own cocktail of doles and promises. They issued **Menu-festo** rather than

manifesto.<sup>ii</sup> There was a menu card for the farmers, traders, students, Dalits, industrialists, women, etc., to cater to everyone's taste replacing the manifesto which is by definition a declaration of the principles, policies, intention and, of course, ideological commitment. It was reinforcement of the thought that the voters' perception constitutes the reality. It does not matter who was the leader and what he believed in. The focus was to market that image of a leader which the voters wanted the most.

### **Emerging Faultlines in Electoral Politics**

The accumulated anti-incumbency of the 10-years rule of the Akali-BJP manifested through various protests like ad-hoc and contractual workers demanding permanent government jobs, the peasantry agitating for adequate support prices for their crops, the followers of Sikhism protesting the revoking of the pardon granted to the *Dera Sacha Sauda* chief by the Sikh clergy and the subsequent violation of the Sikh scriptures culminated into holding of the Sarbat Khalsa<sup>iii</sup> (congregation of the Sikhs) in 2015. The desecration of the religious scriptures and revoking of the pardon to the Dera Sacha Sauda Chief, accused of blasphemy, provided teeth to the political discourse in the elections.

In 2007, the Dera Sacha Sauda chief, Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, had appeared in an advertisement dressed up as Guru Gobind Singh, 10<sup>th</sup> Sikh Guru. This led to widespread clashes between the Dera followers and the Sikhs. An organisation called *Ek Noor Khalsa Fauj* was constituted by Jathedar Balwant Singh Nandgarh of *Takht Sri Damdama Sahib* to oppose and stop the congregation of the Dera followers. The Akal Takht (Supreme Temporal Authority of Sikhs) issued the directive in May, 2007 for social boycott of the Dera chief.<sup>iv</sup> In a flip-flop move, on September 24, 2015 the Akal Takht (Supreme Temporal Authority) exonerated the Dera chief in the 2007 blasphemy case. This led to widespread protests. The followers of the Sikh Panth and the radicals launched a movement against the Jathedars, "and accused that the pardon was granted at the



behest of the SAD, which is eyeing Dera votes in 2017 assembly polls.”<sup>v</sup>

### **Conflict between Institutionalised Sikh Religion and Deras**

This context led to the articulation of the conflict between the institutionalised Sikh religion and the followers of the Dera who mainly come from the lower castes. Deras are the product of a liberal cultural tradition and have been the symbols of plurality and diversification of the religious spectrum. Historically, their evolution has been intermeshed with the drive to consolidate the Sikh religion. The prominent Deras which evolved as a reaction to the consolidation of the Sikh religion were *Nanakpanthis*, *Sewapanthis*, *Nirmalas*, and *Udasis*. The contemporary Deras are not the offshoot of Sikhism. These are the congregations of followers transcending religious, caste and class divisions through reverence for the living Guru.

These Deras have represented marginalised social sections, but have also questioned the monolithic articulations of Sikhism leading to discrimination against the lower castes. It has led to conflict with the institutionalised religion. There have been incidents of violence involving various Dera followers with sections of Sikhs such as Dera Nirankari in 1978, *Dera Bhanjarwala* in 2001, *Dera Sacha Sauda* in 2008-09, *Dera Nurmahal* in 2002 and *Dera Sachkhand Ballan* in 2009-10.<sup>vi</sup> The causes for these conflicts are rooted in the various practices and rituals of the Deras, such as the notion of the living Guru which is strictly opposed in institutionalised Sikhism and imitation of the imagery of Sikh Gurus by the Dera heads.

There are six major Deras in Punjab, including, *Radha Soami*, *Namdhari*, *Dera Sacha Sauda*, *Nurmahal*, *Nirankari* and *Dera Sachkhand Balan*. They draw their discourses from multiple traditions like, Islam, Sufism, Kabir Panth, Christianity, Sikhism, etc. and couch them in regional dialects, myths and symbols. Dera “babas” (self-appointed Godmen) excessively rely on oral discourses. In this region, oral tradition is dominant and text reading is not very popular. Therefore, these “babas” become

the sole mediators between God and the devotees for imparting holistic knowledge and guidance in politics.

Together, these Deras have influence in around 56 constituencies. The *Radha Soami* in 19, *Dera Sacha Sauda* in 27, *Dera Nurmahal* in 8, *Dera Nirankari* in 4, *Dera Ballan* in 8, *Dera Namdhari* in 2 constituencies. Not all the deras are actively engaged in politics. However, *Dera Sacha Sauda* came into prominence in the 2007 elections when it openly supported the Congress. As a consequence, the Akalis suffered a loss in around 21 assembly constituencies. Unlike the past, the Akali Dal did not make any emotional appeal like danger to the Sikh *Panth* or exhibiting any frenzy against the followers of the competing Deras. On the contrary, they were accused of patronising these deras, particularly *Dera Sacha Sauda*, by managing a pardon for the Dera chief who angered Sikhs by imitating their guru.

### **Desecration of Religious Sects**

Along with this, a number of incidents of Guru Granth Sahib desecration were reported in 2015 mainly from the districts of Muktsar, Bathinda, Faridkot and Moga. On October 12, the first incident of desecration was reported from Bargari, Faridkot district. In this incident, 110 torn *Angs* (pages) of the Sikh holy book were found.<sup>vii</sup>

Between October 13 and 16, 2015, a number of Sikh organisations held protest marches. On October 14, 2015, around 6,000 protesters clashed with the police and two died in the police firing, while more than 50 people were injured, including, 24 policemen at *Behbal Kalan*. The Government of Punjab appointed a Judicial Commission headed by a retired Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court to investigate the incidents. The protests also spread to different districts of Punjab. The radical organisations and AAP members launched a morcha in Bargari. Their main demands were; (i) punishment to the culprits of sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib; (ii) action against the police involved in Behbal Kalan firing; (iii) and release of the Sikh prisoners who had completed their jail terms.<sup>viii</sup> These

protests adversely affected the SAD performance in the elections.

### **Radicalisation of Religious Agenda Leading to Alienation of the Urban Hindus**

The widespread protest against securing a pardon for the sacrilege committed by Dera Sacha Sauda Baba Ram Rahim from the Sikh clergy, stealing of the holy Guru Granth Sahib from a Sikh temple and its denigration, and the police firing leading to the killing of protesters made the SAD vulnerable in its own support base. These protests culminated into the organisation of the Sarbat Khalsa on November 9, 2015 on the outskirts of Amritsar, with an aim of strengthening Sikh religious institutions and traditions.

The organisation of the *Sarbat Khalsa* by the protagonists of a separate Sikh State with alleged support of the Congress and the AAP led to the alienation of not only of *Dera* followers, but also urban Hindus and liberal Sikhs.<sup>ix</sup> No doubt, it gave the Congress party and AAP an advantage in the traditional Akali support base in a particular region of Punjab.<sup>x</sup> The political battle was being fought in the religious domain (Panthic) rather than on economic and social development, the agrarian crisis and governance deficits.

After winning the 2017 elections, the Congress party continued to operate in the religious domain. The Punjab Assembly on August 28, 2018, adopted an amendment to the Indian Penal code that imposes a life sentence upon those convicted of desecrating the Guru Granth Sahib, Bhagavad Gita, Quran and Bible, with the intention of hurting the religious feelings of people. Earlier, Section 295A of the IPC already provided for imprisonment up to three years for deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings. The amendment has been described as 'bad in law' and 'politically expedient'. Thirty-four former civil servants reminded the Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh of Congress' chequered history of fishing in the communal waters for short-term political ends.<sup>xi</sup>

The Congress position generated fear among the Hindu minority in Punjab as well as among the Dalits. Congress was explicit in competing to capture Sikh religious institutions and conciliation with the radical Sikhs. This might help Congress to win elections, but it is bound to produce tragedies by polarising identity politics. The struggle to capture Sikh religious institutions, like the SGPC and Akal Takht, by Congress targeting Akali Dal control of these institutions is bound to boomerang as had happened earlier. The protests by the radicals supported by the Congress have also very carefully appropriated the absence of the counter narrative to 'Khalistan'.<sup>xii</sup> The state, on the one hand, allowed the coming together of fundamentalist groups in order to appropriate the religious (Panthic) constituency and, on the other, its inept handling of the violation of the sanctity of the Sikh religious scriptures provided enough fodder to the fringe groups to articulate their divisive agenda in the mainstream politics.

The voting pattern in elections reflected this polarisation. In the 2017 assembly elections, the vote share of the main political parties decreased as compared to the 2012 assembly elections. The Congress party's vote share decreased by 1% with 77 seats, that of the SAD by 10% with an all-time low 15 seats, the BJP by 2% with 3 seats. The vote share of the AAP remained the same with 24% as compared to the 2014 parliament elections. In terms of the seat share, it registered a decline from 33 assembly segments in 2014 to 20 assembly seats in 2017 elections. This was a watershed election for the SAD and the AAP (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Punjab Elections 2012-2019**

Year	Parliament				Assembly			
	Party	Contested	Won	Vote %	Party	Contested	Won	Vote %
2012					BJP	23	12	7.18
					SAD	94	56	34.73
					CPI	14	-	0.82
					CPM	9	-	0.16
					BSP	117	-	4.29
					INC	117	46	40.09
					PPOP	92	-	5.16
					OTHERS	612	3	7.56
2014	BJP	3	2	8.77				
	SAD	10	4	26.37				
	CPI	5	0	0.4				
	CPM	3	0	0.13				
	INC	13	3	33.19				
	BSP	13	0	1.91				
	AAP	13	4	24.47				
	OTHERS	75	0	1.15				
	IND	118	0	3.61				

*Electoral Politics in Punjab*

Year	Parliament				Assembly			
	Party	Contested	Won	Vote %	Party	Contested	Won	Vote %
2017					BJP	23	3	5.43
					CPI	23	0	0.22
					CPM	12	0	0.07
					INC	117	77	38.77
					SAD	94	15	25.42
					AAP	112	20	23.88
					LIP	6	2	1.23
					BSP	111	0	1.53
					Others	647	0	3.43
2019	BJP	3	2	9.74				
	SAD	10	2	27.76				
	INC	13	8	40.58				
	AAP	13	1	7.46				
	CPI	2	0	0.31				
	CPM	1	0	0.08				
	BSP	3	0	3.53				
	OTHERS	233	0	10.54				

Source: Election Commission of India Reports 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2019.

An unusual understanding between the Punjab Congress and the BJP to defeat AAP changed the electoral dynamics in Punjab. The AAP was seen as a formidable challenge by the Congress. It was also seen as supporting the agenda of Sikh radicals much to the dislike of BJP urban supporters.<sup>13</sup> Congress and the BJP entered into a pact that the BJP will support the Congress candidate in other than 23 constituencies contested by the BJP. The BJP will not extend support to its alliance partner the SAD in the remaining 96 constituencies. This can be easily discerned from the shift in the urban vote share as it constitutes the traditional vote bank of the BJP. The urban vote share of the Congress went up from 43.5% in 2012 to 49% in 2017, while the urban vote share of the BJP declined from 28% in 2012 to 19% in 2017. It can be safely concluded that the understanding advantaged the Congress.

In the 2019 elections, there was no pact between the Congress and the BJP. The urban vote share of the BJP increased from 19% in 2017 to 27% in 2019. And, the Congress party's urban vote share declined from 49% in 2017 to 45% in the 2019 election (See Table 2.2)

**Table 2.2: Location Wise Party Wise Seats Contested and won and votes polled in 2012, 2014, 2017 and 2019**

	<b>INC</b>				<b>BJP</b>				<b>SAD</b>				<b>AAP</b>			
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>RURAL</b>	61	61	61	61	5	5	5	5	56	56	56	56	-	61	60	61
<b>won</b>	19	11	37	37	3	5	1	5	38	28	11	13	-	17	12	2
<b>%</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>36.9</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>41.1</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>32.2</b>	-	<b>22.3</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>6.1</b>
<b>URBAN</b>	15	15	15	15	10	10	10	10	5	5	5	5	-	15	12	15
<b>won</b>	6	13	14	11	5		0	2	3		0	1	-	1	0	0
<b>%</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>43.6</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>44.6</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>11.9</b>	-	<b>17.9</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>SEMI URBAN</b>	41	41	41	41	8	8	8	8	33	33	33	33	-	41	40	41
<b>won</b>	21	13	26	21	4	3	2	7	15	9	4	7	-	15	8	5
<b>%</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>38.4</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>27.5</b>	-	<b>29.9</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>11.0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	117	117	117	117	23	23	23	23	94	94	94	94	-	117	112	117
<b>won</b>	46	37	77	69	12	8	3	14	56	37	15	21	-	33	20	7
<b>%</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>34.7</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>28.2</b>	-	<b>24.5</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>7.4</b>

Source: Calculated from Constituency-wise Electoral Rolls and Election Commission of India Reports 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2019.



The electoral outcomes in the 2019 Parliamentary elections were in conformity with the 2014 elections in which the voters were no longer bound to a political party and functioned as footloose voters. The only difference was that it worked to the disadvantage of the AAP and the SAD. Comparing the 2014 Parliament to the 2019 elections, the percentage vote share of the political parties, i.e. the Congress (40.5) with 8 seats, the BJP (9.7) with two seats, the SAD (27.7) with two seats increased and the only party with decreased vote share was AAP (7.4) with one seat (See Table 2.1).

In this election, AAP was reduced to a position of mega spoiler. It made the Congress party lose in 11 and the SAD-BJP alliance in 30 assembly constituencies. The Lok Insaaf Party (LIP) made the BJP-SAD alliance lose in three constituencies.

This was also reflected in terms of electoral competition. The 2019 Parliamentary elections were less volatile as compared to the 2014 elections. In this election, as compared to 2014, the effective number of the parties by votes decreased from 3.7 to 2.3 and the effective number of the parties by seats, decreased from 4.02 to 3.8 (See table 2.3).<sup>14</sup> This clearly indicated that Punjab returned to its traditional bipartisan election mode.

**Table 2.3: Taagepara and Shugart Index for Parliamentary Elections in Punjab 2004 to 2019**

<i>Election year</i>	<i>Effective Number of Parties by Votes</i>	<i>Effective Number of Parties by Seats</i>
<b>2004</b>	2.19	3.93
<b>2009</b>	2.09	3.00
<b>2014</b>	3.76	4.02
<b>2019</b>	2.32	3.85

Source: Calculated from Election Commission of India Reports Punjab, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019.

In terms of electoral volatility,<sup>15</sup> it continued to be high, but was not as high as in 2014. Between 2009 and 2014, it was 25 and was reduced to 17.1 between 2014 and 2019. It was 11 between 2004 and 2009 (See Table 2.4). This shift worked to the disadvantage of the AAP.

**Table 2.4: Pedersen Index of Electoral volatility**

<i>Election Years</i>	<i>BJP</i>	<i>AAP</i>	<i>SAD(B)</i>	<i>SAD(M)</i>	<i>CPI</i>	<i>CPM</i>	<i>INC</i>	<i>BSP</i>	<i>LIP</i>	<i>SAD(T)</i>	<i>OTHERS</i>	<i>Total Net Change (TNC)</i>	<i>Pedersen Index of Electoral Volatility</i>
<b>2004 to 2009</b>	0.42	0	0.43	3.43	2.22	1.67	11.06	1.92	-	-	0.99	22.14	<b>11.07</b>
<b>2009 to 2014</b>	1.29	24.47	7.48	0.1	0.07	0.01	12.04	3.84	-	-	0.23	49.53	<b>24.77</b>
<b>2014 to 2019</b>	0.97	17.01	1.39	0.12	0.09	0.05	7.39	1.62	3.45	0.08	2.13	34.29	<b>17.15</b>

Source: Calculated from Election Commission of India Reports Punjab, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019.

The BJP and the Congress could garner maximum advantage at the expense of both the SAD and the AAP. The BJP and the Congress won more seats for each percentage of votes polled in the 2019 Parliamentary elections; the BJP with a multiplier of 1.5, and the Congress with a multiplier of 1.5 as compared to the SAD with a multiplier of 0.5 and the AAP with a multiplier of 1.03<sup>xvi</sup> (See Table 2.5). Thus, the BJP and the Congress in the 2019 election showed a greater capacity to translate vote share into seats as compared to the SAD and the AAP.

**Table 2.5: Seat-Vote Multiplier for Different parties in previous Parliament Election**

<i>Election Years</i>	<i>BJP</i>	<i>AAP</i>	<i>SAD (B)</i>	<i>INC</i>
<b>2004</b>	2.20	-	1.80	0.45
<b>2009</b>	0.76	-	0.91	1.36
<b>2014</b>	1.75	1.26	1.17	0.70
<b>2019</b>	1.58	1.03	0.55	1.52

Source: Calculated from Election Commission of India Reports Punjab, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019.

The outcome of 2019 Parliamentary elections can be understood in the context of political developments from 2014 onwards. These developments scripted the withering away of the AAP from Punjab's electoral scene.

### **WHY PUNJAB WENT THE MODI WAY?**

Punjab could stand out as Amarinder played Modi in Punjab. He remained grounded refusing to be trapped and refrained from blindly following the Congress Party's plank, i.e., Modi Bashing. He appropriated and extended Prime Minister Modi's narrative on National Security and at the same time nurtured Punjab-specific identity politics.

### **Amarinder Played Modi in Punjab**

After the Pulwama attack, he echoed Prime Minister Modi's assertion, but with significant additions. He asserted that, 'Pakistan killed 41, we should kill 82', calling for 'tit-for-tat'. He further added that, 'Pakistan can't hold India to ransom just

because they are a nuclear nation, even we are'. He cautioned Pakistan on terror and at the same time endorsed the building of the Kartarpur Corridor as a promotion of the people-to-people contact enabling Sikhs to more easily visit their religious shrines in Pakistan. He endorsed Prime Minister Modi's stand unlike other Congressmen, to act on a mix of military, diplomatic and economic measures against Pakistan.

He also disagreed with the Congress Party's position of questioning the reliability and effectiveness of the army strikes against Pakistan. He refused to comment on the veracity of the number of terrorists killed in the strikes, 'whether it was one or 100, the message had gone loud and clear that the nation will not let the killing of its innocent soldiers and citizens go unpunished.'<sup>xvii</sup> This appealed to 'patriotic and nationalist Punjabis' irrespective of religious and caste affiliations.

### **Blended Nationalism with Identity Politics**

Not only this, the Congress Chief Minister blended nationalism with identity politics as has been done by the BJP in other States. At the national level, alleged violations against cows led to violent reactions from Hindu fundamentalists. Similarly, in Punjab, alleged desecration of religious books led to extreme reactions. Religious sentiments were invoked and, in turn, it provided fodder to the radical elements. Amarinder Singh in a statement to the electronic media, accused Pakistan's ISI of trying to destabilise Punjab by desecration of religious books, including the Guru Granth Sahib, Gita and the Bible. He distinguished between desecration and the police action in Bargari. Whereas, the 'Bargari brigade' led by the Congress Ministers targeted the rival political party, the Akali Dal engaged in a counter campaign. It became a toxic mix of nationalism and religious identity that was nurtured in India and Punjab.

### **Decimation of the Aam Aadmi Party**

Another major factor is the decimation of the Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab is back to bipolar politics. The vote share of the Aam

Aadmi Party declined from 24% in 2014 to 7% in the 2019 elections. In all the constituencies except Bathinda, Sangrur and Khadoor Sahib, the vote share of both the losing and the winning party, i.e. the Congress, and the Akali Dal has increased at the expense of the Aam Aadmi Party.

This election also provided resurgence to the Akali-BJP alliance. The vote share of the Akali Dal increased by 2% as compared to the 2014 Parliament Elections and the vote share of the BJP increased by 1% from 2014 to 2019 elections. And, as compared to 2017 Assembly elections, the combined vote share of both the BJP and the SAD increased by 7% in the 2019 Parliament elections.

The SAD-BJP alliance doubled their seat share and the Congress Party declined by 14% as compared to the 2017 elections. Significantly, the Congress could maintain its rural constituencies, whereas its support in the semi-urban and urban constituencies has declined. The Akali Dal could not increase their seat share in rural Punjab. Their major gains are in the semi-urban and urban constituencies.

### **Takeaways**

So, what are the takeaways of the elections in Punjab? Firstly, anti-incumbency campaigns devoid of any ideological persuasion without a regional and positive agenda may not be appealing. For instance, in Punjab the SAD did not even bring out its own manifesto and announced a Common Minimum Programme along with BJP. These parties did not even raise their traditional demands like transfer of Chandigarh and Punjabi-speaking areas to Punjab, sharing of the river waters, and formal consultation forums for the regional parties in decision-making at the national level. Other issues like petroleum prices, fertiliser subsidies, doubling the farmers' income and employment generation policies also received little attention.

Another lesson is that the regional parties should develop their own vision and thoughts on national security. These include building people-to-people connections in South Asia, opening of trade with Pakistan to the benefit of Punjab farmers and overcoming agrarian distress rather than succumbing to a particular kind of discourse on national security or stand in negation.

The regionalisation of the political and economic agenda is needed to reinforce diversity sensitivity and to promote a regional specific development paradigm.

### ***Endnotes and References:***

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<sup>i</sup> Pramod Kumar, "An Election of many Firsts: Can Punjab's politicians get their act together in time and reconnect with the average voter?" *The Hindu*, November 14, 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> Sikhs following the 10<sup>th</sup> & last Guru, started the tradition of deciding matters concerning the community at the biennial meetings which took place at Amritsar on the first of Baisakhi and at Diwali. These assemblies came to be known as the *Sarbat Khalsa* and a resolution passed by it became a *Gurmata* (decree of the Guru). The *Sarbat Khalsa* appointed jathedars (group leaders), chose agents, and entrusted them with powers to negotiate on behalf of the Sikhs. The first event occurred in 1733. See, Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs. Volume 1: 1469-1838*. Second Edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1999. pp. 116-119.

The Five Member Panthic Committee (FMPC) declared the formation of Khalistan on 29 April 1986, spelling out 'social structure of Khalistan' whose main objective will be the 'welfare of humanity (*sarbat da bhala*) and service to society' following Gurbani: 'Condemned are those hand and feet that do not serve others, since all else is futile activity' (1986, 26). Its policy intends to promote cultural life, encourage unity of humankind and feeling of cooperation. The humanity (*sic*) would not be allowed to be divided on bases of caste, untouchability, social inequality, rural-urban, black and white and such other arbitrary divisions. These would be abolished with state power. (FMPC 1986). *Gurmata* adopted on 26 January 1986 makes it clear: 'This august assembly of Sarbat Khalsa clarifies that Sikhs are slaves in India and freedom is their fundamental right.' See Birinder Pal Singh, "Sikh militants'

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terms of discourse: Religion, Khalistan/Nation and Violence." *Routledge. Sikh Formations*, Vol. 12, Nos. 2–3, 2016. pp. 191–206.

<sup>iv</sup> Kamaldeep Singh Brar, "Punjab withdraws security of Takht Damdama Sahib." *Hindustan Times*, December 18, 2014.

<sup>v</sup> Harkirat Singh, "Akal Takht Revokes Pardon to Dera Head Gurmeet Ram Rahim." *Hindustan Times*, October 17, 2015.

<sup>vi</sup> Pramod Kumar, "Punjab Polls: Doles, Deras and Drugs." *The Tribune*, January 28, 2017.

<sup>vii</sup> In 2015, between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of October, several incidents were reported regarding desecration from various places in Punjab. For instance, the *Angs* of the Guru Granth Sahib were found torn as 35 *Angs* in Mishriwala village of Ferozepur district, 39 *Angs* in Bath village of Tarn Taran, and a 3-inch cut was reported in 745 *Angs* in Kohrian village of Faridkot. Along with the Guru Granth Sahib, incidents were also reported of torn *Angs* from the Panj Granth (a smaller text of selected verses from the Guru Granth Sahib). Several other incidents like in Nawanshahr, three saroops were burnt, in Muktsar (Kotli Ablu) a Gurudwara caught fire along with its Bir (burnt to ashes).

<sup>viii</sup> Surjit Singh, "We support cause of Bargari morcha, linking it with ISI unfair, says former cabinet minister Sewa Singh Sekhwan." *Hindustan Times*, October 18, 2015.

<sup>ix</sup> The event was opposed by the SAD. It alleged that the Congress and the AAP are behind the anti-national and secessionist forces who want to stoke the fires of communalism in the state. *The Economic Times*, "Congress, foreign forces behind Sarbat Khalsa: Sukhbir Singh Badal." November 13, 2015.

<sup>x</sup> Pramod Kumar, "Back to the State. A lesson from Punjab: High command politics is past its sell-by date." *The Indian Express*, March 13, 2017.

<sup>xi</sup> *The Tribune*, "Withdraw anti-sacrilege Bills: Ex-bureaucrats to Amarinder. Say blasphemy laws prone to misuse against minorities." September 4, 2018. Similar views were also expressed by a senior political analyst: "this is corrosive pattern of competitive communalism that pushed Punjab into tragedy of terrorism in the past, as that again threatens to intensify religious radicalism in the state." Ajai Sahni, "Another Weapon to the Bigoted." *The Tribune*, September 1, 2018. Making religious sentiments the basis for law is a recipe for competitive mobilisation and conflict not at peace. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "A Blasphemous Law." *The Indian Express*, August 25, 2018.

<sup>xii</sup> The consensus in the country to ensure justice for the Sikhs butchered in 1984 anti-Sikh riots was extended to rehabilitate the terrorists. This provided claim to a section instigating revenge for the hurt Sikh psyche and a separate Sikh State. This was further reinforced by eventually conceding the twice denied appeal of the Dal Khalsa for conferment of martyrdom on the leaders of Khalistan by the Akal Takht. These organisations, after having acquired legitimacy, raised their claim to control the SGPC and the Akal Takht and

'liberate' these from the SAD. Pramod Kumar, "Rising tide of anger in Punjab." *Deccan Herald*, November 22, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Punjab has a history of political contestants who can be labelled as spoilers. Spoilers are those who have a capacity to make others lose rather than their own win. These spoilers become relevant in constituencies where the difference between the winner and the runner up is small. Between 1997 and 2017 elections, the effective number of parties sharing votes was higher as compared to their share in seats. Parties like Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Shiromani Akali Dal (Tohra) and People's Party of Punjab (PPP) and even AAP act as a major spoiler in these elections without winning even a single seat. In 1997, the BSP polled eight % of the votes without winning a seat led to the defeat of nine Congress, five Akalis and three BJP candidates. In 2002 elections, the vote share of BSP was polled around 6% votes and it led to the defeat of 10 Congress, 15 Akalis and 2 BJP candidates. In these elections, Akali Dal (Tohra) got around 5% votes that led to the defeat of seven Akali candidates. In 2007 elections, BSP emerged as the main spoiler with only four % votes which led to the defeat of 18 Congress and 14 Akali candidates. However, in 2012, there were two main spoilers, i.e. BSP and PPP. BSP and PPP led to the defeat of 22 Congress and 29 SAD candidates. These political groups acted as spoilers for main political parties. The BSP and the PPP acted as wild cards, whereas Akali Dal (Tohra) group spoiled the chances of the Akali Dal (Badal). Pramod Kumar, "Punjab Elections: Game of Spoilers." *Times of India*, January 9, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> *Taagepara and Shugart Index*. The effective number of parties, in terms of percentage of votes and seats secured by parties in elections to the directly elected chamber of parliament, is calculated for all the general elections using the Taagepera and Shugart procedure ( $N=1/\sum Pi^2$  where Pi is the fractional share of i-the party and  $\sum$  stand for the summation of overall components).

<sup>15</sup> *Pedersen Index of Electoral Volatility*. It is computed by adding the absolute value of change in percentage of votes gained and lost by each party from one election to the next, then dividing the sum by 2. Thus in a party system with "n" parties, electoral volatility is = TNC/2, where TNC is total net change in party support. The electoral volatility thus has a range of "0" (perfect stability of electoral support to parties, where no party gained or lost votes) to 100 (perfect instability, where there is total shift of voters from one party to the other).

<sup>xvi</sup> *Seat-Vote Multiplier*. It is a ratio of the proportion of seats won by a party to the proportion of votes won by it. It is expression of the relationship between percentage of votes a party secures in an election and the seats it secures in the legislature. It is given by:  $1/[(\text{vote share of a party}/ 100)/(\text{numbers of seats secured by the party}/\text{total number of seats in the legislature})]$ .

<sup>xvii</sup> *Punjab Today*, "Pak Won't Hesitate to Nuke India if Faced with Defeat, warns Capt Amarinder." Amritsar, March 4, 2017.







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