

Political parties, caste system and India's foreign policy

Partidos políticos, sistema de castas e política exterior indiana

Barbara Nilsson*

Luiz Felipe Granzioli**

Natalia Carrusca Alvim de Oliveira***

Resumo

The practice of the caste system remains prohibited in India, but impacts significantly the country's social and political structure. Electoral campaigns reflect this impact: political parties' proposals are often directed to one or another caste, influencing voters. Elected politicians adopt policies adjusted to their party's orientation and the issue of castes substantially affects domestic policy. Nonetheless, does it affect foreign policy? The article presents an overview of the structure and formation of the national political parties, and lays out the foreign policy orientation of each Prime Minister. In the final considerations, it is argued that there is not a comprehensible relation between the political party's orientation on castes and ministerial approaches on foreign policy.

Key-words: India. Foreign Policy. Caste System. Politics

Abstract

A prática do sistema de castas continua proibida na Índia, mas ainda com impacto significativo na estrutura sócio-política do país. Campanhas eleitorais refletem este impacto: propostas de partidos políticos frequentemente são direcionadas para uma ou outra casta, influenciando o eleitor. Políticos eleitos adotam medidas ajustadas à orientação partidária e a questão das castas afeta substancialmente políticas domésticas. Porém, há impacto na política externa? O artigo apresenta um panorama da estrutura e formação dos partidos políticos nacionais e uma visão geral sobre a orientação de cada Primeiro Ministro indiano no que tange à política externa. Nas considerações finais, argumenta-se que não há forte relação entre a abordagem partidária quanto às castas e a política externa ministerial.

Palavras-chave: Índia. Política Externa. Sistema de Castas. Política.

* Graduanda em Relações Internacionais pela Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais. Contato: barbaranilsson13@hotmail.com

** Graduando em Relações Internacionais pela Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais. Contato: luisgranzioli@hotmail.com

*** Graduanda em Relações Internacionais pela Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais. Contato: nataliacarrusca@yahoo.com

Introduction

The elaboration of public policies is the result not only of international phenomena, but also of many domestic factors that interact in different ways and influence the decision-making processes in each country. In India, this is especially true, considering the variety of parties in its political system, and the multiplicity of ethnic, cultural, religious, and social groups.

For example, although the practice of the ancient Hindu caste system – which divides the population into a social hierarchy based on religious beliefs – is forbidden by law, it is still an element of great matter in understanding the dynamics of Indian society and politics. Some political parties claim to represent one or another caste (or socio-economic group, which often coincides with the caste stratification), which affect the elaboration of their electoral proposals.

In this article, considering that foreign policy also reflects the structure of domestic forces at work, we attempt to understand whether these ties between the caste system and the political system have impacted India's international posture and strategies. For such, we approach the structure of political parties and their historical formation, focusing on the six national parties, considered as the most relevant among the more than 1800 parties registered in the country. Approaching the historical formation of these parties aims at detecting their link with the caste system.

Then, we briefly overview the foreign policy strategies of each Prime Minister since India's independence (1947), aiming at identifying elements of convergence and divergence between them. In that way, we try to understand if there were considerable changes according to each Prime Minister's party. To conclude, we conjugate these perceptions in order to properly analyse if the relations between politics and the caste system influences – or not – the way foreign policy has been conducted by each Prime Minister.

The structure of political parties in India

Nowadays, India has a multiparty system, which includes six national parties: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which means "Majority People's Party"; Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the "Indian People's Party"; the Communist Party; the Communist (Marxist) Party; the Congress Party; and the Congress Nationalist Party. In spite

of the small number of national parties, India has a huge quantity of regional parties. According to Ajay Mehra (2007), in 2007 there were already more than a thousand regional and local parties. Since the enactment of its constitution, India has allowed universal suffrage with no formal restrictions (MEHRA, 2007).

The electoral frame has a different element due to the caste system. People from higher castes still have control of many issues in the country, while a significant part of India's population struggles to be properly represented in the political system. There are two official groups that represent this population: "Scheduled Castes" (SC) represents the "Dalits", the "untouchables" according to the caste system; and the "Scheduled Tribes" (ST) represents native or aborigine people. Both groups have earned the control over some electoral districts, and quotas in public service (MEHRA, 2007) through a program known in India as "reservations of seats".

Therefore, in some communities only members of these groups can run for elections. By doing that, the government allows people with lower (financial and social) conditions to run for elections even if they cannot afford massive investment in electoral advertisement (ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016). The "reservation of seats" is also important because it helps to maintain Hindu and indigenous representativeness in the public sector.

According to Kesalu (2013), the political system in India has developed over the years to be more competitive and more democratic (KESALU, 2013), embodying Eckstein's concept of proper party systems: "competitive interaction patterns between parties" (ECKSTEIN *apud* KESALU, 2013). After the independence, one specific party prevailed in Indian politics for half a century. In the 1990's the electoral system broke this situation and ever since the party system operates in two levels: National and Regional. It works as a well-organized party system acting in each of the two levels and both interact in each scenario (MEHRA, 2007).

Furthermore, according to Mehra (2007), even though national parties are more influent in the political system, the first years of the 2000s brought new paradigms, with a rising participation of the regional parties. By 2007, they have occupied 1/3 of the Indian parliament – Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. There are still many regional parties not recognized by the Election Commission of India (ECI). A big number of active parties are ethnic and regional, such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK),

the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD). The DMK and the AIADMK, for example, representatives of the Dravidian population, have gained strength and nowadays have a more active role in the regional ambit (MEHRA, 2007).

One of the most important elements in a democratic political system is the existing of not only a ruling party, but also of opposition parties in order to spread different political views and to promote enriching debates. Even if a specific party wins the elections in India, it does not mean they will have all seats in Parliament. This matter gives an important role to opposition parties due to the fact that the ruling party needs the Parliament working in concertation so their proposals can be approved.

In the recent years, opposition parties in India have faced some obstacles, mainly for the lack of unity among them. There are many opposition parties that have brawls among themselves. The lack of a unity weakens the opposition, and prevents the development of healthy debates over political issues in the country. The quarrel among leaders of the parties often causes the population to lose their faith in them. The opposition parties do not have clear programs of joint action and they often act only in regional and local scope. Besides, many of them also lack a consolidated ideology, being built solely in accordance to the leader's beliefs (SEAM, 2016).

Historical formation of the national parties

With 1.25 billion people and 814 million voters, India has claimed – for a long time – the title of the world's largest democracy (ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016). When it became independent of the British Empire, in 1947, India ended up inheriting various democratic models and legal system of their colonizers. That was a major factor to ensure decades of stability, despite several years of disruption to the late 1970s. With a population predominantly rural, democracy has not brought in its application, however, a transformation in order to move the country forward economically and socially. Until today, India boasts indexes that, in the eyes of the West, are extremely disparate.

The population is still predominantly rural (70%), and although the country is in the vanguard in sectors such as IT and

space engineering, 56.5% of Indians do not have access to basic services as drinking water. Furthermore, 33.3% of Indian homes have no electricity, 33% of the population lives on less than one euro a day and life expectancy is only 66 years. Confirming these disparities between the economy and the social progress, India is currently the 10th world economic power (WORLD BANK, 2016).

Made this brief presentation, and considering that the caste system is still influential (although illegal), we will discourse about the influence of religion within the six major political parties in India, the National Parties. There are equally six major religions professed in the country thus being represented: Hindu 80.46%; Muslim 13.43%; Christians 2.34%; Sikhs 1.87%; Buddhists 0.77% and Jains 12.41% (CENSUS OF INDIARELIGION..., 2011).

It is worth noting that – at the same time that it is a country with a multiparty electoral system where any Indian citizen can found its own party, which results in the existence of hundreds of parties, only six are effectively recognized by the Election Commission of India as national. For this, among other requirements, the party needs to be represented/recognized in four or more states. Once considered a national party, it enjoys perks like political advertising on radio and television, among others (ELECTIONS.IN-ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016).

The conclusion reached after studying the six Indian national parties is that there is no direct relationship between the submission of the policy to the interests of the various religious groups in India's democratic history. What we see, rather, is a tolerance to religious plurality by the state institutions, which is certainly a condition *sine qua non* for the governance of such a multifaceted country. One cannot, however, rule out the existence of radical movements of a religious nature, which have intensified in recent years.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)

BSP was primarily created to represent the minorities in the country and can be said from this that it is a party with religious foundation to assume the representation of the population of the lower castes. Classified as an ethnic party, it represents the Bahujans, people from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (“Bahujan” can be translated as “most people”) – the fact that BSP represents the scheduled castes means they also represent the Dalit people. Nevertheless, they seek for a wide role in society. Its philosophy

was inspired by – among others – B. R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Jyoti-ba Phule, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy & Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj. It owes its foundation to Kanshi Ram in 1984 and its symbol is an elephant, an animal known to be sacred in India (ELECTIONS.IN,ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016[1]).

BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP)

BJP is a nationalist party founded in 1980, with headquarters in New Delhi, of progressive character, which defends the free market and humanism. It is the strongest and most vigorous political representation in the country, with political orientation of right-wing. In 2016, it became the most represented in the meetings of parliament at national and state level. Although it does not present religious origin, it is responsible for the current persecution of Christians in the country. It is considered to be pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim, and it is seen as an elite party due to its support for the Hindu population, tracing back to the inequality imposed by the caste system in Indian society. BJP is also considered the most conservative party in India (SHOURIE, 1996). Its source of ideological inspiration counts with the nationalist argument of the Hindu Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (ELECTIONS.IN,ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA 2016[1]).

Communist Party of India (CPI)

The Communist Party of India, unlike their peers – except for the Communist Party of India (Marxist) – stands out not only due to its ideology, but also for not relying on any highlighted icon or leader to be emulated or worshiped. It has an electoral representation that has revolved around 1.5% in the last elections. Its general secretary is A. B Bardhan. Beyond publishing a periodical called *New Age*, it also has a youth organization – the All India Youth Federation. For being Communist, it does not advocate religious ideals. Founded in 1920, it had a split in 1964 where the CPI-M was born (ELECTIONS.IN,ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016[1]).

Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M)

More significant electorally than the CPI, from which it derived, the CPI-M has received between 5% and 6% of total votes. It

was created in November 1964 and its main electoral strongholds are in the states of Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura. As the CPI, has no member who incarnates the doctrine personally. As the other existing communist parties, is organized in a democratic centralism and its decision-making governing body is the Politburo. Also, and just to remember, it does not defend ideals of religious nature (ELECTIONS.IN,ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016[1]).

Indian National Congress (INC)

Indian National Congress (INC) was the first Indian party gestated between British and Indian. Founded in 1885, in 1907 it was divided in two wings – moderate and pro-British, led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and another under the command of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and promulgating self-government, the earlier stage to independence. It was in this party that the passive resistance of Mahatma Gandhi in favour of political liberties and press freedom began. Over the years these different ideals were exposed, with groups on the left and right of the political spectrum in the struggle for independence (ELECTIONS.IN,ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016[1]).

Throughout World War II, and with the Congress voting in favour of neutrality, the country was attacked by Japan. In exchange for its cooperation against the Axis, India required democratic concessions to Britain, which were denied. The result was the independence that occurred after the election of the Constituent Assembly of 1946, together with the recognition of Pakistan as an independent country. For the first three decades of its existence as an independent state, India's prime ministership was only occupied by members of the INC (Nehru, Indira Gandhi, among others). The party is still known for its participation in the independence movement, for having a secular orientation (ELECTIONS.IN,ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016[1]).

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)

The NCP is known as a “centrist-leftist” party and has as philosophy of populism, secular democracy, social justice and nationalism, aiming at, unity and equality in Indian society. The party was founded in 1999 by former members of the INC who had been expelled by the party after defending that only people who

were born in India should run for presidency (BRITANNICA, 2015; ELECTIONS.IN,ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, 2016[1]). In 2007, NCP leader Ram Pandagale launched front comprising Muslims, Dalits and other socially disadvantaged castes, in order to fight against the “perpetual exploitation” which is, according to NCP, the “common cause” (ONE INDIA,NCP LEADERS..., 2007).

Voting for a party: does the caste system still count?

Secular education is one of the reasons why “the influence of caste has somewhat declined, especially in cities where different castes live side-by-side and inter-caste marriages are becoming more common” (BBC,WHAT..., 2016). Nevertheless, although the caste culture is not as strong as it was decades ago, it still influences electoral choices:

Some say the caste system would have disappeared by now if the fires were not regularly fanned by politicians. At elections, many caste groups still vote as a block and are wooed by politicians looking for electoral gains. As a result, what was originally meant to be a temporary affirmative action plan to improve the lot of the unprivileged groups has now become a vote-grabbing exercise for many politicians (BBC,WHAT..., 2016).

The rise of BJP is strongly related to Narendra Modi, for example. In 2014, he ran for primer-minister and even though BJP has always been related to privileged social groups, the fact that Modi comes from a lower caste attracted voters for BJP. Other candidates tried to damage his image accusing him of “low-level politics”, claiming that his entire campaign was based in persuading people from lower castes. Modi has said that his proposals were only about development and economic growth, however, it is undeniable that voters from the low castes have made a difference in electing him as Prime Minister (INDEPENDENT,BUNCOMBE, 2014).

Foreign policy in independent India

The first PM in independent India was Jawharlal Nehru (INC), who had been a central figure in the independence movement along with Mahatma Gandhi. His term of office lasted from the establishment of India as an independent nation, in 1947, until his death, in 1964. Nehru laid the foundations of India’s foreign policy, establishing basic principles that remained vivid in succeeding

governments, to a greater or lesser extent: peaceful co-existence, non-alignment, opposition to colonialism and imperialism, and amicable solutions to disputes (LAXMAN; VIDYASAGAR; 2014).

According to Kapur (2013), Nehru's policies regarding international matters were dualistic: whether they contemplated the country's relations with its neighbours, or a macro vision of India's role in the International System. Furthermore, Nehru "ceaselessly highlighted the fact that given India's gigantic dimension, its strategic centrality and its richness in natural resources, it will earn an important place in the international diplomatic roster" (KAPUR, 2013).

Nehru's successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, acted as PM until January 1966. Also from Indian National Congress Party, Shastri introduced new structures in the decisional process on foreign policy, incorporating new personnel and new institutions, such as the political secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although the principles laid by Nehru were preserved, India created some distance with the Soviet Union, for Shastri believed this would allow some approximation with the United States in order to bring more balance to the country's international net of relations (KAPUR, 2013).

Nevertheless, foreign policy approaches after Nehru (and until the early 90s), starting by Shastri, marginalized the macro vision of international affairs and focused on neighbouring issues. While Shastri's remarks on most neighbouring countries were amicable, his perception of China revealed strong suspicion. India-China relations were marked by tensions regarding Chinese development of nuclear capabilities, while India engaged in war with Pakistan in 1965 (KAPUR, 2013).

After Shastri, PM Indira Gandhi (INC) managed to maintain the basic principles of Nehru's foreign policy, but applied more pragmatism to them. Cordiality in the relations with South-Asian countries served as a strategy to ensure security in the region and to avoid war with Pakistan, and revitalising bilateral relations with the United States was also part of Indira's agenda (RAFI; SHRIVASTAVA; AKHTAR, 2015). Shastri's focus on regional matters was maintained by Indira, and the central goal of foreign policy was making India "the major factor in South Asian politics" (KAPUR, 2013). Public opinion now pushed India towards the Soviet Union (USSR) and further from the US.

In 1977, Indira was defeated in the elections and Morarji Desai became Prime Minister. It was the first time since the independence that a candidate from a party other than the INC was elected (Desai belonged to the Janata Party, which later merged into the BJP). He was Prime Minister until January 1979, and dismantled the principle of non-alignment: he believed the intense relations with the USSR had compromised India's independence in the international stage. Therefore, he sought out countries as China, the United States(US), and even Pakistan. However, Desai had to deal with civil groups pressuring against his anti-Soviet posture. Regarding South Asia, "he was much more soft spoken than previous governments" (KAPUR, 2013).

After Desai, Charan Singh was PM for only six months. Therefore, no relevant change was consolidated in matters of foreign policy, and in 1980 Indira Gandhi was once again elected. According to Kapur (2013):

While avoiding any radical refurbishment, she did establish some distance with Moscow, went out of her way to introduce a degree of normal interaction with Washington, and took some friendly steps towards Beijing. In sum, Indira Gandhi constructed a stealth diplomacy towards the three powers [...] Last, but not least, was the construction of a broad framework of diplomacy vis-à-vis South Asia – a framework whose underpinnings were to conclude agreements through confidence building gestures towards small countries, and through the maintenance of a high power profile to dissuade countries from pursuing goals anti-thetical to India's national interests. But the most powerful objective of India's South Asian diplomacy was to keep foreign power presence/influence at bay from the region. In sum, she devised some sort of a Monroe doctrine of her own that focussed on maintaining Indian sphere of influence over South Asia (KAPUR 2013).

Indira's second term still focused on India's regional role, but contemplated the international framework more intensely than her first term. After Indira's assassination, her son Rajiv Gandhi was elected PM (INC). He reiterated the adherence to the same nehruvian principles of foreign policy as Indira, but his policies tended to a Western approach, matching his liberalizing economic strategies. Throughout his term of five years (October 1984 - December 1989), India opened up to the US, while still preserving good relations with the USSR. Regarding South Asia, he "was neither able to impose India's predominant power in keeping his six neighbours under India's hegemonial control or in its sphere of in-

fluence, nor was he able to construct an architecture of peaceful regional framework” (KAPUR, 2013).

V.P. Singh (from the Janata Dal party¹) was Rajiv’s successor. In a one-year term (1989-1990), he was able to make India’s relations with its neighbours more amicable by removing troops from Sri Lanka, concluding several agreements with Bangladesh, and ending a trade war with Nepal (KAPUR, 2013). Chandra Shekhar (Samajwadi Janata Party, in coalition with the INC) was the following PM, but only for approximately six months. Although his term was short, he set a pro-American approach that was maintained in the following prime ministerships. Narasimha Rao, member of the INC and PM from 1991 to 1996, focused on strengthening India’s relations with South-East Asia and with the European Union, aiming at broadening the country’s scope in the international stage, and switching the focus from the complicated relations with China and Pakistan (KAPUR, 2013).

Rao’s follower was Atal Behari Vajpayee (BJP), but only for two weeks. After Vajpayee, Deve Gowda (Janata Dal) became PM for a one-year term (June 1996 - April 1997), and his major action regarding foreign affairs was not acceding to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and therefore sustaining “going nuclear” as an option for India. In April 1997, another member of Janata Dal was named PM: I. K. Gujral, also for a term of about one year. Global arena had been going through substantial transformations for some years: the USSR had collapsed, the US were increasingly powerful, and international phenomena such as terrorism and religious fundamentalism were expanding.

As former Foreign Minister (of both V. P. Singh and Gowda), Gujral was well informed and quite perceptive on the subject of international relations. In general, his policies concerning the area were a continuation of already existing ones, such as economic liberalisation, not signing the CTBT, promoting better relations with China and with the US, and attending several multilateral conferences. Vis-à-vis India’s relations with its neighbours in South Asia, however, Gujral’s efforts must be highlighted. According to Kapur (2013):

Gujral’s most conspicuous contribution---for which he will be remembered---is the bridges he built with India’s South Asian neighbours, assuring them of India’s goodwill, and seeking to resolve

1. The Janata Dal was a coalition between the Janata Party, the Congress(S), and the Jan Morcha (which later merged into the INC).

some of the intractable problems that separated India from them. The personal rapport that he had been able to forge with his South Asian counterparts, compounded with his efforts to improve bilateral relations through the «Gujral Doctrine,” and intensified economic interaction, did create a congenial South Asian diplomatic atmosphere for the first time in Indian South Asian diplomacy for which he should be remembered by history (KAPUR 2013).

After Gujral, Vajpayee once again took office as Prime Minister, this time for a much longer term (March 1998 - May 2004). Vajpayee believed the country must become a great power in the International System. He not only saw nuclear capability as a necessary counter-action considering the geopolitical threat of China and Pakistan, but also as an essential element for turning India into a major power in a global scope. Concerning Pakistan, there were no relevant changes, in spite of Gujral’s diplomatic involvement in the personal level (KAPUR, 2013).

Under Manmohan Singh (INC, 2004-2014), India’s foreign policy was developed based on the country’s relations with the United States. According to Bhadrakumar (2014):

[Singh’s] world vision is imbued with the belief that India’s medium and long term interests – «enlightened interests», he would at times claim without elaborating – devolve upon forging a pivotal strategic partnership with the US, with which he wished India to move «shoulder-to-shoulder», as he once put it, into the future on the global arena (BHADRAKUMAR, 2014).

Kapur (2013) indicates four dimensions/goals of Manmohan’s foreign policy: strong relations with great powers, well-structured interaction with developing countries, intense economic and political interaction with a restricted group of countries, and a new posture towards India’s neighbours. The author highlights India’s approximation with emerging countries like Brazil and South Africa, and the positive developments regarding South Asian cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally. Nonetheless, Kapur (2013) does not share Bhadrakumar’s view that Manmohan’s policies were solely based on the relations with the US – in fact, the author says that the PM “forged meaningful and non-conflictual ties with [all] four planetary powers – US, Russia, China and the European Union” (KAPUR, 2013).

Finally, Narendra Modi (BJP) took office in May 2014 and is still incumbent. Modi frequently reaffirms India’s power aspiration, but he uses the expression “leading” power, instead of

“major” or “global”. This indicates that Modi wants India to be seen differently: not imperialist or intrusive as the US and the USSR have been while making global rules, but as a country which adapts these rules to its national interest and which settles an example of good governance and respect in international affairs (SINGH, 2016). India now focuses on becoming a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council; leading initiatives of cooperation in cybersecurity, terrorism, and energy security; and improving and expanding relations with its neighbours (SINGH, 2016; SUKUMAR, 2015).

The appointment of a National Security Adviser who is “known to be hawkish on Pakistan” (SINGH, 2016) surely indicates a severer posture regarding the durable tensions between the two countries. However, India has also been investing in stronger ties with countries out of its immediate neighbourhood, like Japan, Australia and Saudi Arabia, and has been playing an active part in Asian organisations such as SAARC. In general, it is clear that strengthening India’s role in Asia is a central strategy for Modi, as well as seeking out other emerging countries from other regions for cooperation, without marginalizing the relations with traditional powers.

Final considerations

It is undeniable that the caste system still influences the political system in India, shaping the parties’ proposals and being an important factor for Indian population’s electoral choices. While approaching the six parties recognized as national in India, we have perceived that the caste culture has played an important part in the historical formation of some of them. The BSP, for example, claims to represent lower castes from the traditional Hindu system of stratification, and also other socially disadvantaged groups such as Muslims and aborigines. Likewise, some of NCP’s proposals trace back to the inequality and the marginalization of some groups in Indian society, which is in many aspects originated and reinforced by the caste system.

Nonetheless, we have observed that the caste culture is not a central element when it comes to foreign policy. International strategies of Prime Ministers from different parties have showed differences, but they are much more related to the changing global

scenario, than to specific guidelines of foreign policy defended by the parties. The personal factor is also strong, apart from the party to which the Prime Minister belongs. For example, even though Nehru, Indira and Rajiv belonged to the same party, and maintained some basic principles regarding foreign policy, it is clear that they have approached it from different angles: Nehru valued non-alignment, Indira was more pragmatic, and under Rajiv foreign policy reflected values that were more Western.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the caste culture is an element that is still present in India's political system, but in the domestic scope. Domestic policies regarding social stratification and directed to lower castes are important for parties and candidates in attracting voters, but they are not reflected in the way foreign policy is conducted in the State level.

References

- BHADRAKUMAR, Melkangara. **Manmohansingh's foreign policy legacy**. [S.l.]: Strategic Culture Foundation, 2014. Available at: <<http://m.strategic-culture.org/news/2014/01/30/manmohan-singh-foreign-policy-legacy.html>>. Access: May 2016.
- INDEPENDENT.BUNCOMBE, Andrew. **How caste could swing India's elections in favour of Hindu nationalists**. [S.l.]: Independent, 2014. Available at: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/how-caste-could-swing-india-s-elections-in-favour-of-hindu-nationalists-9330533.html>>. Access: May 2016.
- BRITANNICA.D'Souza, ShanthieMariet. **Nationalist congress party**. India: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015. Available at: <<http://global.britannica.com/topic/Nationalist-Congress-Party>>. Access: May 2016.
- ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA. **The function (Electoral System)**. [S.l.]: ECI, 2016. Available at: <http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/the_function.aspx#reservation> Access: May 2016
- ELECTIONS.IN. ELECTIONS in India. India: Elections in, 2016. Available at: <<http://www.elections.in/>>. Access: May 2016.
- _____. POLITICAL parties in India. [S.l.]: Elections in, 2016. Available at: <<http://www.elections.in/>>. <<http://www.elections.in/political-parties-in-india/>>. Access: May 2016 [1].
- KAPUR, Harish. **Foreign policies of India's prime ministers**. Atlanta: Lancer Publishers, 2013.
- KESALU, Satri V. Genesis and Evaluation: Political Parties in India. **Int. Res. J. Social Sci.**, Vol. 2(2), 56-62, February (2013). Available at: <<http://www.isca.in/IJSS/Archive/v2/i2/10.ISCA-IRJSS-2012-014.pdf>> Access: May 2016.

LAXMAN, Deelip; VIDYASAGAR, I.S. Contributions of Pandit Kawaharlal Nehru to Indian Foreign Policy. **Golden Research Thoughts - Impact Factor**, v. 3, issue 11, May 2014. Available at: <<http://aygrt.isrj.org/colorArticles/3744.pdf>>. Access: May 2016.

MEHRA, Ajay K. O sistema político partidário da Índia. **Cadernos ADENAUER**. VIIIv.8, n. 3, 2007. Available at: <<http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/9470-1442-5-30.pdf>>. Access: May 2016.

ONE INDIA.NCP LEADERS call to unite dalits, Muslims, OBC. India: One India, 25 June,2007. Available at: <<http://www.oneindia.com/2007/06/25/ncp-leaders-call-to-unite-dalits-muslims-obc-1182784553.html>> Access: May 2016.

RAFI, Tajamul; SHRIVASTAVA, Usha; AKHTAR, Nasreena. India's foreign policy: retrospect and prospect. **African Journal of Political Science and International Relations**. Srivastava, v.9, n. 6, p. 212-2016, June 2015. Available at: <<http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/AJPSIR/article-full-text-pdf/DD-6D29F52946>>. Access: May 2016.

CENSUS IN INDIA. RELIGION.India: Census in India,2011. Available at: <http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx> Access: May 2016.

SEAM, Neelam. **Democracy of India: ruling party Vs opposition party**. Noida:Academia Edu, 2016. Available at: <http://www.academia.edu/10283185/Democracy_of_India_Ruling_Party_Vs_Opposition_Party> Access: May 2016.

SHOURIE, Shri Arun. **The Hindutva judgements: the distance that remains**. New Delhi:BJP, 1996. Available at:

<http://www.bjp.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=373:q-the-hindutva-judgements-the-distance-that-remains&catid=92&Itemid=501>. Access: May 2016.

SINGH, K. C. Modi's Foreign policy. **The Tribune**. Apr 14 2016. Available at: <<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/modi-s-foreign-policy/221967.html>>. Access: May 2016.

SUKUMAR, Arun Mohan. A shift from style to substance. **The Hindu**. Dec 16 2015. Available at: <<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/modis-foreign-policy-a-shift-from-style-to-substance/article7987958.ece>>. Access: May 2016.

THE WORLD BANK. **India**. India: World Bank, 2016. Available at: <<http://data.worldbank.org/country/india>>. Access: May 2015.

BBC. WHAT is India's caste system?Índia: BBC,2016. Available at: <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35650616>>. Access: May 2016.