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Regional Governance in a Changed Context: A Preliminary Analysis of Bihar, Tripura and West Bengal¹

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Within the overall framework of India's political stability and democratic governance, political scenarios in India's regions and localities present a contrasting picture. This includes violent mobs on the streets of Srinagar, insurgency and armed secessionist movements in India's north-east, Naxalite violence in several states of India, and violent inter-community riots that, nevertheless, do not impair the overall stability of the state. How does India cope with these challenges to governance? Focused on a comparative analysis of regional governance, the paper answers this key question with reference to policies and administrative and legal structures at the regional level that promote governance. By drawing on the logic of human ingenuity, driven mostly by self-interest, the innovation of appropriate rules and procedures, and most of all – agency, of elites and their non-elite followers – the paper sheds light on policies, institutions and processes that enhance governance. It argues that 'fundamentalism',

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‘ethnicity’, conflict and fragmentation, seen as characteristic of non-western politics, have political and not necessarily cultural and idiosyncratic origins and, as such, are amenable to a general explanation, and empirical policy analysis.

Regional Governance in Contemporary India

States in India have attracted considerable attention from analysts and policy makers as a key factor in regional governance since the onset of reforms in India after 1991. In a way, the states today are at the centre of debates on Indian federalism and politics. (For example, Yadav and Palshikar 2008; Palshikar and Deshpande 2009; Sridharan ed. 2014; Tillin et al 2015; Manor 2015: 73-86). Shashtri (2012) has pointed out how the states have become crucial to the formation of a coalition government at the Centre, playing a decisive role in cabinet formation as well as in making many central decisions including deciding not to implement some.

The post-1991 reforms in India have given birth to a new political economy in which it is the market, not the state, which is the main arena of transaction.³ In the heyday of the welfare state, governance was measured not in terms of how much the concerned states had developed themselves but whether there was political order and stability in the states or not. Neither service delivery, nor the amount of investment (Indian and or foreign), mostly in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI), was seen as the main component of governance. In keeping with changing times, the social construction of governance has changed. This empirical study is thus aimed at an analysis of the changing nature of the state itself.

The states’ freedom of action during the pre-1991 period was hugely circumscribed by their financial dependence upon the Centre and the gnawing fear of the ruling parties at the state level of being pushed out of power taking recourse to article 356 of the Indian Constitution. The dire prospect of the imposition of President’s rule on the state if it deviates from the direction of the Union government is no longer a significant factor in state politics today. One of Prime Minister Modi’s first maxims on the assumption of power in 2014 was ‘less

³ The states then were dependent on the Centre and grumbled a lot for not getting enough. Some states still do so from the same old mindset, and for political mobilisation of support for anti-Centre politics.

government, maximum governance'. This epitomised the scenario in India since the early 1990s. The days of (welfare) state intervention are over; the federal units are now free to pursue trade, commerce and investment in their realms. Market is to be given priority over state control in service delivery; the extent of state-funded services will be severely curtailed. The abolition of the Planning Commission (2014) and, along with it, the system of Special Category State status for certain poorer states gave a strong signal that the state will promote, encourage and actively help free market all around. The states are also strongly encouraged to do so. The states in India today enjoy more freedom of action, but it raises a lot of question marks on how far they can go. It is beyond doubt that India's neo-liberal reforms have brought in a new federal ambience within which the politics and governance in the states are to be explained and understood.

From the above, it is clear that what goes on inside the states in India today as politics and governance is to be understood in terms of the new dynamics of Indian federalism. In other words, Indian federalism defines, determines and shapes, to a considerable extent, the tone and tenor of politics and governance in each state. At the same time, the state specificity with a set of problems and issues turns out to be a constant factor in Centre-state relations. As India globalises, the strategic role of the states has assumed special significance. We ought to, however, keep in mind that the states in India are not a homogeneous and uniform entity but distinct ethno-regional identities, and ruled as such by political parties that do not always toe the political line of the Centre (Antony 2016). Historically, the region-based parties and movements in the states have most often been successful in mobilising social and cultural cleavages as resources (or, identity markers) to press their demands for creating separate new states out of the existing ones. The peculiar constitutive element of Indian federalism under article 3 of the Constitution provides for such a potentiality.

As one considers governance in contemporary India with reference to India before economic liberalisation, the emergence of the service sector as a leading sector of the economy, and before FDI and corporate governance with links to multinational companies started playing a salient role, one realises that there has been a major shift in the context of governance, which calls for a comprehensive revision of the analytical model that past research had relied on. The expanded model of governance, however, continues to have at its core the three main variables that affect governance, namely, law and order management, social and economic reform, and

institutional articulation of identity that are largely the responsibility of the federal states, though the central government maintains a careful watch over them, particularly with regard to the third variable. The central government also plays a role in coordination and policy planning and can take its own initiative to maintain law and order by dismissing the regional government and imposing direct central rule under article 356. But new variables such as deeper and more comprehensive federalisation, power-sharing and constitutional reforms affect governance in Indian states in a major way. These manifest their effect in the three states under analysis – Bihar, West Bengal and Tripura – in different ways. It is not often realised that enhanced governance has been an unintended consequence of liberalisation of the economy and the spread of global norms of corporate governance to the Indian context, through the agency of multinational corporations investing in India. According to Rahul Mukherji, there is a strong link between liberalisation, globalisation and governance in his succinct analysis with reference to the slow build-up to a ‘tipping point’ through the long years of what we have called conventional governance.⁴

If there was a growth/development imperative in the policy of radical liberalisation of the early 1990s, there was a parallel process of legitimacy-and-vote-bank-driven imperative for welfare policies as well. Mukherji captures this argument in his explanation of what led to the enactment of policies such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREG) Act.⁵ As we look at governance in contemporary India, especially since the early 1990s when India decided to liberalise the economy and make the transition from a state-controlled, ‘licence-permit-raj’ to a neo-liberal regime with greater freedom of market, we realise that, at the macro-level, the policy has paid off. India’s growth rate far transcended the so-called Hindu rate of growth, and the past decades have sustained this growth rate, currently the highest in Asia. However, national growth has not been distributed uniformly across the Indian population, nor among the federal units of India and that has affected levels of regional governance.

India is a federation with relative autonomy of the states, which also hold a strategic position in the implementation of India’s reforms agenda. As such, the states’ role in the reform process

⁴ See, Rahul Mukherji, “Governance reform in a weak state: Thirty years of Indian experience”, *Governance*, vol. 30, (1), 2017, pp. 53-58.

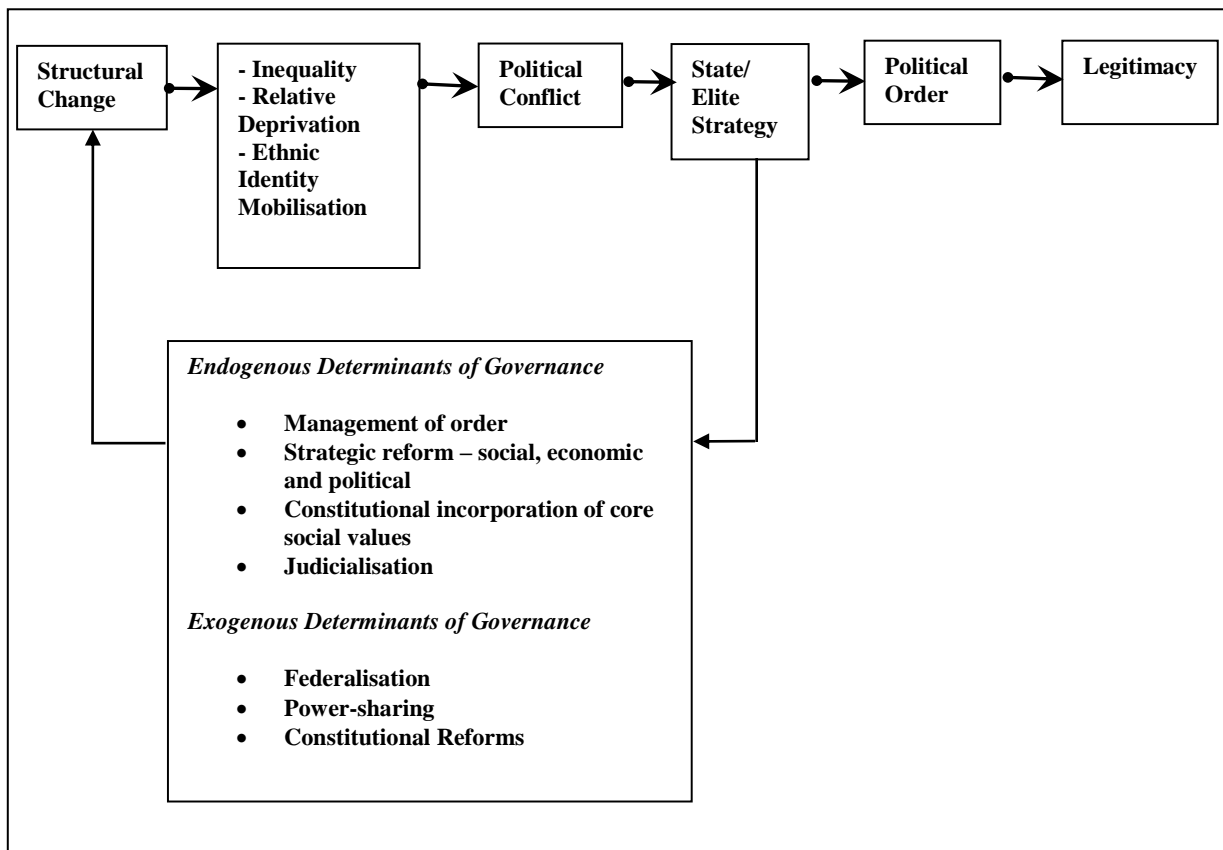
⁵ Mukherji (Ibid) explains why the role of the state as the initiator of reform continues even as the state retreats.

is crucial. However, given the variegated social, economic and political regimes that are in place across different states in India, with complex relations to the party or coalition in power at the Centre, acquiring a common consensus around governance and reforms has not been easy. While some states have been quick to carry out reforms, others have lagged behind. Some states have performed better in FDI in their realms than the country as a whole. While macro-level governance has received considerable attention, much less attention has been paid to the states that performed rather well in governance, yet failed to attract FDI. In fact, most of India's 29 states fall into this category where better governance since the 1990s and early 2000s has not meant more FDI, trade and commerce and economic growth in general. A comparative study of Bihar, West Bengal and Tripura is not intended to be *sui generis*. These states belong to the majority camp with respect to the new criteria of governance in India measured mostly by the extent of FDI. The study of these difficult states thus opens a new window through which to examine the future prospects of governance and legitimacy in India in general.

Drawing on the burgeoning macro-level literature on India's politics and governance, we seek to argue that governance in general is the outcome of strategic policies in the areas of law and order management, strategic social, economic and political reform, constitutional accommodation of core social values and judicialisation. In addition to these explanatory variables, governance at the state level is deeply influenced by the interaction of three interrelated variables, namely, federalism, power-sharing and constitutional reforms.

If India has survived as a nation-state in the midst of large-scale inequalities, malnutrition, regional unevenness in development and abysmal records of unemployment, it is due to its federalism and other institutional arrangements of power-sharing, and continuing constitutional reforms which have remained the catalyst for unity and integrity. Indian federalism is not a static mode of governance but a dynamic one. The dynamism is provided by the constitutional reforms that provide further space for power-sharing. Gone are the days when states had to fight for more decentralisation and revision of Centre-state relations. States in India, today, enjoy more autonomy and attract global investment directly. The general model that one can develop from the conventional model can be summed up in terms of the following flow diagram (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A dynamic neo-institutional model of regional governance



Source: An expanded model of governance, based on Mitra 2005.

Using the overall conceptual framework of federalism, power-sharing and constitutional reforms, we will assess the implications for governance and legitimacy within India as a whole. The explanatory model underpinning the study will complement the set of independent variables, outlined in Figure 1, with three sets of new variables derived from the federal arrangements, and will assess how they impinge on governance in the states in terms of constitutional amendments that affect governance, and other mechanisms of power-sharing arrangements at the state level and the level below.

India: A Welfare State since the 1990s

The conceptual framework of directive principles of state policy as laid down in Part IV of the Indian Constitution asserts that India is a welfare state. This simply means that the state plays a major role in protecting and promoting the interest of citizens, looking after their well-being

and spending a substantial proportion of the budget in social provision and in implementing policies.

The public services law in India owes its origin to the Citizen's Charter of the United Kingdom, promulgated in 1991. The basic aim of this charter was to strive for a sustained improvement in the quality of public services provided to the citizens. It was a paradigm shift in public service provisioning and a testament to the growing international consensus that public institutions needed to become more efficient. This influenced several countries such as Belgium, France, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, Spain, Portugal and India to adopt similar measures (Chandra and Bhatia 2015).

The first push for public service reforms in India came from Prime Minister I K Gujral as part of the 'Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government' in 1997. A consensus was then evolved and a decision was made to formulate the Citizen's Charter for sectors with big public networks such as the railways, telecommunications and public distribution systems. The charter originally emphasised improving the quality of services, valuing taxpayers' money, setting standards for delivery and a redressal mechanism, holding individuals and organisations accountable for the same and making rules, procedures and schemes more transparent for the citizens (Chandra and Bhatia 2015).

As part of an initiative to reform policy goals ensuring citizen-centric services, the Directorate of Public Grievances and the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) were set up in the 1980s. In 2002, the DARPG, under the Government of India, set up a comprehensive website. While this move was good in principle, its implementation faced setbacks in terms of a slacking bureaucracy, lack of awareness, frequent transfers of concerned officers and inadequate understanding of the norms relating to the service provided. In all, 111 Citizen's Charters by the Central Government ministries/ departments/ organisations and 668 charters by various agencies of state governments and the administrations of Union Territories were formulated by April 2006 and are posted and published bilingually on their website as well as in the national gazettes (Chandra and Bhatia 2015). In 2005, the momentous Right to Information Act was passed with the aim to make Indian governance more transparent. The Right to Education Act, 2009; National Food Security Act, 2013 and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 are some similar legislative instances in India.

Indian states have come a long way from the non-binding citizen's charter to introducing legally binding legislations that guarantee its citizens time-bound delivery of select public services. In recent times, the governments in India have embarked on law-making, on right to services at the Centre and in some of the states. The Madhya Pradesh *Lok Sewaon Ke Pradan Ki Adhiniyam*, 2010, is the first in that category, which has been followed by enactments in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. These Acts followed a widespread realisation that the provision of public services in India was sub-par. By clearly outlining citizen entitlements and building internal checks and balances through effective grievance redressal mechanisms, they represent an effort by state governments to build a new model to address service-delivery failures (Thulaseedharan 2013).

The Centre introduced the Right to Redressal of Grievances Bill, 2011, in the Lok Sabha on 20 December 2011. The bill is intended to entitle citizens to time-bound delivery of goods and provision for services and sets out a mechanism for redressal of grievances. This bill was tabled in the wake of the public uproar over the Lok Pal Bill in 2011. It had the support of then United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, and opposition parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In December 2013, parliamentarians from across parties spoke in favour of the law. But, with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha, the bill, which had been tabled in the Rajya Sabha, also lapsed. After the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) came to power at the Centre in 2014, it reiterated that it was committed to bringing in such a legislation. However, by March 2016, the government announced that it was not looking at legally justiciable rights for delivery of services. The government announced in June 2016 that while it had "prepared" a government scheme that would allow administrative action in case of deficiency in delivering services scheme, it was still under "finalisation". Since then, it has not put out any public information or announcement on the scheme in the public domain.⁶

⁶ Sethi, Nitin. 2016. "Govt Aborts Plan For Grievance Redress Law." *Business-standard.com*. Web. 25 July 2017. Access to link: http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/nda-dumps-the-idea-of-citizens-grievance-law-116101000744_1.html.

Looking Deeper into Three ‘Difficult States’: Bihar, West Bengal and Tripura

The rationale for choosing the selected states is as follows. While Bihar is a mainstream state in the Hindi and Hindu heartland, West Bengal is a part-mainstream and part-peripheral State with very long international borders with Bangladesh and a nearly unending influx of people from across the very long borders. Tripura, on the other hand, is a small, landlocked, peripheral hilly state in the north-east of India lying further east of Bangladesh. In Bihar, politics and governance have been marked by stalemate, class conflicts and the violence of caste politics in the past, while class conflict has been seen as the main marker of politics and governance in West Bengal. Tripura’s politics and governance have been a prisoner of endemic ethnic conflicts and the stronghold of Left politics for over half a century. All in all, these are among India’s ‘difficult states’. The incumbent chief ministers in each state – Nitish Kumar, Mamata Banerjee and Manik Sarkar in Bihar, West Bengal and Tripura respectively – enjoy popular support and are acknowledged for the positive changes brought about in each state. In recent years, while Bihar and West Bengal have been ruled by political parties that were part of the Union government at different stages, the Tripura government has been under the control of a party in opposition to the Centre since the early 1990s. Geographically speaking, these states are all located in India’s eastern region. The statistical analysis presented below documents the consequences of social and economic policies undertaken by those states, and by the central government and international agencies and NGOs during the past years.

Quantitative Measures of Governance in Bihar, West Bengal and Tripura

Table 1: Percentage of population living below the poverty line

State	1993-94	2004-05	2011-12
<i>Bihar</i>	60.5	54.4	33.7
<i>Jharkhand</i>	60.7	45.3	37.0
<i>Tripura</i>	32.9	40.6	14.1
<i>West Bengal</i>	39.4	34.3	19.9
<i>All India</i>	45.3	41.8	21.9

Source: TATA, *Statistical Outline of India 2014-15*, p. 160.

One can notice a precipitous fall in the level of poverty in India as a whole (Table 1) since the beginning of economic liberalisation. The fall is steepest in Tripura, noticeable in Bihar and Jharkhand, which nevertheless stay above the Indian average, and appreciable in West Bengal, which continues to be below the Indian average over the entire period. In terms of consumption expenditure, we do not have the figures for Tripura. But in the Bihar-West Bengal comparison, rural West Bengal, starting from below Bihar, has surpassed it, staying consistently above Bihar and, getting close to the Indian average. (Table 2A) The picture is roughly the same when it comes to urban consumption; the sole difference being that during the period between 2000 and 2005, West Bengal had fallen below the Indian average whereas Bihar had stayed well below the Indian average as well as West Bengal (Table 2B)

Table 2: Consumption expenditures

A. Consumption expenditures (Rupees per month per person) – rural at current prices

State	1973-74	1977-78	1983	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-2005 (URP)
<i>Bihar</i>	56.01	57.45	93.75	218.30	385.09	417.11
<i>West Bengal</i>	47.50	59.27	104.59	278.78	454.80	562.10
<i>All India</i>	53.01	68.89	112.45	281.40	486.16	558.8

Source: Planning Commission Data & Statistics, Government of India.

B. Consumption expenditures (Rupees per month per person) – urban at current prices

State	1973-74	1977-78	1983	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-2005 (URP)
<i>Bihar</i>	68.17	83.14	138.53	353.03	601.90	696.30
<i>West Bengal</i>	80.76	97.13	169.95	474.19	866.59	1123.60
<i>All India</i>	70.77	96.15	164.03	458.04	854.92	1052.40

Source: Planning Commission Data & Statistics, Government of India.

When it comes to literacy, the most spectacular result has been achieved by Tripura, which has forged ahead of West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand as well as the Indian average. When it comes to overall social services, West Bengal has moved up from the 9th to the 6th spot in all-India rankings whereas Bihar has pretty much languished at its lowly 18th place and Jharkhand has moved up marginally by one rank from the 17th to the 16th spot. (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Literacy rates

State	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Bihar	13.49	21.95	23.17	32.32	37.49	47.00	61.8
Jharkhand	12.93	21.14	23.87	35.03	41.39	53.56	66.4
Tripura	NA	20.24	30.98	50.10	60.44	73.19	87.2
West Bengal	24.61	34.46	38.86	48.65	57.70	68.64	76.3
All India	18.33	28.30	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	73.00

Source: Planning Commission Data & Statistics, Government of India.

Table 4: Overall social service indicators

State	2001				2011			
	Overall Education Score	Overall Health Score	Composite Score	Rank	Overall Education Score	Overall Health Score	Composite Score	Rank
Bihar	0.09	0.13	0.11	18	0.11	0.18	0.15	18
Jharkhand	0.21	0.17	0.19	17	0.27	0.17	0.22	16
West Bengal	0.40	0.33	0.37	9	0.46	0.42	0.44	6

Source: Mundle, S., Chowdhury, S. and Sikdar, S. (2016). *Governance Performance of Indian States 2001-02 and 2011-12*. National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) Working paper series, [online] 164. Available at: http://www.nipfp.org.in/media/medialibrary/2016/04/WP_2016_164.pdf.

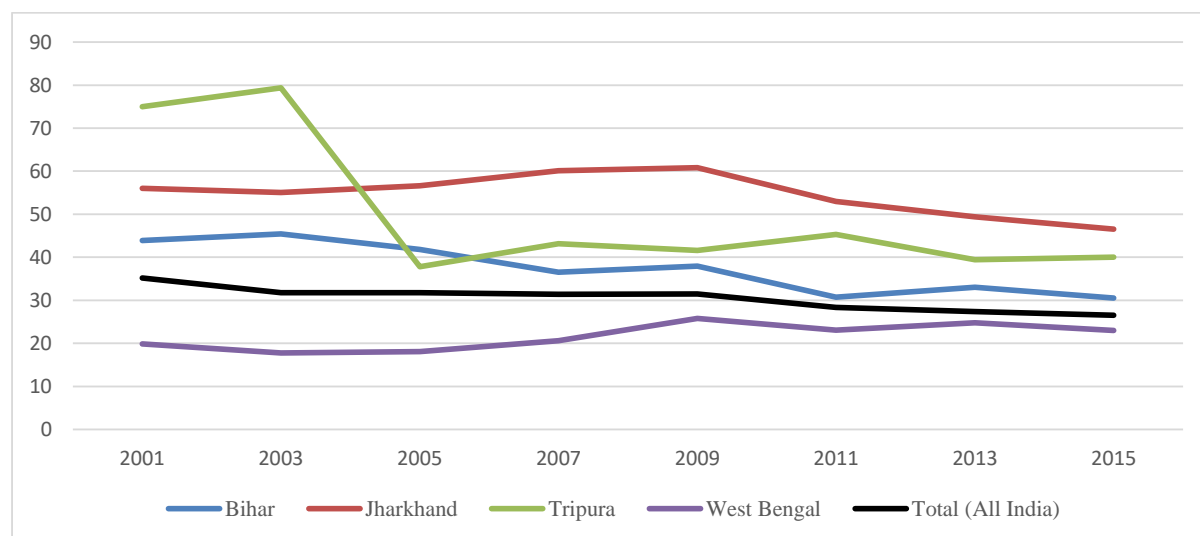
Turning now to murders and riots – the two standard measurements of the state of orderliness of politics, one can see (Table 5) that Tripura, at 40 per million, while still way above the Indian average of 26.5, has registered the sharpest drop in the murder rate, down from the peak of 75 per million in 2001. West Bengal, consistently below the Indian average, has stayed that way. Bihar and Jharkhand, though above the Indian average, have nevertheless registered modest gains in orderliness.

Table 5: Incidence of murders and riots**A. Incidence of murder per million**

State	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015
Bihar	43.89	45.43	41.82	36.55	37.97	30.72	33.05	30.53
Jharkhand	56.02	55.09	56.61	60.11	60.82	52.94	49.39	46.54
Tripura	75	79.37	37.81	43.12	41.56	45.28	39.44	40
West Bengal	19.87	17.77	18.12	20.60	25.79	23.10	24.80	22.96
Total (All India)	35.19	31.80	31.81	31.42	31.46	28.33	27.42	26.53

Source: *Crime in India (2001-2015)*, National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India; Census 2001 & 2011.

Figure 2: Incidence of murder per million



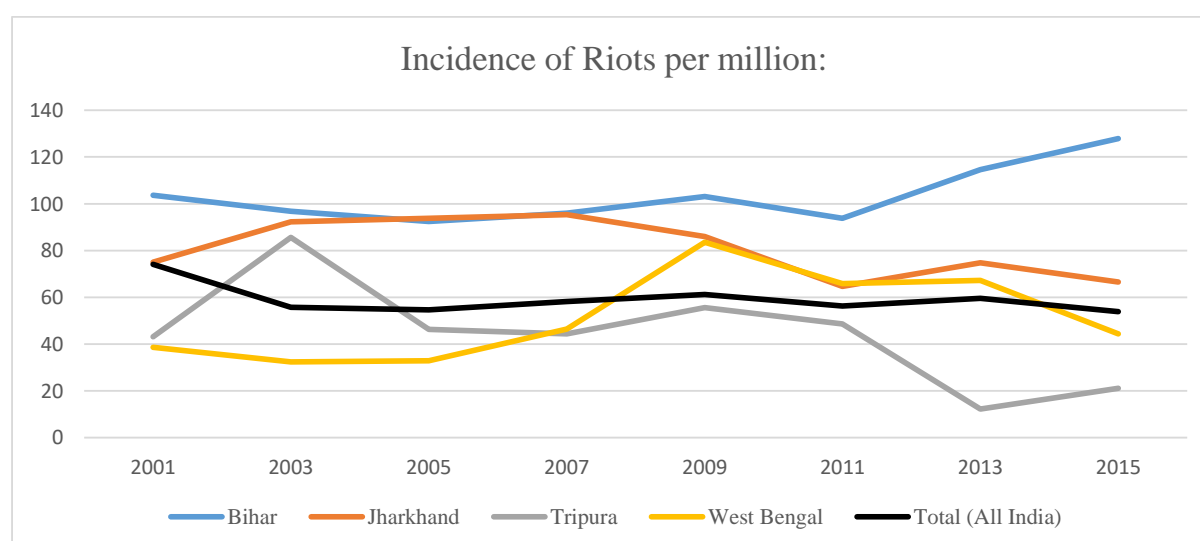
Source: Crime in India (2001-2015), National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India; Census 2001 & 2011.

B. Incidence of riots per million

State	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015
Bihar	103.69	96.73	92.42	95.93	103.06	93.83	114.61	127.87
Jharkhand	75.02	92.23	93.83	95.35	85.95	64.67	74.70	66.54
Tripura	43.12	85.62	46.25	44.37	55.62	48.61	12.22	21.11
West Bengal	38.60	32.37	32.85	46.48	83.54	65.92	67.27	44.43
Total (All India)	74.09	55.73	54.66	58.24	61.18	56.33	59.57	53.87

Source: Crime in India (2001-2015), National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India; Census 2001 & 2011.

Figure 3: Incidence of riots per million



Source: Crime in India (2001-2015), National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India; Census 2001 & 2011.

As riots go, Bihar, consistently above the Indian average, continues the trend, with a level that is more than twice that of the Indian average. West Bengal, below the Indian average in the early years of the 21st century, took a steep rise in the period between 2007 and 2009 but, by 2015, fell below the Indian average. Interestingly, Jharkhand, which was at par with Bihar for a while, has come down appreciably below, inching towards the Indian average. But the most spectacular is the case of Tripura which, briefly above the Indian average in 2003, has dipped appreciably below in recent years (Table 5).

Qualitative Assessment of State Performance: Bihar, West Bengal, Tripura

Reality being what it is, the quantitative indicators might come across as pointing in contradictory directions as far as trends in governance of our three states are concerned. As such, we now turn to qualitative analysis of the three, aiming at a comparative analysis, leading to a broad generalisation. We look at policy initiatives and public service indicators in each of the three states under their respective incumbent governments.

Bihar: Nitish Kumar's government (2005 onwards)

Policy Initiatives

Since coming to power in 2005, the Nitish Kumar government has announced a slew of policy initiatives in line with his agenda of “Development with Justice”, triggering optimism about the future of the state (Hirashima, et al. 2011). Over the first five years of Nitish Kumar's tenure as chief minister, Bihar's economy trailed only behind the industrial powerhouse of Gujarat as the fastest growing state in India. Fast-track courts and a fortified police force resulted in a reported 52,343 criminal convictions, which was many times that of any comparable period. The government introduced 20 per cent reservations for the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) and 50 per cent reservations for women in local panchayats (Kohli and Singh 2013). The government also initiated bicycle and meal programmes in the state. The initiative to

distribute bicycles to girls saw the Bihar schools getting a huge number of girl students. There was also a drastic fall in school dropout rates.⁷

These successful initiatives paved the way for Nitish Kumar and his NDA government to significant success in state elections in 2009, wiping away the main opposition RJD, led by Lalu Prasad, which had been invincible during its 15-year leadership up to 2005 (Kohli and Singh 2013). Nitish Kumar was awarded the ‘Best Chief Minister’ award by the CNN-IBN and Hindustan Times State of the Nation Poll 2007.⁸ According to a survey by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in 2009, about 88 per cent of the respondents evaluated the performance of the Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)]-BJP government as satisfactory and nearly 70 per cent rated Nitish Kumar as the best chief minister that Bihar has had in the last 20 years. It also showed that he was one of the most popular chief ministers in India at that time. In the 15th Lok Sabha elections held later that year, Nitish Kumar’s popularity was reconfirmed by the landslide victory of the JD(U)-BJP alliance in Bihar (Hirashima, et al. 2011).

The core ideals of the Nitish Kumar government were influenced by the electoral alliance underlying the then government (Kohli and Singh 2013). The Nitish Kumar government, combining the BJP’s upper-caste support with Nitish Kumar’s core base of ‘Annexure One voters’ (including Hindus and lower-caste Muslims) and his own Kurmi caste, can be seen as simultaneously progressive and regressive. The political consolidation of Annexure One castes reflects a deepening of the politics of caste empowerment to groups that had not received the full benefits of the RJD’s ‘backward-caste’ government. Nitish Kumar went on to broaden this already formidable base to include a category which he has termed ‘Maha Dalits’ – scheduled castes excluding the populous Paswan caste (which was already aligned with the opposition Lok Janshakti Party). A Maha Dalit Commission was formed and Nitish Kumar stated his intention to ‘saturate them with development funds’ (Kohli and Singh 2013).

As the Annexure One castes and the Maha Dalits remain geographically dispersed and poorly organised, it has been difficult for Nitish Kumar to build a grassroots organisation through which to carry out policy initiatives, making it unlikely that they would be in a position to

⁷ Indiatoday.intoday.in. (9 November 2015). *Nitish Kumar’s work in Bihar: Everything you need to know about Bihar’s development*.

⁸ Ibid.

exercise the kind of dominance that the upper castes and the Yadavs were able to. The criminal records of some of the NDA leaders who enjoyed local dominance prevented Nitish Kumar from delegating power to them if he wanted to restore law and order in the state. In order to gain the support of the lower-caste Muslims, he also needed to ensure that the Hindu nationalist BJP was as weak as possible in the state. The lack of politically viable grassroots organisations and the presence of corrupt and even criminal legislators led Nitish Kumar to shift power from elected politicians to the bureaucracy. Unlike Lalu Prasad Yadav, who weakened the bureaucracy and ruled through informal political networks, Nitish Kumar sought to revive the bureaucracy through a ‘core team’ of senior Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officers. Circulars instructed officials at all levels to resist interference from politicians, including those from the ruling party, and the government threatened politicians caught unduly influencing the administration. A broad governing alliance enjoying both upper-caste and lower-caste support resulted in greater cooperation and cohesion between different state institutions (Kohli and Singh 2013).

In 2014, JD(U) left its coalition with the BJP over the choice of Narendra Modi as prime ministerial candidate and decided to contest the 2014 election alone. In 2014, without the JD(U), the NDA won 31 out of 40 parliamentary constituencies, with the JD(U) winning just two seats. In the months following up to the 2015 State Assembly election in Bihar, Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav, and their respective parties, JD(U) and RJD, joined forces along with the Congress to form the *mahagathbandhan* or Grand Alliance to defeat the NDA. The 2015 election, thus, saw a reversal of fortune for the NDA led by the BJP. While the BJP’s defeat could be related to its poor cooperation with parties within the NDA and an ineffective campaign strategy, there is no evidence of a popular upsurge in favour of the Grand Alliance, as the alliance did not bring in a significantly larger share of voters. The Grand Alliance, however, can be credited with better coordination among its member parties (Sircar and Verniers 2016).

Nitish Kumar came into power in 2015 with his strong development concept of ‘*Saat Nischay*’ or ‘Seven Points’.⁹ He has popularised the ‘seven resolves’ programme of “*sushasan*” (good

⁹ Free Online India. (n.d.). *Nitish Kumar Seven Resolves (Saat Nischay) for Bihar - Free Online India*. [online] Available at: <http://www.freeonlineindia.in/nitish-kumar-seven-resolves-saat-nischay-bihar/>. Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

governance) among the public. The government has pledged an investment of ₹2.7 trillion (S\$58 billion) against ₹1.25 trillion (S\$27 billion) given by Prime Minister Modi. The biggest share of the expenditure has been dedicated to improving the road connectivity and drainage system. This agenda has promised the rural areas will be connected with all-weather roads. This promise is over and above the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (The Prime Minister's Rural Roads Programme) launched by the central government.

Youth employment and skill development has received the second largest budget allocation. This is because Bihar has a low young population (between 17-29 years), but about 17.5 per cent unemployment rate. The government has also planned to provide electricity to all households. The agenda promised that within two years all the villages and nearby places will get electricity. Clean drinking water and proper sanitation are the fourth and fifth resolves respectively among the seven resolves. Previously only 10 per cent of the houses in Bihar had clean drinking water sources on their premises and only 0.7 per cent of the Bihar population had taps in their homes. Nitish Kumar plans to connect 1.6 million urban households with pipelines, and to connect the next 17.9 million households to a direct source of clean drinking water. In line with the sanitation scheme, the government aims to provide toilets in every household within five years. This would mean constructing 17.5 million new toilets. Access to higher education is also an important part of the Nitish Kumar government's agenda. They ensured that five new medical colleges were built along with new nursing colleges in all the medical colleges. According to the proposal, every district in Bihar would now have one engineering college and technical institute. Lastly, to empower the women of Bihar, Nitish Kumar promised a 35 per cent reservation for women in all state government jobs. It was decided that, even in the police department, the reservation for women would be raised to 35 per cent.¹⁰

The Bihar government has already implemented its resolve of providing 35 per cent quota for women in government jobs in 2015. Two schemes – '*Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal*' (piped drinking water to every household) and '*Shauchalay Nirman, Ghar Ka Samman*' (toilet to every household) –have also been launched on 27 September 2016.¹¹ Under the tap water scheme,

¹⁰ Free Online India. (n.d.). *Nitish Kumar Seven Resolves (Saat Nischay) for Bihar - Free Online India*.

¹¹ The Indian Express. (3 October 2016). *Bihar CM Nitish Kumar launches schemes for students as part of 7 resolves*. [online] Available at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/bihar-cm-nitish-kumar-launches-schemes-for-students-as-part-of-7-resolves-3062208/>. Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

the government has promised to ensure supply of clean drinking water through pipes to all homes across the state. The scheme, in the next five years, would try to end people's reliance on hand pumps and other sources of drinking water and ensure supply of piped water to around 1.95 lakh households in 8,391 gram panchayats and 140 urban local bodies (ULBs) in all 38 districts.¹² The Nischay scheme — ₹4 lakh (S\$9,000) student credit card to students — was launched on 2 October 2015 on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary. Under the scheme, students who have passed Class XII will be able to avail credit cards and can withdraw up to ₹4 lakh (S\$9,000) while pursuing any professional course. It is an education loan wherein the government will pay the interest.¹³

The JD(U)'s *Parcha pe Charcha* is an initiative publicising the work done by the Nitish Kumar government in the fields of law and order, governance, women empowerment, roads, power, etc., as well as seeking feedback on issues affecting the everyday lives of the people of Bihar. *Har Ghar Dastak* is a similar volunteer-driven campaign of the JD (U), which takes the message of Nitish Kumar's government to the voters. With the tagline, "*ek karyakarta 10 dastak, ek sandesh har ghar tak*" (Each worker knocks on 10 doors, the message gets delivered to every household), it aimed at reaching out to at least one crore households. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's initiative on Twitter, Ask Nitish, draws about 600+ questions on a weekly basis, and is one of the few two-way communication campaigns initiated and sustained by any chief minister in India.¹⁴

Between 1998-99 and 2004-05, the number of people engaged in industry increased by 0.9 per cent a year. Under Nitish Kumar's leadership, industrial employment improved, the number of people engaged in industry rising by 8.1 per cent a year between 2005-06 and 2012-13. This growth was, however, mostly in micro and small industries, and not in medium and large ones. Bihar has an extremely low percentage of households earning regular wages. In 2010-2011, more than 90 per cent of employment in the organised sector (public as well as private) in the

¹² The Indian Express. (3 October 2016). *Bihar CM Nitish Kumar launches schemes for students as part of 7 resolves*.

¹³ The Indian Express. (3 October 2016). *Bihar CM Nitish Kumar launches credit card for students*. [online] Available at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/bihar-cm-nitish-kumar-launches-credit-card-for-students-3062121/>. Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

¹⁴ The News Minute. (29 September 2015). *Bihar Polls: CM Nitish Kumar champions people centric campaigns*. [online] Available at: <http://www.thenewsminute.com/article/bihar-polls-cm-nitish-kumar-champions-people-centric-campaigns-34733>. Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

state was in the public sector. Bihar has faced a major setback in industrial development since Jharkhand became a separate state in 2000. Earlier, Jharkhand was the ‘industrial part’ of Bihar, as the districts that made up Jharkhand were mineral-rich, in contrast to the rest of Bihar. Thus, ever since the separation, Bihar has found it difficult to lure private investors and increase the share of employment in the private sector.¹⁵

Nitish Kumar has been known since his early days to take a stand on issues he personally feels strongly about. In his early career, he participated in the Bihar Movement, a movement initiated by students in Bihar in 1974 and led by the veteran Gandhian socialist Jayaprakash Narayan, against misrule and corruption in the government of Bihar. The movement later turned against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s government at the Centre. In 2012, he was also known to have supported Pranab Mukherjee for President of India despite being a member of the NDA. In 2016, despite his party’s fallout with the BJP after 17 years of alliance, he supported Prime Minister Modi’s decision to demonetise ₹500 (S\$11) and ₹1,000 (S\$21) currency notes, convinced that the step would help fight black money.¹⁶ With the rise of tension along the Line of Control after frequent terrorist infiltrations and cease-fire violations, he expressed support for the Modi government’s steps against terrorism. In a statement to ANI, the Bihar Chief Minister said, in October 2016, “In matters related to terrorism, contradictory political views won’t help; we’re with the Centre, necessary steps are being taken”.¹⁷ Nitish Kumar has also supported Modi’s candidate for the country’s presidency, Ram Nath Kovind, who was sworn in as the 14th President of India on 25 July 2017.¹⁸

Two years into the Grand Alliance, Nitish Kumar resigned as chief minister on July 26. He cited the corruption charges against Lalu’s son, Tejashwi Yadav, the deputy chief minister, as the reason for ending the alliance with Lalu’s party with whom he had been sharing power.

¹⁵ Navhindtimes.in. (21 November 2015). *Nitish’s Single Biggest Challenge* | *The Navhind Times*. [online] Available at: <http://www.navhindtimes.in/nitishs-single-biggest-challenge/>. Accessed on 14 February, 2017.

¹⁶ DNA. (26 November 2016). *Nitish Kumar explains why he's backing PM Modi in demonetization debate / Latest News & Updates at Daily News & Analysis*. [online] Available at: <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-nitish-kumar-explains-why-he-s-backing-pm-modi-in-demonetization-debate-2277163>. Accessed on 14 February, 2017.

¹⁷ The Financial Express. (3 October 2016). *Nitish Kumar supports Narendra Modi, says ‘we’re with center in matters related to terrorism’*. [online] The Financial Express. Available at: <http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/nitish-kumar-supports-narendra-modi-says-were-with-center-in-matters-related-to-terrorism/403132/>. Accessed on 14 February, 2017.

¹⁸ Chaturvedy, Rajeev Ranjan, and Ranjan, Amit. ‘The Shifting Sands of Bihar Politics’. ISAS Brief No. 502 – 28 July 2017 Institute of South Asian Studies (NUS, Singapore).

Following the collapse of the Grand Alliance, the BJP extended its support to Nitish Kumar and the JD(U). Nitish Kumar, thus, re-emerged as the chief minister forming a new coalition with the NDA.¹⁹

Development Indicators

In terms of socio-economic indicators from 2005 onwards, Bihar's performance has been better than it had been in the previous decade. Based on findings reported in the Statistical Outline of India 2014-15 published by TATA, the population living below the poverty line in Bihar fell from 54.4 per cent in 2004-2005 to 33.7 per cent in 2011-2012, but even then remained above the national average.²⁰ According to the Planning Commission data, per capita consumption expenditure (both rural and urban at current prices) has also increased steadily over the years.

Spending on health has been done more efficiently, with the birth rate falling from 30.9 to 27.7 between 2002 and 2012,²¹ and the infant mortality rates (IMR) falling at a faster pace than the national average. The state's IMR is still higher than all-India levels, but the gap narrowed after Nitish Kumar came into office.²² Another important indicator of public service delivery in the state, the literacy rate, also showed some improvement, rising from 47 per cent in 2001 to 61.8 per cent in 2011, though still below the national average.²³ In terms of overall social service indicators, including both health and education, Bihar's ranking remained the same at 18 over the decade 2001-2011.²⁴ It is also important to note that the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking for Bihar as compared to other states fell by one point from 16 to 17 between 2007 and

¹⁹ Chaturvedy, Rajeev Ranjan, and Ranjan, Amit. 'The Shifting Sands of Bihar Politics'. ISAS Brief No. 502 – 28 July 2017 Institute of South Asian Studies (NUS, Singapore).

²⁰ TATA, *Statistical Outline of India 2014-15*, pg 160.

²¹ Planning Commission Data and Statistics, Government of India.

²² Indiatoday.intoday.in. (9 November 2017). *Nitish Kumar's work in Bihar: Everything you need to know about Bihar's development*. [online] Available at: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/nitish-kumar/1/519976.html> [Accessed 9 Nov. 2015].

²³ Planning Commission Data and Statistics, Government of India.

²⁴ Mundle, S., Chowdhury, S. and Sikdar, S. (2016). Governance Performance of Indian States 2001-02 and 2011-12. *National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) Working paper series*, [online] 164. Available at: http://www.nipfp.org.in/media/medialibrary/2016/04/WP_2016_164.pdf.

2014.²⁵ In terms of the ease of doing business, Bihar's rank has risen from 21 to 16 between 2015 and 2016.²⁶

According to Crime in India data published by the National Crime Records Bureau, the incidence of murders in the state fell steadily between 2003 and 2015 from 45.43 to 30.53 per million. The incidence of riots, however, rose from 96.73 in 2003 to 127.87 per million in 2015. In absolute terms, Bihar had more riots than any other state with 13,311 cases registered in 2015, followed by Maharashtra (8,336), Uttar Pradesh (6,813), and Karnataka (6,602). The assembly elections in Bihar in 2015, and the end of the 25-year old coalition of the JD(U) and the BJP resulted in a rise in riots in the state over three years from 2013, the Indian Express reported in August 2015. Kerala had 164 rioting cases per million population – the country's highest rate – followed by Bihar (129) and Karnataka (126). Bihar reported more “agrarian riots” cases than any other state (1,156), or 43 per cent of cases in the country.²⁷

Tripura: Manik Sarkar's Government (1998 onwards)

Policy Initiatives

Senior IPS officer Kuldeep Kumar, who led the Special Forces (SF) of the Tripura State Police, in his book *Police and Counterinsurgency: The Untold Story of Tripura's COIN Campaign* (2016), chronicles Tripura's counter-insurgency (COIN) operations and how civil governance, development and welfare helped the state slowly return to normalcy. The state government never perceived the violent uprisings in the state as a mere law and order problem and adopted a holistic approach for its resolution. It has been willing to consider any political demand within the framework of the Constitution and undertook initiatives to resolve the problems of social, economic and political development of the affected tribal population.

²⁵ The Indian Express. (14 March 2015). *Communal clashes soar in Bengal*. [online] Available at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/communal-clashes-soar-in-bengal/>. Accessed 10 February 2017.

²⁶ Hindustan Times (31 October 2016). *Andhra Pradesh, Telangana top ease of doing business ranking, Gujarat slips*. [online] Available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/andhra-pradesh-telangana-top-ease-of-doing-business-ranking-gujarat-slips/story-NtYZEg1EkiyISSgFZ7x2RP.html>. Accessed 10 February 2017.

²⁷ Waghmare, A. (15 September 2016). *Religious Riots Down In 2015, But Other Riots Rise*. [online] IndiaSpend. Available at: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/religious-riots-down-in-2015-but-other-riots-rise-49538>. Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

The policy of the state government to address the problem of insurgency is summarised as follows:²⁸

Government initiatives include attempts to restore alienated lands to tribals; rehabilitation of the Jhumias (shifting cultivators) through different schemes; measures for poverty alleviation, the decentralisation of administration and devolution of powers to local bodies; providing employment for tribal youth in the state sector; working to protect tribal languages and cultures; strengthening friendly relations with people on the other side of the border; and attempting to convince youth that legitimate socio-political grievances can be resolved through dialogue and within the framework of the Constitution of India. (Tripura: Human Development Report, 2007: 114).

Tripura has made considerable progress in the last two decades with regard to all three indices of human development – literacy and schooling, life expectancy, and per capita income – which is in contrast to most countries and regions, where conflict further aggravates economic and social problems. Given the corruption and general lawlessness that plagues the north-eastern states, Tripura has earned a well-deserved reputation about the quality of its governance. This can be largely attributed to the personal example set by the present Chief Minister, Manik Sarkar, who leads a simple lifestyle, donates his monthly salary to the CPI (M) party fund and in turn gets a meagre amount for his personal expenses, prevents family or friends from interfering in administration, and does not tolerate corruption among party members or bureaucrats.²⁹

Policy initiatives implemented for the empowerment of tribals include a 37-point “Special package for development of Scheduled Tribes” introduced in 2003 for the socio-economic progress of the tribal community, accelerated infrastructural development, and a range of forest-based livelihood programmes. The rubber cultivation scheme has been one of the major success stories in Tripura, which is not traditionally a rubber-growing state. It has helped in the resettlement of the Jhumia tribals as well as a few surrendered extremists. Special attention has been given to the delivery of public services such as drinking water, public housing, and

²⁸ Kumar, K. (2016). *Police and Counterinsurgency*. 1st ed. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

²⁹ Ibid.

connectivity of village roads. Efforts have also been made to protect tribal language and culture by opening up a channel of All India Radio in Kokborok, the main tribal language in the state, as well as by teaching the language in the tribal areas at the school level. The state government also constituted a separate Directorate of Kokborok and other minority languages in August 2012.³⁰ The World Bank has recently sanctioned ₹1,376 crore (S\$292 million) for the complete upgradation and improvement of the power system network in Tripura.³¹

In an effort to ameliorate the economic hardships of Jhumia tribals living in interior rural areas and to protect them from the influence of insurgents, the government has facilitated their relocation in “cluster villages” by providing basic civic and infrastructural facilities such as drinking water, sanitation, basic education, and employment under the poverty alleviation schemes. This scheme was met with a positive reaction as, contrary to the harsh methods adopted in other conflict-ridden states, people were not forced to move from their native habitats and resettled in these new villages. Instead, these “cluster villages” were used to resettle villagers who were driven out from their homes by insurgents for refusing to pay extortion money and for not preventing the police from collecting information in the villages.³²

The Communist Party of India (Marxist)’s [CPM] government led by Manik Sarkar has taken steps to strengthen the institutions of local self-governance by holding regular elections at the village, block and district levels. The functioning of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous Development (TTAAD) Council has also been improved to meet the aspirations of self-government among the tribal people of the state. Since 2005, the Left Front has been in power in both the TTAAD Council and the Legislative Assembly, paving the way for better coordination between them and greater flow of funds to the TTAAD Council, enabling it to play a greater role in the development of rural areas.

The impact of all these initiatives is reflected in the success of the Left Front in all elections held in the state in recent years. The government promoted ‘peace through development’ through large-scale meetings, effective political mobilisation of women, federalisation within

³⁰ Kumar, K. (2016).

³¹ The Economic Times. (9 January 2017). *World Bank sanctions ₹1,376 crore for Tripura power upgradation*. [online] Available at: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/world-bank-sanctions-rs-1376-crore-for-tripura-power-upgradation/articleshow/56669796.cms>. Accessed on 15 February, 2017.

³² Kumar, K. (2016).

the state and by encouraging the youth to renounce violence.³³ In May 2015, in view of significant taming of insurgency in the state, the council of ministers repealed the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, demonstrating how the integration of police strategies with comprehensive government initiatives has re-established the rule of law and a sense of security among the people.

Despite various policy initiatives and positive developments, a lot remains to be done on the development front. There is an acute shortage of qualified teachers in a large number of schools in the tribal areas because, despite considerable improvement in the security scenario, Bengali teachers have refused to locate themselves in interior areas and pocket their salary sitting in the capital city of Agartala, paying a meagre amount to the “proxy” teachers who are themselves barely literate.³⁴ There is a lack of employment opportunities for tribal youth in the government as well as the private sector. There is currently a reservation of 31 per cent in all government jobs for scheduled tribes, and many tribal youth have found employment in TSR battalions and other government departments. However, more than one lakh tribal youth still remain unemployed. This issue needs to be addressed in order to ensure that the tribal youth do not fall under the militants’ influence due to poverty and unemployment.³⁵ According to the Statistical Profiles of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013, only about 59.13 per cent of scheduled tribes (ST) men and 40.87 per cent of ST women are workers in the state.

In November 2014, a group of political leaders, activists and academics came together to raise their voices against the Modi government’s attempt to dilute MGNREG scheme. Sarkar, the first chief minister to lead a dharna against the dilution of the MGNREG Act, said his state was facing a massive cut in funds from the Centre, with the amount coming down to ₹650 crore (S\$138 million) from the previous year’s ₹1,400 crore (S\$297 million). He attacked the UPA-II government, which had started curtailing the MGNREG Act, and accused the Modi government of failing to deliver on its promises. “The decision to curtail the MNREG Act will

³³ Kumar, K. (2016).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

adversely affect Tripura, which is the best performing state in this regard. This will not be tolerated,” he said.³⁶

Chief Minister Manik Sarkar, recently, following the CPM’s party line, reacted to Prime Minister Modi’s demonetisation initiative, saying it was nothing but a political gimmick aimed at diverting the attention of the common people from Modi’s failures.³⁷ He said the poor, especially in rural areas, would be the worst sufferers as they would be unable to exchange the notes in the absence of banks or bank accounts. Sarkar said they were facing problems in making the MGNREG Act payments and many people were unable to withdraw money from their social pension as there was no bank near their houses. Sarkar also raised questions on Prime Minister Modi’s promises during the 2014 general election to get back the black money stashed in safe havens abroad.

Development Indicators

According to the Statistical Outline of India 2014-15 published by TATA, the percentage of population living below the poverty line in Tripura dropped from 32.9 per cent in 1993-94 to 14.1 per cent in 2011-12.³⁸ In real terms, the figures released by the Planning Commission in 2012 indicate a substantial reduction of poverty from 40 per cent in 2004-05 to 14 per cent in 2011-12. Basic health indicators in the state have shown steady improvement, with the birth rate falling from about 14.9 per cent in 2002 to 13.9 per cent in 2012 and the IMR down from 34 in 2002 to 28 in 2012. Both the health parameters remained below the national average throughout this period. Literacy rates rose in the state from about 60.44 per cent in 1991 to 87.2 per cent in 2011.³⁹ According to the Statistical Profiles of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013, the gap in the literacy rate between the total population and the ST in the state fell from about 20 to 8.2 between 1991 and 2011.⁴⁰ The dropout rate among ST students at the primary school

³⁶ The Times of India. (27 November 2014) *Tripura CM leads protest against shrinking NREGA at Jantar Mantar*. [online] Available at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Tripura-CM-leads-protest-against-shrinking-NREGA-at-Jantar-Mantar/articleshow/45291364.cms>

³⁷ CatchNews.com. (9 February 2016). *PM Modi's demonetisation program nothing but a political gimmick: Tripura CM Manik Sarkar*. [online] Available at: <http://www.catchnews.com/national-news/pm-modi-s-demonetisation-program-nothing-but-a-political-gimmick-tripura-cm-manik-sarkar-1478745098.html> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2017].

³⁸ TATA, *Statistical Outline of India 2014-15*, pg 160.

³⁹ Planning Commission Data and Statistics, Government of India.

⁴⁰ Statistical Profiles of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013. (2013). *Literacy rate of total population and Scheduled Tribes Population and Gap in Literacy rate – India /States/Union Territories: 1991-2011*. [online] Available

level (classes I-V), middle school level (classes I-VIII), and high school level was 41.5 per cent, 61.6 per cent and 71.6 per cent respectively in 2010-11.⁴¹ There are also large inter-district disparities in various components of the HDI. In terms of the ease of doing business, Tripura's rank has risen from 26 to 22 between 2015 and 2016.⁴²

According to Crime in India data published by the National Crime Records Bureau, the incidence of murders per million fell significantly between 2001 and 2005 from 75 to 37.81 per million, but fluctuated around 40 per million by the year 2015. Riots, on the other hand, rose significantly between 2001 and 2003 from 43.12 to 85.62 per million and then fell sharply over the years to 12.22 in 2013 and then rose again to 21.11 per million in 2015. Tracing the roots of unrest, Kuldeep Kumar points out that Tripura's tribal population, which stood at 52.89 per cent in 1901, came down to 31.8 per cent in 2011 with the influx of refugees during Partition and again after the liberation of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971. As a result, many tribal people lost their land and were reduced to working as landless labourers. This generated frustration and discontent that set the stage for violence.⁴³

West Bengal: Mamata Banerjee's Government (2011 onwards)

Policy Initiatives

Mamata Banerjee's government came into power in 2011, spreading her success mantra of "*Ma, Mati, Manush*" (mother, land and humanity) and the guarantee of "*poriborton*" (change). This ended 34 years of Left rule in the state. As the first female chief minister of West Bengal, one of her first decisions was to return 400 acres of land to Singur farmers. Singur was the project site selected by Tata Motors for setting up their Tata Nano car factory. The project

at: <http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/Statistics/StatisticalProfileofSTs2013.pdf> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2017].

⁴¹ Statistical Profiles of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013. (2013). *State wise Dropout Rates of ST Students- 2010-11*. [online] Available at: <http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/Statistics/StatisticalProfileofSTs2013.pdf> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2017].

⁴² Hindustan Times (31 October 2016). *Andhra Pradesh, Telangana top ease of doing business ranking, Gujarat slips*. [online] Available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/andhra-pradesh-telangana-top-ease-of-doing-business-ranking-gujarat-slips/story-NtYZEg1EkiyISSgFZ7x2RP.html> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2017].

⁴³ The Hindu. (13 August 2016). *Tripura's fight against insurgency*. [online] Available at: <http://www.thehindu.com/books/literary-review/Tripura%E2%80%99s-fight-against-insurgency/article14566328.ece>. [Accessed 10 Feb. 2017].

faced massive opposition from displaced farmers whose land had been acquired by the previous Left Front state government in 2006 to help the Tatas set up their factory. The displaced farmers received political support from Mamata Banerjee and her “Save Farmland” movement. Finally, the Supreme Court on 31 August 2016, declared the land acquisition in Singur was illegal and directed the state government to return the land to the farmers within 12 weeks. The decision gave Mamata Banerjee a much-needed boost in the current political context of Bengal.⁴⁴

The flagship programmes of the West Bengal government include the ‘Yuvashree’ scheme, launched in October 2013, under which a monthly dole of ₹1,500 (S\$32) will be provided to the unemployed youth in the state. Mamata announced that one lakh youths enrolled in employment exchanges would receive the amount every month in the first phase. She maintained it was not an unemployment allowance but “assistance” for them to meet their expenses.⁴⁵ The government’s direct cash transfer scheme for girls, Kanyashree Prakalpa, launched in 2013, is another flagship scheme launched by Mamata Banerjee. Under this scheme, unmarried girls aged 13-18 years, enrolled in classes VIII-XII, get an annual scholarship of ₹760 (S\$16). This apart, they get a one-time grant of ₹25,000 (S\$530) upon attaining the age of 18, provided they are enrolled in an education institution. The annual family income of the beneficiaries should not be above ₹1.2 lakh (S\$2,542). Census 2011 suggests that West Bengal had an adolescent (10-19 years) population of 17.3 million, of whom 48.11 per cent or around 8.3 million were girls. So far, Kanyashree has covered about 3.4 million.⁴⁶

The West Bengal government has been increasing its budget allocation for women’s development and social welfare, up from nearly ₹700 crore (S\$150 million) in 2014-15 to about ₹1,000 crore (S\$212 million) in 2016-17. Recently, the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund applauded West Bengal for its intervention in the education sector to ensure almost 100 per cent enrolment in primary education. The scheme was also shortlisted among the best

⁴⁴ The Wire. (2 September 2016). *Will the Singur Verdict Consolidate Mamata Banerjee in Bengal?*. [online] Available at: <https://thewire.in/63423/will-singur-verdict-consolidate-mamata/>. Accessed on 10 February, 2017. Among other initiatives, Mamata Banerjee has also been credited with containing the longstanding “Gorkhaland related violence” by setting up the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, a semi-autonomous administrative body for the Darjeeling hills in West Bengal.

⁴⁵ The New Indian Express. (3 October 2013). *Mamata announces monthly dole to unemployed youth in WB*. [online] Available at: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2013/oct/03/Mamata-announces-monthly-dole-to-unemployed-youth-in-WB-522833.html>. Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

⁴⁶ Business-standard.com. (14 July 2016). *Girls' education in Bengal gets a boost with Kanyashree project*. [online] Available at: http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/girls-education-in-bengal-gets-a-boost-with-kanyashree-project-116071200811_1.html. Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

projects in public administration by the United Nations for 2014-15.⁴⁷ The Banerjee government also declared a scheme titled ‘Sabooj Sathi’ in 2015 for distribution of bicycles to the students of classes IX to XII in all government-affiliated schools.⁴⁸ Other policy initiatives under the Mamata Banerjee government included preponing the pay day of both state government employees and teachers to the first day of each month instead of the 10th. Also, an initiative was undertaken to ensure that teachers get their pension immediately after their retirement.⁴⁹ The government has also focused upon the rejuvenation and development of its world-famous *Tant* products, which are still woven in handlooms.⁵⁰

Mamata Banerjee was instrumental in the rollback of the petrol price hikes in 2012⁵¹ and the suspension of FDI in the retail sector until a consensus is evolved.⁵² In a bid to improve the law and enforcement situation in West Bengal, Police Commissionerates were created at Howrah, Barrackpore, Durgapur-Asansol and Bidhannagar. The total area of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation has been brought under the control of the Kolkata Police.

Between 2011-12 and 2015-16, the state’s economy grew much faster not only than the Indian economy as a whole but surpassed the state’s average growth rate in the last five years of Left Front rule (until 2011). Under the charge of state finance minister Amit Mitra, the State’s tax revenue doubled by 2014-15. This, in its turn, led to a massive increase in spending on social welfare schemes, which came to be recognised by every villager in the state as ‘Didi’s gift’.⁵³ These schemes have forged an important bond between the government and the rural people.

⁴⁷ Business-standard.com. (14 July 2016). *Girls' education in Bengal gets a boost with Kanyashree project*.

⁴⁸ Wbsaboojsathi.gov.in. (n.d.). *Sabooj Sathi*. [online] Available at: <https://wbsaboojsathi.gov.in/> Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

⁴⁹ Sify. (3 June 2011). *Quicker pensions for retiring West Bengal teachers: Mamata*. [online] Available at: <http://www.sify.com/news/quicker-pensions-for-retiring-west-bengal-teachers-mamata-news-education-lgdsuejgjdhsi.html> Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

⁵⁰ Aitcofficial.org. (2015). *Policies of Mamata Banerjee Govt help revive Bengal handloom sector : All India Trinamool Congress*. [online] Available at: <http://aitcofficial.org/aitc/bengal-tant-handloom-mamata-banerjee-policy/> Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

⁵¹ NDTV.com. (26 May 2012). *Petrol price hike: Mamata Banerjee takes her protest to streets of Kolkata*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/petrol-price-hike-mamata-banerjee-takes-her-protest-to-streets-of-kolkata-485043> Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

⁵² The Hindu. (3 December 2011). *Centre will suspend FDI decision, says Mamata*. [online] Available at: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/centre-will-suspend-fdi-decision-says-mamata/article2684384.ece> Accessed on 15 February, 2017.

⁵³ Mitra, S. (21 May 2016). *Mamata won because of five years of consistent performance*. [online] <http://www.hindustantimes.com/>. Available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/mamata-won-because-of-five-years-of-consistent-performance/story-tG41bGxbGCMYr5iKAHSMnK.html> Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

It is, however, important to note that the Mamata government's popularity does not seem to be confined to the rural poor.⁵⁴

Mamata Banerjee has often been in the spotlight for clashing with the Central government over various issues. For instance, the India-Bangladesh Teesta water-sharing agreement fell through when, as the then newly-elected West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, refused to approve the treaty, fearing the loss of higher volume of water to the lower riparian region would cause problems in the northern part of state, especially during drier months. Given that water is a state issue in India, and that Banerjee's political party was a key coalition partner of the then ruling central government, the deal could not go through without her approval.⁵⁵ Mamata Banerjee has also raised her voice in protest against the Modi government's recent demonetisation move as she is of the opinion that it badly affects the poor. "The Modi government has led an assault on the lakshmir jhapi," Mamata said, pointing to the plight of the vegetable vendor or tea garden worker who sustains his family on daily income.⁵⁶

Development Indicators

In West Bengal, the population living below the poverty line has fallen incredibly from 34.3 per cent in 2004-05 to 19.9 per cent in 2011-12 and remains below the national average.⁵⁷ Based on Planning Commission data, health indicators such as birth rate and infant mortality rate have also improved tremendously over the same period. Literacy rates in the state have increased from about 68.84 in 2001 to 76.3 in 2011. Between 2001 and 2011, West Bengal's ranking in terms of overall social indicators has gone up from 9 to 6.⁵⁸ HDI ranking of West Bengal fell from 10 to 11 between 2007 and 2014 when compared to other states in India.⁵⁹ In

⁵⁴ Mitra, S. (21 May 2016). *Mamata won because of five years of consistent performance*.

⁵⁵ Ray, A. (8 June 2012). *India, Bangladesh: Water Disputes and Teesta River Diplomacy* · *Global Voices*. [online] Global Voices. Available at: <https://globalvoices.org/2012/06/08/india-bangladesh-water-disputes-and-teesta-river-diplomacy/> Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

⁵⁶ The Times of India. (12 November 2016). *Why's Mamata Banerjee against demonetization?* - *Times of India*. [online] Available at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Whys-Didi-against-demonetisation/articleshow/55378644.cms> Accessed on 10 February, 2017.

⁵⁷ TATA, *Statistical Outline of India 2014-15*, pg 160.

⁵⁸ Mundle, S., Chowdhury, S. and Sikdar, S. (2016). Governance Performance of Indian States 2001-02 and 2011-12.

⁵⁹ The Indian Express. (14 March 2015). *Communal clashes soar in Bengal*. [online] Available at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/communal-clashes-soar-in-bengal/> Accessed on 10 February 2017.

terms of the ease of doing business, West Bengal's rank has dropped from 11 to 15 between 2015 and 2016.⁶⁰

Based on District Level Household and Facility Survey Findings, in 2007-08, West Bengal had the fifth-highest prevalence of child marriage, leading to high school dropouts, particularly from classes IX to XII. Based on Census 2011 findings, the state is home to nearly 27.45 million married women, of which 11.06 million got married below the age of 18. Of late, the state has seen a reduction in school dropout ratio as well as in incidences of child marriage. According to the Kanyashree baseline survey of June 2015, conducted with a sample size of nine schools across three districts, the enrolment of girls increased from 9,021 in 2013-14 to 9,329 in 2014-15. The increase in enrolment significantly improved in the secondary and higher secondary levels. The number of girls dropping out of school fell from 161 in 2013-14 to 71 in 2014-15, a reduction of 56 per cent, the survey said. Further, there was a 33 per cent drop in cases of child marriage.⁶¹

According to Crime in India data published by the National Crime Records Bureau, West Bengal showed a slow rise in the incidence of murders (per million) from 19.87 in 2001 to 22.96 in 2015. The incidence of riots went up between 2001 and 2009 from 38.60 to 83.54 per million and then dropped again to about 44.43 by 2015. As an Indian Express report (14 March 2014) shows, there was a sudden spike in communal clashes in the state, with the average number of communal incidents rising from about 25 a year between 2008 and 2012 to 106 in 2013. The deterioration in Bengal in 2013 can be seen as a consequence of continuous migration from Bangladesh; many constituencies near the border now have either Muslim majorities or near-majorities, or have a Muslim voter share of 25-30 per cent. This demographic shift is creating both social tension and a new assertiveness among Muslims who don't see the need for the "secular" parties to mediate between them and the "majority".

⁶⁰ Hindustan Times (31 October 2016). *Andhra Pradesh, Telangana top ease of doing business ranking, Gujarat slips*. [online] Available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/andhra-pradesh-telangana-top-ease-of-doing-business-ranking-gujarat-slips/story-NtYZEg1EkiyISSgFZ7x2RP.html> Accessed on 10 February 2017.

⁶¹ Business-standard.com. (14 July 2016). *Girls' education in Bengal gets a boost with Kanyashree project*.

Conclusion

Whether a country with deep-rooted cultural diversity adopts a federal form of governance or not is a matter of major public policy option. The rulers, when not prudent enough, are less likely to share power with their regional counter-parts. Centralisation is a policy option but does not guarantee enduring political order and stability. The centralising rulers understand this only late in the day. The regional autonomy that Spain's regions now enjoy has unmistakably added to the country's political order and stability in the post-Franco era. Therefore, federalism is not enough as a public policy; power-sharing embedded in federalism may be found to be inadequate, and hence requires constitutional reforms to create the space for more power-sharing. In a large and diverse country such as India, government is to be multi-layered with appropriate autonomy guaranteed.

The analysis undertaken above has shown how regional governments, led by political leaders who have moved from opposition to high office, have put the political, administrative, constitutional and financial resources at their disposal to the making of policies that have impacted positively on the level of governance. However, when they are up against structural conditions that are beyond the control of the state government such as the influx of refugees into Tripura, turning the indigenous tribal population into a minority, or for that matter, the steady migration of Muslims into the border districts of West Bengal, radically altering the equations of electoral politics, the impact on governance falls beyond the boundary conditions of the model depicted in Figure 2 in Part 1 of this working paper series.⁶²

Based on comparative regional governance, the paper attempts to look at the variation of governance – as perceived by ordinary people – in terms of a general model, and in the process, to extend the domain of comparative politics into previously uncharted territory. By drawing the logic of human ingenuity, driven mostly by self-interest, the innovation of appropriate rules and procedures, and most of all – agency, of elites and their non-elite followers – the analysis undertaken here sheds light on policies, institutions and processes that enhance governance.

⁶² See Figure 2 titled 'A dynamic neo-institutional model of democratic governance' in Mitra, Subrata K. and Antony, Taisha G. (2017) 'Governance in India: Political Order, Accountability and Public Service Delivery', ISAS Working Paper, Institute of South Asian Studies (NUS, Singapore).

Finally, we need to note the limitations of the explanatory model on which the empirical analysis is based. In the era of globalisation and cross-border terrorism where the world beyond national frontiers deeply influences the currents of domestic politics, an explanatory model that attributes governance exclusively to its domestic causes can be seen as underspecified. In cases of protracted conflict such as Kashmir, purely endogenous solutions to governance, while important, are limited in their explanatory capacity, reducing the scope of their acceptance as a general explanatory principle for analysis. Just as local governance requires an involvement of the regional level and the regional level requires a national involvement, governance in India, particularly in India's troubled border regions, logically points towards exogenous variables, particularly in the form of security arrangements with India's neighbours. The solution to low governance in parts of India calls for joint elite initiative from within India as well as from neighbouring countries, on the lines of a two-level game.⁶³

The second limitation emerges from the changing nature of cognition in the era of identity politics. Rather than confining its cognition of the social reality entirely to social 'facts' reported by their observers or to the opinions of the actor, the paper engages both observers and actors by focusing on the discourse that connects them. The approach adopted here asserts that there are neither 'sheer' facts nor 'mere opinions'. Both become relevant only when the analyst is able to connect them in his narrative through references to similar connections made by actors in their discourse (Howrath et.al. 2000). Both the statistical facts of a riot and the meanings attached to the event are true but partial representations of reality. They become theoretically meaningful for a comprehensive analysis of the event only when the analyst succeeds in connecting the narrative to the 'objective' facts and their subjective meaning. Neo-institutionalism, which in the context of the analysis of governance, draws as much on the modern state as on the traditional society, is of critical importance to students of non-Western societies where the institution of state are at least partly of exogenous provenance.

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⁶³ See Subrata Mitra and Jivanta Schoettli, "The new Dynamics of Indian Foreign Policy and its Ambiguities", *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol 18 (2007), p. 21 for an illustration of how to combine domestic and international constraints in a single model.

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