Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief background to the circumstances of the current times that have necessitated the need for an investigation on the topic under consideration. There has been a diligent attempt to contextualise existing literature on similar areas and incorporate the same throughout the introductory chapter as an attempt to facilitate an understanding of the research problem under consideration, which has also been briefly described in the section dedicated for it. The questions that this study attempts to address and objectives it wishes to meet have been described in the subsequent section. The theoretical frameworks, which have been employed in the various stages of the study have been described in a relevant section dedicated for the same. The concluding remarks provide the necessary signposting to lead to the following chapter.

1.1. Background of the Study

The outcome of the 2014 general elections has brought the Bhartiya Janata Party (henceforth, BJP) at the uppermost echelons of government power for the third time in two decades. Owing to the nature of the BJP's politics, critics have feared that it would use state power to implement its hegemonic majoritarian agenda, yet there is also assentation by several scholars that – owing to the need to be more inclusive, there seems to be a tendency of moderation in its agenda (Palshikar, 2015). Nonetheless, it cannot be ignored that there are tendencies for majoritarian ideological assertions containing overt religious overtones both in public discourse as well as in the online public sphere. The rise of Hindu nationalism has created a stringent group of ultra-nationalists who wish to "… purge all manifestations of anti-national thought from the national discourse, have increasingly engaged in online smear campaigns against journalists," who do not subscribe to their ideas of the national identity and the consequent nationalism that these nationalists espouse (Gopalakrishnan, 2018). There is also another group that vehemently criticises the shift in the discourse on nationalism that has emerged as a result of the rise of the BJP, and vociferously critiques the current discourse as a means to sideline minority opinions on the idea of Indian nationalism (Ramachandran S. , 2020).

Benedict Anderson, in his seminal work, 'Imagined Communities' proposes that the idea of nation itself is an imagination calling it an 'imagined political community' which is inherently 'limited' and 'sovereign' but as a community having a sense of "… deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2015, pp. 15-16). The smear campaigns, therefore,

indicate either malice or complete disagreement with the imagination that a section of the Indian populace holds with regards to a certain idea of the Indian nation. A description of the smear campaigns along with the people involved and the process has been meticulously documented by Swati Chaturvedi, in her book 'I am a Troll' in which she writes:

> "… volunteers and employees were given a 'hit list' of mainstream journalists who needed to be constantly attacked. This includes NDTV's Barkha Dutt and Rajdeep Sardesai, who was with CNN IBN at the time … and the pack of hyena like trolls would descend." (Chaturvedi, 2016, p. 59)

This on the other hand has led to increased self-censorship among journalists whose fear is not limited to mere trolling but at times a fear for their very lives. The Committee for the Protection of Journalists maintains a record of the number of journalists who have been killed on their line of duty across various geographical locations. Thus far, in India, from the year 1992 to 2023, a total of 42 journalists have lost their lives while on duty. In recent time, the year 2017 saw the murder of three journalists and this also includes the infamous case of Gauri Lankesh, who had also been the target of a hate campaign on social media. This continued onto 2018, when four other journalists were again murdered in their line of duty.

While, in 2019 and 2021 there were no reported killings, there were 2 in 2020 and 4 in 2021. Figure 1 indicates higher instances of the killing of journalists which also corresponds to the depreciation in the World Press Freedom Index rankings published by Reporters Sans Frontiers, in Figure 2, in the same period. While, on numerous occasions, Indian leaders have pointed out the inaccuracy of reports published by international agencies on the condition of press freedom with logical argumentation (FP Explainers, 2023) but relevant data does indicate a gradual increase in the killings of journalists and a simultaneous decline in the rankings. As such, irrespective of the source of such data, the reasons for the same must be methodically investigated though formal independent inquiries so that improvements in the working conditions could be made through better policy measures.

42 Journalists Killed in India
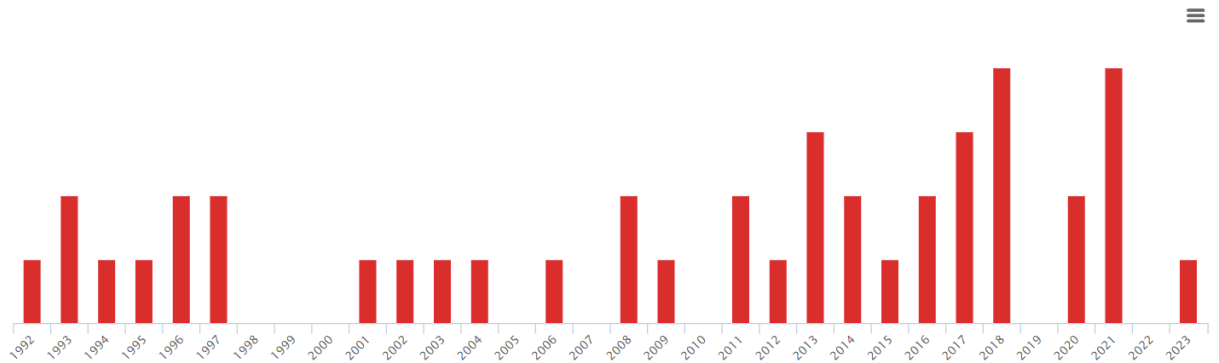
between 1992 and 2023 / Motive Confirmed / Murdered

Figure 1: Journalists Killed in India from 1992-2023
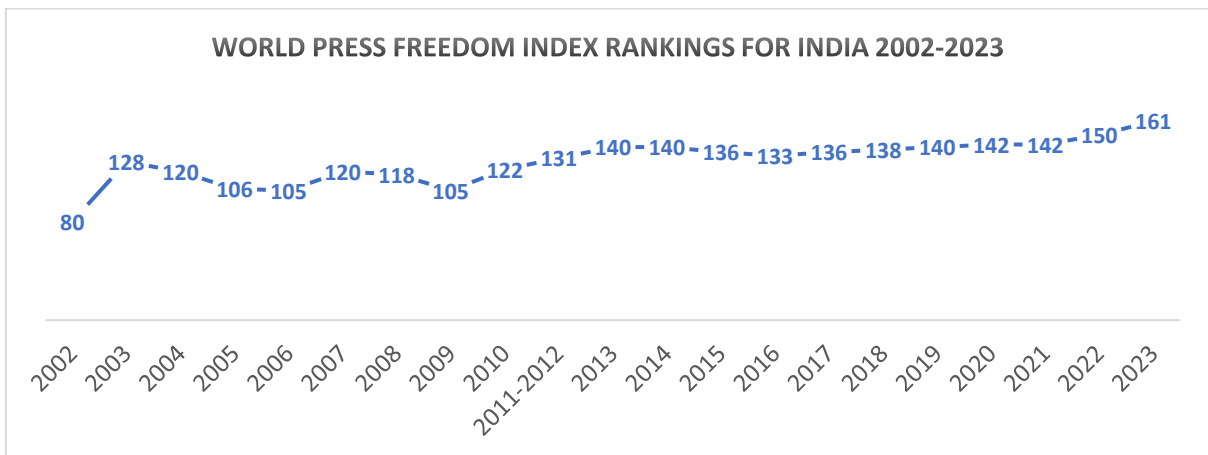
Source: (Committeee to Protect Journalists, 2023)

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX RANKINGS FOR INDIA 2002-2023

Figure 2: India's Ranking on the World Press Freedom Index Report 2002-2023

Source: *(Reporters Without Borders, 2023)*, illustrated by researcher

In this contest between the 'national' versus the 'anti-national', journalists who do not conform to the majoritarian ideas have to take refuge in self-censorship resulting in the selective presentation of facts and the mainstreaming of only certain opinions on particular issues (Paul & Pegu, Media Polarization and Assertion of Majoritarianism in Indian News Media, 2021). Consequently, this also has an effect on the space allocated to more important issues that concern with development and governance which are sidelined for polarised political rhetoric instead. On the role and response of the Indian media on the proliferation of Hindutva in the media discourse, Parthasarathy (2015) writes,

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"Led by a group of highly ideological columnists like Arun Shourie, Swapan Dasgupta, and S. Gurumurthy, whose writings were featured prominently in leading national dailies and newsmagazines, there was a tendency to glorify the Hindu nationalist leaders and exaggerate their popular appeal … providing the political legitimization for sectarian leadership and conflict of the worst kind." (pp. 92-93)

While the concept of 'objectivity' with reference to the reporting of news is riddled with its own set of complexities, owing to the philosophical niceties involved, it rests on the journalists to diligently present their subjective truths with proper research and an effort to represent the voices of all stake holders who are part of the discourse (Frost, 2011, pp. 67-88). The Press Council of India has its own set of detailed guidelines that warrants journalists to serve "… people with news, views, comments and information on matters of public interest in a fair, accurate, unbiased, sober and decent manner" (Press Council of India, 2022).

An exploration of the polarisation of media discourse also warrants an understanding of the polarisation of political discourse in India which is a definite underlying factor in influencing the former. The major thrust in this thesis, therefore, is to provide an understanding of the proliferation of majoritarian discourses in the print media of the Northeastern states of India. While this study acknowledges the pervasive advantages of new media in disseminating news, scholars have argued that it is the print media that enables better retention and hence has the potential to exercise greater power. In this regard, van Dijk (2008, p. 55) writes,

"… Contrary to popular and scholarly beliefs, news in the press is usually better recalled than is Television news and is perceived to be qualitatively superior which may enhance its persuasive influence and therefore its power."

The thesis also limits the research area of the study to the Northeast of India as this is a region which has moved from its politics of ethnicity to that which has elements of religion infused in defining the larger 'insider' versus 'outsider' discourse. While the region has seen the unprecedented rise of the BJP, which through the North East Democratic Alliance, dominates the political discourse in the region, the image of BJP's politics as is known in the Gangetic plains, is not the same in this part of the country (Longkumer, 2022). As Das (2004, p. 246) argues,

> "… much of religious radicalism in the Northeast is embedded in ethnicity and does not exactly manifest itself in the way it does in other parts of the country. Religious radicalism situates itself within an ethnic matrix and assumes a highly complex character."

As such this study uses concepts such as 'autochthonous' versus 'non-autochthonous' groups to argue that while ethnicity and religion are very overtly evident as elements that effect the political discourse, these are simply smaller factors under the overarching question of identity. The exclusivist ideas of nationalism along with nativism that perpetuate the political discourse in the Northeast are not very different from the ideas that are espoused by 'Hindutva' which is the ideology of the BJP and its fraternal organisations. While 'Hindutva' could be seen as an opposition to the assimilating factors of globalisation, the sub-nationalisms that have existed in the Northeast should also be looked at from the frame of 'Indian Nationalism' as the assimilating factor against the existence of the sub-nationalistic aspirations. As a support mechanism for perpetuating nationalisms, Anderson (2015, pp. 37-41) in his seminal work Imagined Communities speaks about the link between the onset of the 'Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (Benjamin, 2008) to the origin of national consciousness. The publication of books in vernacular languages, which was an outcome of the saturation of the market for Latin language publications, corresponded the rise of the popularity of the notion of 'nation.' As such, Anderson asserts the "primacy of capitalism" in proliferation of ideas such as 'nation' and 'nationalism.'

In other words, the rise of mediated communicative mechanisms and their capability for replication facilitated the creation of national consciousness.' As 'nations' developed their state apparatuses'; which, as Althusser (1970) describes, are either 'Repressive' or 'Ideological', with Repressive Ideological Apparatuses (RSA) constituting entities such as government, courts, police, armed forces etc. and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) constituting entities such as educational institutions, media outlets, social settings, family etc.; it created an interdependence between the ruling elites of the state and the Ideological State Apparatus, particularly, the 'Ideological State Apparatus of Information', which includes press, radio, television etc. With the use of the 'Ideological State Apparatus of Information,' ruling elites have managed to perpetuate the acceptance of discourses that they see as fitting to the narrative that has the potential to legitimise and consolidate their power and likewise also shun the discourses that would undermine the dynamics of power in a society of concern. Scholars like Herman and Chomsky (1994) have also reiterated on the

influences of the ideological state apparatuses on the discourse emanating out of the media outlets in their explanation of how the various filters associated with propaganda work. In this regard, polarisation of discourse could happen when there are competing interest groups that seek to control the narrative and thereby legitimise their hold on the agencies of the Ideological State Apparatus. In this regard, it would be noteworthy to point out the introduction of the new education policy introduced by the BJP led Government of India in 2020 and the implementation primarily opposed by the states that are opposed to the BJP (Saraswat, 2023). Likewise, there is also the infamous acquisition of NDTV, a news channel that had been known to be critical of the BJP, by the affiliates linked to Gautam Adani, who is again known to be a supporter of the BJP (Rajvanshi, 2022).

In recent times, there have been numerous instances when the sway of the Ideological State Apparatus, that has been evolving under the BJP made itself known. Of the many examples, an interesting one is that of the discourse of 'doctored' versus 'non-doctored' videos in relation to the raising of certain slogans at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University in the February of 2016 (Patnaik & Choudhary, 2016), that emerged on two electronic news outlets, the NDTV and ZEE News. At the time, the NDTV was not associated with affiliates that could be linked to the BJP and therefore the discourse in the respective media houses were evidently polarised and the competition between the narratives clearly visible. The 'Ideological State Apparatus of Information' had played its role in establishing a certain narrative and the repressive measures of the same 'Legal Ideological State Apparatus' became evident when the sedition law was used to arrest the respective students who had been accused of raising those slogans. This example has given a picture of how three constituents of the Ideological State Apparatus – education, legal and information were involved in the creation and correction of narratives that would legitimise the power of certain ruling elites. The discourse originating out of a prestigious educational institution to be corrected lest it would risk the authority of the elites who, in this case, held the echelons of power.

In this context, Innis (1949) had insisted that "… A medium of communication has an important influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and over time". He goes on to divide the media as being time-biased and space-biased, based on their respective characteristics. While time-biased media are characterised by limitations on their capacity of being transmitted across space, for instance, inscriptions on stone, they do encourage the survivability of the mediated communication and therefore aid in the extension of the

'empire' over time. Likewise, there are also the space-biased media that are portable and therefore easily transmitted, for instance, written communication on paper and since they are easily transmitted over space, they have the capacity to extend the 'empire' over expansive territories. While the evolution of mediated communication through the internet has brought about considerable challenges to the arguments in Innis' thesis, nonetheless, the pervasive nature of communication that is space biased facilitates expansive territorial assimilation. On the other hand, time biased media establish centres of power with a handful of people possessing the authority to access and disseminate the knowledge, which in the current era could also be linked to privileged access to information sources. Therefore, mediated communicative mediums are essentially historical systems of social control that tend to exercise monopolies on knowledge through built-in-biases. This in turn jeopardises the utility of mediated communication which, as Thomas (2008, p. x), in relation to Christian Fundamentalism in India, points out could be used for the dissemination of discourses that respective interest groups espouse. He writes,

> "… From time immemorial, the media has been a fertile and well-used (manipulated) tool for religious fundamentalists. This is to be expected since one of the primary aims of the religious fundamentalist is to persuade people to accept the authenticity of an eternal message, valid for all times and for all people ... The marketing of Paradise is big business today. God sells."

While this might be unavoidable in a democratic society where mass media, like any other channels of communication, are used by various interest groups including political parties to advocate for their respective positions but this is also facilitated through gatekeepers who select news, consciously or not, based on the ideas they hold dear. White (1950) in his study on a non-metropolitan newspaper, in which he analysed the various wire-news that were selected and rejected by the editor of the paper and documented the reasoning for the same noted,

> "… In almost every case where he had some choice between competing press association stories Mr. Gates preferred the 'conservative.' I use this expression not only in terms of its political connotations, but also in terms of the style of writing."

In India, one of the earliest studies linking the role of newspapers to electoral politics in the first general elections after the independence of India, attempted a study on Gujarati, Marathi

and Hindi newspapers of Bombay. The study concluded that majority of the papers were politically biased and that their predictions had been wide off the mark. Evidently certain biases, in relation to the various interest groups that were stakeholders in the election, had played their role in influencing the opinions that had been shared in the newspapers (Venkatarangaiya, 1953). Later, Prasad and Kumar (1991), in their analysis of the election-related content of editorials and letters to the editor pointed out that the respective corpora in the newspapers selected for their study primarily emphasized on the role of the Election Commission during the respective elections but what is relevant to this current study is that they also affirmed that the public was provided with selective information either through omission or the highlighting of certain issues and more importantly political parties, although they do not explicitly conclude if it is the ruling party or the party in opposition that finds greater prominence.

In this regard, an older study by Haque and Narag (1983), had attempted to analyse the content of editorials and news items of three national dailies The Hindu, The Times of India, and The Hindustan Times, to identify trends in the coverage of the two Indian elections of 1962 and 1977. They concluded that the Congress, then the ruling party, dominated the coverage in both the elections. As a recommendation towards the future directions to research in similar areas, in their study, they point out that as it is "the elite press … (that has been) articulating the issues, concerns and needs affecting the public" and by studying how the media present issues, the identification of the socio-political objectives for the government and the political parties, could facilitate an understanding of the press-society relation in developing countries. It is in this context that the current study is situated with an aim to understand the relation between the Ideological State Apparatus and its communication arm that entails an enduring effect on the media, the impact, often inevitable, owing to the politico-economic factors that influence the discourse but with competing 'nationalisms', given what has been the case in the Northeast of India (Misra, 2000), studying the discourses in the English print media of the Northeast, opens the scope of developing an understanding of the press-society relation in a complex set-up like the Northeast of India.

This study limits itself to the English print media in four states in the region which is also a delimitation of this investigation. This study aims to investigate the media discourses that are generated out of Northeast India's premier English print media houses based on the research questions and objectives that have been described in section 1.4. The intent of the

researcher is to determine the use of majoritarian narratives through the assertion of hegemonic religious and ethnic identities in the English print media houses in the region at the crucial time of the general elections of 2019. Further there is also an attempt to examine, if political parties, owing to the interest groups they represent, use influence mechanisms to manipulate objective media discourse in favour of their own concerns in the environment of competing interests.

1.2. Research Problem

The rise of the Bhartiya Janata Party to the echelons of power by decimating its political opponents, first in the 2014 and subsequently in the 2019 general elections, brought with it, a complete shift in the politics of the largest country on the Indian subcontinent viz. India. They had dislodged a strongly-entrenched Indian National Congress led United Progressive Alliance Government who had been in power for two consecutive terms. The BJP's prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, as described in the Introduction to 'Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India,'

> "… saturated the public sphere, taking the country by storm, behaving like a muscular rockstar on stage (endowed with a '56-inch chest'), and resorting to TV, social media, holograms, etc. His image was everywhere. In terms of content, his campaign … repeated ad nauseum catchy and vague slogans that emerged as powerful, though 'empty signifiers,' the trademark of populists according to Ernesto Lacau" (Chatterji, Hansen, & Jaffrelot, 2019, p. 3).

The growth in the dominance of the BJP in the political scape brought with it, allegations, and counter allegations about the oppressive nature of the Ideological State Apparatus that was out to disrupt the free press, which some considered, had been suppressed by various means. Schiffrin (2021, p. 14) writes –

> "The BJP's actions in India have resulted in growing self-censorship and an unwillingness to pursue and stick with watchdog journalism, unprecedented even for a country with a long history of politicians equating any overtly critical journalism with being negative about India and even unpatriotic."

There was also a rise in the endorsement of media houses with alternate discourses which seemed to be preferred by the ruling dispensation, who accused the alternative to their own discourse as being riddled with a mindset of colonialism and thus unacceptable to an Indian

rational (Aiyar, 2023). This, therefore, has become an age of sharp, competing discourses to define and redefine the nature of the Indian democracy as we know it. In this regard, two articles published within a gap of few days, by The Indian Express, largely represents this ongoing discourse of asserting and refuting of ideas that define the discourse surrounding democracy in India. While one is headlined – "J Sai Deepak writes: 'Majoritarianism' is used to gaslight Hindus" (Deepak, 2023), published on June 22, 2023, another is – "J Sai Deepak is wrong: Indian democracy is not Hindu will" (Sijoria, 2023), published on June 28, 2023. This is just one of the few instances that could be used to put into perspective the existing polarisation of ideas about Indian democracy. The nature of a democratic society depends on the contestation of ideas – it could either be through face-to-face interactions or in the current times, through mediated communication. As such Dahlgren (2012, pp. 2-3) writes,

> "The media are a prerequisite … though by no means a guarantee for shaping the democratic character of the society, they are bearers of democracy's political communication beyond face-to-face settings … they have both been praised and criticised, but however we judge them they are integral part of our contemporary reality, a major historical force."

It is therefore, that, the existence of a free press which is independent from the coercive influences of the Ideological State Apparatus, becomes essential for a healthy democracy to thrive. Scholars, from time to time, have argued, though, that the political economy of the media has its effects on the discourse that the media houses disseminate. In this regard Herman and Chomsky (1994, p. xi) point out that media tends to,

> "… propagandise on behalf of powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The representatives of these interests have important agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy. This is normally not accomplished by crude intervention, but by the selection of right-thinking personnel and by the editors' and working journalists' internalization of priorities and definitions of newsworthiness that conform to the institution's policy."

Under such circumstances, it is only imperative that it is the powerful societal interests that dictate the discourse in the media and in the absence of a diverse array of powerful societal interest groups to finance institutions that generate the news, the Ideological State

Apparatus, with its model of advertising in various local newspapers, as it has been in India, will have considerable control over the news being disbursed through these media houses. This is probably the reason why,

> "… India's ruling administrations often dramatically increase advertising rates that they will pay media for government ads, which is another way to try and leverage their influence in media at a critical time (elections) ... the Congress Party– led government hiked the rates that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting set for ads in print newspapers by 13 percent in 2013, ... The BJP, which then swept into power in 2014, announced a 25 percent increase in rates in January 2019, just months before national elections ..." (Narisetti, 2021, p. 164)

This study attempts to look at the English print media in four states of the Northeast, which, as a consequence of, the lack of financers, has higher dependence on the Government apparatus for advertising revenue. The Northeast is also known for having different political interests in the form of sub-nationalistic aspirations (Kumar P. , 1991; Misra, 2000) and as such, is in a state of constant negotiation with the unifying assimilating factors espoused by 'Hindutva'[1] and the attempts that relevant organisations have been making to proliferate the same (Longkumer, 2022). It is in these contradictions and complexities that the various media houses in the Northeast function and as such, the phenomenon of media polarisation, in the context of the Northeast becomes an interesting area to explore. Besides the religion factor that is being used to 'square the circle' (Bauman & Vecchi, 2004, p. 10) of the Indian identity, in the Northeast, the ethnic consideration becomes as important and hence the negotiation which in this case, being disseminated through mediated communication, is a matter of concern and the research problem.

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study attempts to situate itself as a study of the Northeast, a region which has had a history of the dominance of ethnic assertions and consequent overt sub-nationalistic aspirations which are a result of the same dominant ethnic discourses, in the context of an ongoing polarisation of discourse in the media across India. As discussed in section 1.2,

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[1] "Hindutva is a political ideology that does not necessarily represent the views of the majority Hindus in India. However, elements of its assimilative ideology expressed in Hindutva, or Hindu-ness, cannot be totally denied …" (Haokip J. , 2014, p. 35)

there is an evolving dichotomy which is a result of the competing discourses on the nature of democracy in India and the mass media, being a major instrument responsible for shaping the discourse on democracy is at the centre of it. This study, therefore, tries to investigate the workings of the English print media in the Northeast, which, as this thesis will explore, is among the most evolved and hence, has considerable capability in influencing and voicing the concerns that various stake holders, who are capable of directing the discourse on the nature of democracy, espouse.

As such, the Northeast of India, with its unique history, is caught in a quagmire of the autochthonous versus non-autochthonous discourse and while the assertions of nativism are in consonance with the exclusivist ideas of 'Hindutva,' traditionally, in defining the autochthonous, ethnicity was the major concern in the northeast, which is not the case with Hindutva. As has been evident from the various election results, which include both Assembly and General elections to the State Legislature and the Lower House of the Indian Parliament respectively, there has been a rise of the BJP, which, with its assimilating ideology goes against the identity assertions among the communities in the Northeast. The commonality though, is the anti-outsider rhetoric, which for Hindutva are the non-Indic religionists and for the ethnicists (in the Northeast), the various communities that they consider non-autochthonous to the areas under their domain.

The significance of this study, therefore, is in exploring the content in the media and document the experiences of the media professionals and academics who shape the discourse, in relation media polarisation and ethno-religious assertion, in a complex setting of religion, ethnicity and the insider versus outsider discourse that has been redefining itself with time. The study, further, also explores the influences of the Ideological State Apparatuses in influencing the discourse – it is, here, essential to note that the Ideological State Apparatuses on the level of the 'Indian Nation' and the 'smaller identities' that perceive themselves as nations are different and therefore there are various negotiations that take place with reference to the discourse emanating out of the various media houses in the Northeast of India.

1.4. Research Questions & Objectives

This section outlines the research questions and objectives that this study attempts to address. As White (2017, p. 1) puts it,

"… being interested in the topic and having an interest in the results you produce are very different … it is very important to have a clear idea about the answers that are possible, given the nature of your questions … but it is crucial to be prepared to be surprised by your findings and that you do not rule out any possibilities in advance"

Although the topic of study could ensue a view that the research questions and objectives would have been crafted with certain pre-conceived notions, there has been diligent attempt made in this regard, to mitigate any such anomaly though peer vetting and discussions with scholars in the area and subsequent revisions of the same had been carried out, at the formative stages of the study, to ensure that possibilities of any novel findings are not ruled out. The research questions and objectives, hence formulated, are as under.

1.4.1. Research Questions

1. What are the prominent discourses in the print media of Northeast India, pre and post general election of 2019?
2. Is there a dominant opinion being asserted through the print media texts which leads to the marginalisation of the minority opinion?
3. Whether and how there is a 'Manufacturing of consent' through the discourses being produced by the print media of Northeast India?
4. How have the print media discourses in Northeast India influenced the academic scholars and journalists of the region?

1.4.2. Research Objectives

1. To identify the discourses that are prominent in the print media of North East India as an effect of the general elections of 2019.
2. To analyse if there is a dominant opinion being asserted through the print media texts in the Northeastern region leading to the marginalisation of minority opinions.
3. To examine if there is a 'Manufacturing of consent' that is happening through the discourse being produced by the print media of Northeast India.
4. If there is indeed the 'Manufacturing of consent,' to assess how the same is taking place through the discourses in the print media of the region.
5. To study how the print media discourses are being perceived by the academic scholars and journalists of the North-Eastern part of India.

1.5. Theoretical Frameworks for the Study

The study combines van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998) and Fairclough's (2015) ideas on the use of language for the assertion of power relations in society as theoretical frameworks. This, along with the propaganda filters suggested by Herman and Chomsky in their seminal work 'Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media' (1994). While the scheme of the usage of the theoretical frameworks and their relevance to the sections where they have been used, have been discussed in Chapter 4: Research Methodology, the theoretical frameworks themselves require brief descriptions. This section provides the general descriptions of the theories that have been employed in the course of the conceptualisation, fieldwork and writing stages of this thesis.

On Ideology, Dijk (1998) notes that an important feature of ideological opinions, expressed in discourse is, they should have implications for groups or social issues that concern the respective groups. In this regard, he makes a general note that they are "…conceived of as the interface between fundamental properties (e.g. interests, goals) of social groups and the shared, social cognitions of their members (p. 313)". As "… ideologies are social and group-based... (p. 267)" they could be characterised as being a pre-requisite for the 'Us' versus 'Them' dichotomy which would aid in the description of the Ideological Square, in which, van Dijk (2008, p. 55) proposes that, the power elite[2] exercise control over the media. The media, he notes, are not limited to being just the mouth piece of the elite but rather "… an inherent part of the societal power structure" which they achieve through "general professional and ideological aspects of news worthiness" but their reliance on a constant availability of credible sources warrant that they reproduce the "…news stories … (about) major political bodies of the state, the police, the courts, and the big corporations." This in turn creates a situation where elite opinions or the opinions of people in power are produced and reproduced, further consolidating their control over power, and legitimating the views held by them, and on the other hand it consolidates the power of the media houses that are poised to gain from interactions with the many power holders.

> "… many power holders get routine coverage by the news media, and thus
> their power may be further confirmed and legitimated ... Through selective
> source use, news beat routines, and story topic selection, the news media

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[2] According to Mills (1959), there is a power elite in modern societies, an elite who command the resources of vast bureaucratic organizations that have come to dominate industrial societies.

decide which news actors are being publicly represented, what is being said about them, and, especially, how it is said ... instead of simply being a mouthpiece of the elite, the media also show that they are an inherent part of the societal power structure ... (p. 55)"

Here, his thoughts align with what has been expressed by Herman and Chomsky (1994), who, in their work, characterise the elite control over the media and describe how,

"… the large bureaucracies of the powerful subsidise the mass media, and gain special access (to the news), by their contribution to reducing the media's costs of acquiring ... and producing, news. The large entities that provide this subsidy become 'routine' news sources and have privileged access to the gates. Non-routine sources must struggle for access, and may be ignored by the arbitrary decision of the gatekeepers." (p. 22)

Along with the elite sources that have the capacity to dictate the agenda, through their privileged access, Dijk (1998, p. 267) describes the 'Us' versus 'Them' dichotomy – the 'Us', as 'oneself' and the 'Them' is the 'other'. While there is a tendency to emphasize the 'good' of oneself (Us) and the 'bad' of the other (Them), there is also the tendency to de-emphasize the 'good' of the other (Them) and the 'bad' of oneself (Us). In other words, while there is positive self-presentation, there is the negative other presentation. The visual representation, as provided under, summarises the theory and provides clarity to a rather complex idea.

	Good	Bad
Emphasize	Us	Them
De-emphasize	Them	Us

Figure 3: van Dijk's Ideological Square

Source: Illustrated by researcher

On Language and Power, (Fairclough, Language and Power, 2015) in his comparison between face-to-face discourse and the nature of media discourse, attributes the limitation

in the capacity of media houses, responsible for producing the discourse, to ascertain and adapt to the diversity of their audience base to the deficiency in knowledge regarding the characteristics of the audience. It, therefore necessitates all media producers to produce the discourse in the media, while keeping in mind a certain interpreter who might be a viewer, listener or reader, depending on the media under consideration. Therefore "…Media discourse has built into it a subject position for an ideal subject, and actual viewers or listeners or readers have to negotiate a relationship with the ideal subject (p. 78)". It is therefore evident that media discourse, with its limited scope for immediate feedback, tends to be one-sided and these "sole producing rights … can therefore determine what is included and excluded, how events are represented (p. 79)"

He goes on to explain how it is in fact an "institutional collective" that is involved in the production of the discourse in the media. While one might think that it is only the journalist, who writes the news report, wields power over what is to be included and excluded but the same journalist has to also negotiate with editorial control. Even so, in their reportage, journalists have to access various sources for the news and this opens the scope for unequal representations. As Fairclough (2015) writes,

> "…the people and organizations that the media use as sources in news
> reporting do not represent equally all social groupings in the population ...
> While the unequal influence of social groupings may be relatively clear in
> terms of who gets to be interviewed … it is less clear but nevertheless highly
> significant in terms of whose perspective is adopted in reports. (p. 79)"

In other words, higher representation of a particular 'grouping' could indicate a bias that media producers might have towards that respective grouping. The factors, though, that lead to this bias could be many. Lwin and Teo (2013, p. 61). have also, on similar lines, insisted that news outlets, in order to increase the credibility of their reports tend to only quote people in power,

> "When a news reporter interviews and quotes people in positions of power…
> the poor, the young, the uneducated, the unemployed, the elderly, etc. – only
> further disempowers them."

As a relevant conjecture that could be made from the line of reasoning, as above, is that, the use of sources, that have considerable authority, makes the media an enabler of elite power and when paraphrasing is used, media producers tend to assert their own power in shaping

a certain discourse. Problem resides, also with the "institutional collective" and this has been expressed quite clearly in Herman and Chomsky (1994, p. xii) who note,

> "…biased choices in the media arise from the preselection of right-thinking people, internalized preconceptions, and the adaptation of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organization, market, and political power. Censorship is largely self-censorship, by reporters and commentators who adjust to the realities of source and media organizational requirements, and by people at higher levels within media organizations who are chosen to implement, and have usually internalized, the constraints imposed by proprietary and other market and governmental centres of power"

Further, Herman and Chomsky (1994), in relation to the "inequality of wealth and power" that has the effect of altering the discourse in the media at multi-levels, have proposed the propaganda model. It highlights that the "raw materials" that constitute the news must pass through the various filters, as outlined by this model, before they are considered newsworthy. As such, following are the filters that have been proposed,

> "(1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism." (p. 2).

The first filter, that Herman and Chomsky introduce us to is on the overarching idea of 'ownership' of the media. Their work reveals that, since 1990s, in the United States, through major deals, there has been an attempt to consolidate the grip of a handful corporates on the various large media outlets, which, they argue, have the capability to control the media discourse by restricting the sources from where news discourse could originate. In essence the cost of running an intervention that produces a news discourse is a costly affair and requires for substantial generation of revenue and cost cutting measures for the effective running of the outlet. Unless, the owners of a media outlet are capable of generating revenue by other means, to ensure that running a media outlet is profitable, negotiations with market

forces is an inevitable reality. It is in this 'laissez faire[3]' idea that the idea of the second filter is situated.

The second filter, is on the overarching idea of 'advertising revenue.' Historically, advertising had served as a powerful deterring mechanism that was responsible in weakening the working-class press. Curran and Seaton as quoted in Herman and Chomsky (1994, p. 14) note that "…advertisers thus acquired a de facto licensing authority since, without their support, newspapers ceased to be economically viable." In this context, agencies that support news producers through advertisements have considerable say on the discourse originating from the respective media houses. These agencies, in this case, could either be governments or other corporates.

The third filter is on the overarching idea of 'sources' of the news. Herman and Chomsky (1994, p. 19), note that, in an attempt to "… protect themselves from criticisms of bias and the threat of libel" while also maintaining the image of an 'objective' dispenser of news, the mass media tend to attribute higher weightage to official sources, which could either be a government, corporate or any other entity but with the element of being "…recognisable and credible by their status and prestige." This, effectively reduces mass media to an instrument that acts in collusion with power sources that wish to dictate the direction in which the media discourse should develop.

The fourth filter is on the idea of 'flak' which could, in a more simplistic sense, be described as negative reception of the views and opinions espoused by the respective media house or the employees who work for the respective media house. Herman and Chomsky (1994, p. 26), in reference to, what could constitute 'flak' note, "… letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches and bills before Congress, and other modes of complaint, threat, and punitive action." While 'flak' could be an organised action but is not limited to it, with ample scope for the "independent actions of individuals."

Last is the fifth filter which is described by Herman and Chomsky (1994, p. 29) under the overarching idea of 'anticommunism' but to contextualise it in the current times, could connote the fear of an opposing ideology. While Communist ideology, at the time, was an agent of disruption, in the current times, this could be equated with any idea that would be a disruption of the established status quo. In this regard Herman and Chomsky have

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[3] Government abstention from interfering in the mechanisms of the free market.

themselves expressed that 'anti-communism' as a filter has been losing its application only to be replaced by the more recent, in the American context 'anti-terrorism' (Mullen, 2017). The researcher, for this study has associated the fifth filter with the marginalisation of dissenting opinions.

1.6. Summarising Comments

This chapter started with a brief introduction, in which Section 1.1 Background of the Study, provides a contemporary account of the time in history and the context in which this study is situated. The end of this section provides a glimpse of similar studies that had been conducted in the past. This is followed by section 1.2 Research Problem which attempts to put the problem of into perspective and therefore describes the circumstances under which the idea of this study has been conceived. The next section 1.3 Significance of the Study tried to establish why this investigation is relevant in the current context. This led to Research Questions & Objectives that were a result of the gap that was established by existing literature and the circumstances of the current times that establish the need for the current inquiry. This was followed by a section on the Theoretical Frameworks for the Study which provided brief descriptions of the existing theories that are the foundation of this study and have been employed widely throughout the various stages of the study. The next chapter will discuss the concepts that have been widely utilised as the overarching concepts during the study.