

AN ECONOMIC THOUGHT OVER THE DISTORTING ROLE OF EMERGING POLITICAL CONSULTANCY SERVICES IN INDIA



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ABSTRACT

There is a common practice existing among the people for time immemorial, not only in India even among the western world, to have or seek consultants/experts/advisers/assistants/sometimes even astrologers for getting some valuable expertise opinions before venturing into a new business, finding good schools for their children, selecting a suitable educational programmes for their wards, where to construct a house, where to go for a tour, selecting a suitable bridegroom and brides, how to make their children a popular figure in the society etc. etc.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The then Kings/Rulers who ruled Indian continent just before the British made India as their colony had the practices of consulting their “Head Priests of the kingdom” for all daily activities like the economic conditions of the Kingdom, rainfall and welfare of the people, the tax system, when, which month, which date, which star period they have to launch a war against their enemies, and the chances of winning the war etc. etc..... It is very well explained in our “Two Great Epics, Ramayana and Mahabharatha”. Most of the Classical Literatures in Tamil, Sanskrit and Pali also talk in length about this type of consulting practices. There were priests and ministers in those kingdoms who would advise the King what he has to do to be powerful King? And at what time has to start to win the war Almost all the kingdoms had a “Head Priest” and “Ministers” to advice the King and the queen in all their daily and monthly activities. Consultants and advisers are there even at home level also. The elder generations with their vast knowledge and experiences used to guide and advise the younger generations in their day-to-day activities. The role of “Lord of Krishna” in Mahabharatha is more or less a role model for an experienced and excellent “consultant” work or “adviser” for those who seek his guidance. The Pandava

brothers used to consult Lord Krishna in all their activities throughout Mahabharat Period. Chandra Gupta Mourya, the Great King of Mouriya Dynastry, had in his court the great “Chanakiya” also known as “Vishnu Gupta” or “Koutilya” who is the author of “the Arthashastra” an ancient political statecraft, as his advisor. So, seeking an expert opinion or consulting an experienced person regarding social and economic issues/problems is not something new to us or nothing wrong in that also.

Consulting an astrologer and a management expert /an industrialist /an entrepreneur for starting a business is always a welcome one. The experts will guide the new entrepreneurs properly when they have to go for starting a business, what is the demand for that particular product, who are the internal competitors, who are the external competitors, what are the export opportunities, how to avail financial support and credit facilities from the government, know about the incentive packages, tax holidays, tax concessions, and how to solve the tax problems with the tax department etc. The new entrepreneurs could avoid to make any wrong decisions or risks or hurdles on the way of developing their business if they have right consultant as their adviser. Talented and experienced new generation consultants are there for each and every areas to provide expertise services.

Most of the Governments – capitalist, socialist and mixed economies also recognised the need for such consultancy services to develop their economies. Governments both central and states started appointing a group of experts as consultants and advisers to advise policy makers of the the governments at various levels. Prime Minister of India is to consult a group of experts generally known as “Empowered Group of Ministers” in addition to having his own individual consultants for each and every area. The President, The Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, Central Ministers, State Ministers , MLAs and MPs also used to have their own private advisors and consultants from different fields like Science, Engineering, Technology, Agriculture, Economics, Foreign affairs, Service sector and industrial sector, labour issues and environmental issues etc. etc. to get an expertise opinion about the existing issues and based on this they will take a suitable /appropriate and /or policy changes needed for the government. It is always a welcome one.

Generally all the governments have the practice of consulting experienced scientists, economists and social workers for the betterment of the economy, their people and their society. At present the successive governments after independence, for the development of various economic sectors and sub-sectors started consulting experts and for getting their services in the name of export promotion council and development boards, for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), increasing exports, increasing production and productivity, increasing credit facilities, increasing marketing facilities etc. Spices Board, Coconut Development Board, Rubber Board, and various export promotion council such as Engineering Export Promotion Council, Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council, Electrical and Electronics Promotion Council, Special Economic Zone, are some of the examples for that. These boards and promotion councils would provide consultancy services to the farmers, start-

up groups, women entrepreneurs, and promoting their products within and outside India. Most of these boards and councils are government organisations and the governments also implement their development oriented policy programmes through these organisations So consultancy took different forms in different times. This consultancy services now took a “New Avadar” or “New Role” in politics known as “political consultants” which was not so familiar to Indian politicians before 2005.

If one analysis the role of “promotion councils” and “development boards” they are very much development oriented. They mainly concentrate on increasing production, productivity, increasing exports, industrialising the country, bringing more foreign exchange reserves, create employment opportunities are some of the major targets of these bodies. Definitely India made great achievements through these promotion bodies such as attainment of “green revolution” in the Fourth Five Year Plan itself, increasing the foodgrains production from 54 million tonnes of foodgrains in 1950-51 to 298 million tonnes in 2020-21, white (milk) revolution from a chronic milk deficit country in 1950-51, with a production of 19 Million Ton per year (MMT) , the production has increased to 210 MMT in 2020-21, and with various export promotion councils India’s exports share has increased from 0.5 per cent before adopting LPG policy to 1.7 per cent 2018-19, our foreign exchange reserve increased from just \$1billion in 1991 to \$579 billion in 2021. Similar to these achievements, India made so many economic and social development/achievements due to these development oriented promotion bodies. Just opposite to these promotion bodies now a new consultant body has emerged in the areas of politics from 2014 onwards.

2. WHAT IS POLITICAL CONSULTANCY?

An intensive search has been carried out to find out what exactly the term “Political Consultancy implies”. But no specific definitions are available. What one could understand from the term is that it is like consulting firm/ agency/advisory body mainly works in democratic countries where elections are held frequently. The consulting agency/body will make use of all its means to create an environment to ensure an individual politician/ political party/group of politicians and parties win the elections without much problems.

A winning campaign is not one that pumps in the most money. A winning election campaign is determined by how well the candidate influences his voters to choose him. Political consulting firms can help you there. They advise the candidate (and his election campaign) on how best to engage with the voters to win. “With enough money, 40 per cent of the consultants say, they can get voters to accept a weaker candidate”. Political consulting firms typically give inputs on ad and media spends, help with opposition survey and also direct their GOTV efforts. Not all of them however, do it well. An unfortunate example is Jeb Bush’s campaign in the 2016 US elections. He spent a whopping \$125 million on his campaign consultants, before dropping out of the presidential primary race. His failure is hugely attributed to his campaign

strategists. They were criticized for spending money on TV and media ads, instead of positioning the candidate as a viable option. On the other hand, Obama's win in his 2008 election campaign and his subsequent re-election are legendary. Both these successes were largely due to how well his advisors used political technology to make intelligent decisions in the campaign. The bottom line is, picking the right political consultant for your election campaign is important. It could be a firm. or a singular consultant(calhub.io).

Oxford defines Politics as 'the activities associated with the governance of a country or area, especially the debate between parties having power'. India is a democratic nation that is not run by the elected leaders but the people who bring them to power. Political consultants/strategists play a key role in helping the leaders win the heart of millions. Owing to the nature and frequency of elections, political strategy and consultancies have started gaining legitimacy over the past decade not just in India but across the world. Whenever the elections gear up in any part of the country, the political strategists/consultants are already on the road highly loaded with data driving campaigns using extensive Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to manage electoral politics (economictimes. Com)

Political strategists work as consultants, specialized in certain activities or areas of work as mentioned below, to help a candidate win elections by expediting election campaigns via driving people thinking through a. Polling Research (Intelligence gathering), b. Digital Media Campaign, c. Public Relations, d. Fundraising, and e. Speech-writing. The primary task is to share the right message that centres on a specific cause or objective that helps shape/change/influence public opinions in the desired direction "[Smarica Pant \(2021\) Career As A Strategist In Political Consultancy, India Today](#)" (2021)

Political Consulting is a catch all phrase and is quite different from Management Consulting. While there are similarities in that both are meant to help organisations perform better, Political consulting covers a wider gambit of activities that include message building, media advertising, opinion polling, opposition research, PR, ground campaigns, events and numerous other activities that present the campaign in an effective manner. The range of specialisations that a political consulting firm has to handle is wider than a management consulting firm. Political Consultants have caught the media attention recently but have always existed in some form or the other since the day candidates fought elections in India. Winning elections means strategies and strategies means someone assisting the candidate to devise and execute the strategies. Eventually these evolved to hiring out external consultants for a specific activity - Surveying, Creating advertisements, PR etc. Politicians have used external specialists since the last 30-40 years and these consultants focus on one or two areas of the campaign. In the sense, they are consultants but worked with an in house campaign manager who had an understanding of the big picture. This system existed until 2015 when Prashant Kishor was given responsibility for Bihar. This is perhaps the first time when the role of campaign manager itself was handed over

to external talent and signalled a significant change in how campaigns were run in India [Chandra \(2016\)](#).

The Consulting firm is assisting the political parties (s) and politician (s) through (a). advising as well as (b). assisting the political campaigns. Though it is sometimes, may be new to India, India heard about this only for the past one decade. This political consultancy service is taking place world over for more than 90 years. In 1930s this political consultancy firms used mainly press media to increase the chances of a candidate to win the election. At present there are so many ICT medias available for politicians and political parties and make use of such an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services intensively and extensively. The television medias, social medias like whatsapp, facebook, youtube, instagram, twitter, press medias, SMS, mobile are commonly used during the elections to communicate among the electorates.

Although political consultants have increasingly been the subject of scholarly research, there is little agreement as to what a 'political consultant' actually is?. Early researches in this field, and a good deal of contemporary work as well, have provided only vague conceptualisations of the term. Recent quantitative work that attempts to examine the role and impact of consultants in elections suffers from a lack of a common operational definition. After a brief review of the way systematic empirical researchers operationalise 'professional political consultant,' I offer a comprehensive definition that can be used in future research on the topic. Without an agreed definition to employ, the study of political consulting will remain idiosyncratic and fragmentary. That, in turn, hampers efforts to provide normative evaluation, and comparative analysis, of the consulting phenomenon [Stephen and Medvic \(2003\)](#).

President William McKinley's closest political adviser Mark Hanna is sometimes described as the "first political consultant". Whitaker and Baxter established the first true political consulting firm, "Campaigns Inc", which focused exclusively on political campaigns in California in the 1930s - 1950s. However, political consulting blossomed with the increasing use of television advertising for campaign communications in the 1960s. Joseph Napolitan was the first person to describe himself as a "political consultant". The New York Times newspaper described him in a 1968 profile as "that newest American phenomenon, the professional campaign manager" and a "pioneering campaign consultant. In recent years, political consulting has become more common place throughout the world and has extended its reach to campaigns at all levels of government. Many consultants work not only for campaigns, but also for parties and political action committees, while some focus on public relations and research work. Many consultants also take up official positions inside Governments while working for a ruling party candidate (en.wikipedia.org)

India has registered more than 600 political parties at national and regional levels. Political Consultancy is new to here in India that political parties and politicians consulting private consultants to increase their chances of winning the elections and change the wave in their favour. It became potentially very powerful. It became part

of democracy. It is very much visible from 2014 general elections and brought a change in the nature of election campaigns. They have worked for individual candidates and exercised influence far beyond what was visible to the public. A political consultant has multi tasks to be performed such as organising meetings with different communities, caste leaders and dissatisfied the people within and outside the parties. The consultant acts as a mediator between the candidate and the voter, reducing the need for intervention by small and large local leaders.

Any mainstream party, regional or national, has structures from the village to state level, including booth committees, youth wings and wings for particular communities. Positions within these structures are assigned to karyakartas (cadre), empowering them to work harder and more effectively for the party. From the outside, this looks like a strong form of party organisation; from the inside, however, one realises how loosely-tied the links in such an organisation can be. To make their work easier for the elections, parties are now outsourcing the work of organising these loose structures to private consultancies. The immediate problem is dismantling the authority of the local cadre leaders. They often resent the political consultancy, which has to take over monitoring, training and commanding the local cadre and structure. Consultants prepare regular progress reports on these structures; at the party level, they even report on the MLA and MP candidates, based on which the party high-command announces the final candidate lists (Rajesh Serupally,2019).

3. WHAT IS THE NEED FOR THESE CONSULTANTS?

India has had highly dedicated and patriotic politicians and social leaders just before and after independence. Though most of those politicians from different backgrounds, different caste groups, different religious groups but they all joined together and expressed their concern about development of India. They understood the exploitative nature of the British rule and wanted to get independence from them to develop India as a prosperous country. They “fought against the British” and also conveyed the people “how important self rule is for the development of the country”? “ They explained the people what are the ways “the British rulers exploiting the country’s wealth and the work of the people? and How they were taking away the wealth of our country to make their country a prosperous one”? Then leaders thought that Independence is the solution for abolish poverty, unemployment, rural and urban differences, social development will be ensured, more industries will be established, more employment will be created and finally economic development will be ensured. So the freedom fighters and the then political leaders were of the opinion that that independence is the solution for all our economic and social problems. They fought for independence with dedication. During the 1951-52 election they promised only what they can do within the next five years. They directly talked with the people from where they were contesting, led a simple life with them in villages and became a role models for the common people. The people also

believed them and voted for them. There were no assistants, no political consultants and propaganda secretaries for them. There existed a direct connection/contact between the leaders and the population. Leaders used to visit each and every village of their respective constituencies and had a complete knowledge about them. Then politicians and political leaders thought that India is their country, the people are theirs like brothers and sisters and it is their duty to take care of them along with taking the economy to the next level of development. Most of the freedom fighters and then political leaders lived with government pensions not even having their own houses.

The political system after 1990s has been completely changed. It is noticed that Political parties, indirectly, have been converted themselves into Private Limited Companies or Corporates or Societies” with the purpose of making money and profit from politics. The new generation politicians, about 60 per cent of them are descendants of former political leaders, land lords and Zamindars, also behave like an Executive of an established Private Limited Company. They are travelling in with luxury cars, having a lot of personal assistants, advisors, have their own security staff, and some times very much with “goondas with criminal backgrounds”. The top leaders from different political parties, though ideologically different, join together in the respective state capitals and or major cities and share their ideas and views themselves. For them caste is not the problem, religion is not the problem, region is not the problem and language also is not the problem. They maintain a cordial relationship among themselves. At the same time they ensure that their followers should not maintain any close relationships and should not join together, should not move together and should not be allowed to live with harmony. The followers from different political groups should fight with one another, sometimes it may go upto the level of attacking and murdering someone from opponent political parties. It is quite common to see in all the 28 States and 8 Union Territories.

After 1990s the Patriotism among the political parties and political leaders gone to the back seat, and “caste based and religion based majoritism” stated playing a major role in politics in India. Most of the new generation politicians behave like “corporate leaders”. Making Money, in the form of movable and immovable assets and profits, and grasping power are their main targets of 2/3 of politicians and political parties. They easily fulfil their targets in politics since politics has money power as well as administrative powers.

The new generation politicians use all their powers such as money power, muscle power, economic power, caste power and political powers to retain their power continuously in politics. Democracy is meant for them only. It is only they could enjoy the privileges of the democratic system. They have the privilege of contesting the elections continuously and not by common people. In certain cases the money power, caste power and muscle power would not work out easily in politics in favour of them because of more competition from equally wealthy politicians from same party/same caste groups/same religious groups. Here they need some “extra curric-

ular activities” to be carried out to get the vote bank in favour of them. For that they needed some “professional guidance/advise” to convince the common people/brain wash the people in favour of them. There emerged a group of “political consultants” with “legal sometimes illegal winning strategies”.

It is generally observed and proved that if you were a “straight forward politician with pure hands and clean image”, the common people will believe you and vote for you. If you fulfilled whatever promises you made in the previous elections manifestos definitely people will vote for you. If you led a simple and dedicated life along with the village people definitely people vote for you. Most of the new generation politicians failed miserably in fulfilling most of the promises they promised in the elections through “Election Manifestos”. Most of the election manifestos of political parties are full of short term promises and targets, and may not be industrial development oriented and economic development oriented. If one compared the Election Manifestos of political parties of 2019 Parliament elections and 2021 Assembly elections of 4 states and one Union Territories with that of the promises of the political parties during the elections held in 1951-52, one could easily understand that not even 50 per cent of their promises they had made in 1950 were not fulfilled so far even after 74 years of independence. A five time MLA or MP of a constituency is still promising, I will provide “very good road network facilities for the constituency, provide drinking water facility to the households, houses will be constructed for the homeless people, provide toilet facilities for the women, create employment opportunities, create health care facilities for the villages etc. etc.....”. The question is then what he/she did for the constituency/the people when he/she was in office for the past 5 terms? An interesting thing is that in most the cases at the time of elections he/she will not allow somebody from his own political party or from his own caste or his own religion submit nominations for contesting the elections. He/she will use all his money power and muscle power to defeat the idea of contesting elections against him/her. This drama is very well drafted and very well implemented.

Every election time political parties/politicians used to come with new “election manifestos” and this process continues from elections after elections from 1951-52 onwards, but what is the result? The successive governments, who occupied the central as well as states, right from independence of India brought a lot of changes and made a lot of achievements in the social and economic indexes. The average life expectancy at the time of independence was only 33 years. Now it increased to 69 years. Only 12 per cent of the people were literate in 1947 and it increased to 77.7 per cent in 2020. India brought down the fertility rate from 5 children per women in 1950 to 2.2 in 2020. The infant mortality rate (IMR) was 145.6/1000 live births and now it is reduced to 29 in 2020. Maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in the 1940s was 2000/100,000 live births, which apparently came down to 1000 in the 1950s. Now the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India has declined to 113 in 2018. India had just \$1 billion as foreign exchange reserve in 1991. During the LPG period it increased to \$580 billion. India made green revolution in the Fourth Five

Year Plan itself. India produced only 54 million tonnes of food grains production in 1951 and now it increased to 297million tonnes in 2020-21. India is number one in milk production with 210 million tonnes in 2020-21. Though we count all these achievements one by one, on the one hand, Still most of the basic and fundamental problems are not solved. So India has another face to show to the world. According to Global Nutrition Report 2018 India has about 46.6 million, one in five, stunted children. There are about 35 per cent of the school going children are suffering from mal-nutrition and anaemia. About 30 per cent of our foodgrains, fruits and vegetables are simply wasted in India due to lack of warehousing and air conditioned storage facilities and lack of food processing industries. At the same time according to Prof. Rangarajan Committee 2014 report on poverty had estimated that about 29.5 per cent of the India's total population are living below the poverty line. According to the Economic Survey 2018-19 about 93 per cent of 500 million of total work force in India is engaged with unorganised sector as daily wage workers on contract or casual work basis without proper wage structure, disability benefits, insurance benefits, leave with salary benefits, pension and gratuity benefits etc. Only about 16 per cent of this total work force is registered for social security benefits.

You take the case of unemployment problem is not solved, every year about 10 million graduates and 1.5 million engineering graduates are coming out of our educational institutions, but government is in a position to create employment only for about 4 million graduates, the gap between rural and urban is not reduced, still 68.8 per cent of the people are living in rural areas, about 49 per cent of the total population are directly engaged with agricultural sector where disguised unemployment is quite common, National Sample Survey (NSS) already stated that 42 per cent of the farmers are not ready to be farmers because of low income, in 2016 government of India formed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Asokh Dalwai to find out strategies for doubling the farmers income by 2024, still now 91 per cent of the 500 million work force is engaged in the unorganised sector without proper social security measures such as accident benefits, disability benefits, provident fund benefits, leave with salary benefits, financial support for educating their children and finance for housing facilities. Poverty is quite common among them and still attracting the attentions of the international bodies. According to Prof. Rangarajan Committee on Poverty 2014, about 29.50 per cent of the people are living below the poverty line, about 500 million are there in India with less than 5 cents of land.

The introduction of Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Programme, Prime Minister Awas Yojana, Prime Minister Ujjwala Yojana, PM Jandhan Yojana, PM Awas Yojana, Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, Shramew Jayate Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Ujala Yojna, Atal Pension Yojna, Prime Minister Jyoti Jyoti Bima Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Gramoday Se Bharat Uday for the benefit of common people are openly parading the existence of poverty and rural unemployment in India. The successive governments by providing false promises to come to power and then ignore whatever they have promised in the election manifestos.

They do it repeatedly elections after elections. The common innocent people were completely been marginalised on all grounds. Even the basic requirements like good roads, drinking water facility to each households, toilet facilities within the house, primary health care facilities near villages, availability and accessibility of quality education to poor children are still distant dream of the common people. There are about 41 million children with stunted growth. Their contribution to economic growth is zero percent. It is happening because of lack of medical and health care facilities.

If the promises appeared in the manifestos of most of the political parties at the time of elections, right from Independence are properly implemented with spirit and dedication, India could have reached development level of countries like China, Singapore, Malaysia and South Korea. I did not refer USA, Western European Countries, Canada and Japan here because these countries were advanced even before the second world war period. But countries like China, Singapore, Malaysia and South Korea has similar problems like India in 1947 with poverty, unbalanced growth, lack of industrialisation, and unemployment. Now China is a high income economy. Singapore and South Korea are newly industrialised countries. What is the status of India?

Wrong advise: The political strategists or consultants ignore all these economic and social problems and simply advise the political parties “how to win the elections by adopting different short term methods”. The political consultants advise politicians the “use of caste as one of the major strategies” to be adopted in increasing the vote bank. They advise the political parties divide the people on caste lines/religious lines. During every election time the caste concept is emerging and play a vital role in deciding the winning of a candidate. The caste sensitive people will prefer a candidate from his own caste without looking into whether he is a genuine candidate or not. The caste leaders also would exploit the innocent people by using their caste identity during the elections. This is quite common among the new generation politicians and about 70 per cent of the elected representatives in India in both the State Assemblies and in the Parliament elections were elected through this strategy only. At the time of independence, people elected most the representatives without looking into their caste backgrounds though the leaders were from different communities. But now a day’s politicians wanted to be identified as a caste leader, caste representative to encash the vote of the people from where he originates. Even if he was a corrupt politician and involved in criminal cases people prefer him because he is from their caste. So the political strategists always keep alive an issue which divides the people for centuries.

The political consultants generally advise the political parties go for announcing short term benefit schemes, which would in no way improve the living standards of the people on long term basis and create an opportunity for a regular income for the common people. For example distribution of money, both legal and illegal ways, distributing low quality consumer durables items, low cost ornament items needed for women and children, some times even kitchen items to attract women votes, dis-

tribution of certain household requirements, providing food packets, hard drinks, distributing tokens to purchase certain provisional items from the identified shops/shopping malls, promise of tour programmes, and entertain programmes etc etc., The poor people or those who live below the poverty line would be very happy to receive these kinds of benefits and vote for the party who distribute all these items just before the elections. It is happening every election time. The innocent poor people, who are without formal education, will not think anything more than that. Most of the time they vote for the person who is, may be, representing their own caste, land lord, industrialist or business men without knowing their criminal backgrounds and with what intentions one is contesting the elections.

After winning the elections the elected candidate rarely visit the constituency to enquire about the requirements or grievances of the people if anything to be addressed. Once in every five years this practice is going on in India as celebrations. These election celebrations used to take place for local level elections, Assembly level elections, and Parliament level elections. Most of the elected persons will get an opportunity to create more assets for himself and his family and enjoy the constitutions privileges and rights meant for legislators. What about the people who elected them? There won't be any developments in their life. There is no employment opportunities for them, there is no income generating opportunities for them, there is no social development, and finally forced to go into the "vicious circle of poverty". This is what going on in India. The inter-state migration of 150 million people from industrially backward states like Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Assam to the industrially advanced states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, and Kerala are the best examples for that.

So the political consultants never and ever in support of the voters whatever may be and whatever may be their economic conditions. They support only the political parties and politicians to win the elections at any means. They suggest all the legal and illegal strategies/ways to corner the votes of the poor people without considering their future livelihood opportunities and developments. It is a dangerous trend noticed from 2014 onwards.

Those who are running consultancy services for the political parties least bothered about the existing economic and social problems. They are running these consultancy services for making money and they advise some strategies which are very much harmful and not development oriented. Their strategies mostly concentrated on the poor people, less educated people, and innocent rural population who do not understand the exploitative characters of the person, some time with criminal backgrounds, who is contesting in the election

Once election is over the candidates as well as the political consultants disappear from the constituency for ever. They have no rights and responsibilities in looking into the implementation of the strategies they have recommended or adopted during the election time. What India needed is to find permanent solutions for the economic

and social problems.

The political consultants never come up with long term development strategies to take the economy to the next level of development. India needs strategies to make it a \$5 trillion economy before 2025, create employment opportunities for more than 11.50 million educated graduates and engineers coming out of the educational institutions, poverty should be reduced, employment opportunities to be created for the rural poor people, then only a large scale migration of the rural educated people could be stopped, world class infrastructural development is to be created in India, infrastructural development is one of the “Five Pillars of Atmanirbhar Bharat”, by increasing more investment in the infrastructural sector, how to create world class infrastructural facilities in rural areas like constructing world class warehousing facilities to the rural areas, quality air conditioned godowns to store the perishable agricultural products including milk, starting food processing industries to make the agricultural products into value added products, very good road network facilities to the rural areas with air conditioned container facilities to every village so that they can take the processed agricultural products to the marketing areas without wasting any products, and to the air port for export purposes. In this cycle the income of the farmers will be increased many fold and their life style will be up-graded.

4. TYPES OF CONSULTING FIRMS

Roughly, there are 4 types of political consulting firms—pollsters, media consultants, direct-mail experts, and strategists. The direct-mail experts are those who focus on fund-raising. However, in recent times they also lend their expertise for more targeted messaging. Pollsters are firms who take opinion surveys and polls to understand the pulse of the voters. They bring back information on how popular the candidate is with the target audience, what issues affect them, and how they respond to the candidate’s most recent event. Media consultants focus primarily on producing and placing TV and media ads. They are responsible for the ad spends (note – this has the maximum money) and also handle social media for the candidates. In fact, pure strategists who don’t offer other services—Republican Stuart Spencer is the most famous—are a dying breed. They only offer strategic guidance on what to focus the campaign on – leaving the rest to the candidate (and his team) to figure out. Here is a quick look at which type of consultants were most ‘in demand’ (based on how much money was spent on them) in the 2016 US elections. Whatever their role, political consultants understand the key challenges the candidate (and by extension their campaign) faces. They then offer strategic solutions to not just overcome the problem, but also shape a favorable opinion of the candidate with the public. In some cases, if the candidate already has a public image (like Joe Biden, running for 2020 elections), the political consulting company should be able to leverage it to win support. Yes, it is a tough job. But as you can read on, some political consulting firms do it extremely well. Here are the top 5 examples. We’ve included both liberal and

conservative political consulting groups [Calhub et al. \(n.d.\)](#).

5. MAJOR POLITICAL CONSULTANTS IN INDIA

Political consultants is a much familiar word among the people at urban level. They used to promise or coming with a package for changing the “voters Swing” in favour of them by creating a “wave”. According to ASSOCHAM there are about 150 “political consultants”, both big and small, operating in India in 2014 and it is increased to 300 at present.

Let us bring out a list of major political consultants and their strategies adopted in various the election campaigns to make their sponsors as winners.

1. Vivek Singh Bagri, founder of “Lead Tech”
2. Prashant Kishor, founder of “Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC)”
3. Pallav Pandey, founder of “Viplav Communications Pvt Ltd
4. Saurabh Vyas, Co-founder of “Political Edge
5. Abhishek Shukla, the founder of “Cambridge Analytic
6. Manish Jha, fonder of “Janadhar India”,
7. Ipac-Indian Political Action Committee
8. Saurabh Rai, Co-founder of Chennai-based “Bharat Political Consulting”
9. Sunil Deshpande, founder of “Shree Political Research Bureau”
10. Gaurav Singh, Co-Founder of” Poltubaa”,
11. Try Smart Neta firm for political consulting
12. SankalpAnalyticals offers all the services and suggestions required. And most affordable when comes to price
13. Political Consultant India
14. PoltuBaaz: Election Management and Political Consulting Services.
15. The Accost Which offers Digital Marketing Experts and Management Professionals
16. The Rastraneeti
17. Integrated communications agency The Tribes Group has launched ‘Mandate,’ an end-to-end political consulting and election communication company.

India, being the largest democratic country in the world with 28 States and 8 Union Territories, frequency of elections during every five years is the need of the system. There used to be a lot of elections within every five years like Parliament elections, Assembly elections and Local level elections. The frequency elections warranted new political strategy and consultancy services started and became so active for the past one decade though world over this service is available for the past nine decades. Whenever the elections gear up in any part of the country, the political strategists/-consultants are already on the road highly loaded with data driving campaigns using

extensive ICT tools to manage electoral politics. Political strategists work as consultants with various strategies depend upon the region and states to help a candidate win elections by speed up election campaigns via driving people's thinking (Manoj Sharma , 2018) and , Amogh Dhar Sharma (2019).

6. STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL CONSULTANTS

Create a Wave:

The political consultants tried to increase voter turnout through technological interventions to the level of 5 to 10 per cent in favour of their electoral candidate. They develop apps that help candidates get real-time information flow during campaigning and polling on the fingertips. They prepare four weeks poll package designed to create a vote swing towards their clients. They understand and analyse the trends of the last phase of the election, creating segmented strategies for different kinds of voters, specialise in turning a client's Facebook followers into ground workers. They used to develop tools to analyse each post on the client's Facebook wall and give a scorecard to each follower. They make all out efforts such as "psychographs" and "voter micro-targeting" part of the country's political parlance, extensively use data to drive election campaigns. They use advanced data analytics to identify groups of voters who share demographics, political beliefs, and lifestyle and uses this insight to create unique messages designed to resonate with them. They use people's digital footprints with/without permission. They have their own qualitative and quantitative primary research methods to understand individuals, households and communities to drive a behavioural change in favour of their clients in the elections. They are like bandwallahs. They go wherever there is an election to blow the trumpet of their clients.

Familiarise the Candidate :

They used to calculate their vote share by alliances and caste equations through best-laid plans and change stereotypes associated with traditional, cadre-based election campaigns . For them candidate is a product, voters are customers, and a constituency is a neighbour-referral market where local influencers play a key role, especially in rural areas. Their work involves identifying and managing these influencers. Now a days it is quite common to see that young generations started concentrating on politics. They are first timers tech-savvy independent candidates without any background in politics. The political consultants job is to turn them into a familiar face among the people. They try "Jan Seva helpline" where anyone can call them anytime for any kind of help. That idea is to turn the new candidate into a Good Leader image and get favourable coverage in the media much before the elections. It is not the candidate who take the calls every time but one of the team members takes the calls and offers help directly.

Identify the Winner candidate:

Sometimes the candidate might be doubtful in winning the elections. The candidates who are doubtful of their party's popularity and ability to deliver them voters may turn to political consultants as a last-ditch effort to swing the tide in their favour. Especially in elections characterised by a "wave" candidates from the losing party hire political consultants to buck the trend in their particular constituencies. Once some candidates are seen to be employing political consultants, other rival candidates may adopt this practice for fear of being outdone. It is observed that political parties in India increasingly distribute tickets on the basis of a candidate's ability to self finance their campaign expenditure. Given the massive wealth at the disposal of many candidates, hiring a political consultant to manage the election campaign is unlikely to pose an insurmountable cost for them. On the contrary, it may even produce greater efficiency in the use of financial resources, given the more professional modus operandi of these consultants.

Absence of Party Workers:

It is quite common to see that while citizens may ultimately cast their vote in the name of a party and not the candidate, candidates still have to undertake considerable campaign activities on behalf of the party in their constituencies. However, most political parties in India continue to be weakly institutionalised and often have a defunct party machinery at the local level. In the absence of party workers who could be relied upon for accurate information or to undertake campaign activity on the ground, a candidate may choose to depend upon political consultants to top up the organisational efforts of the party workers.

7. ILLITERATE POLITICIANS

Though various social medias are available still candidates need a lot of day to day information to be addressed in the political forums and the public. So the candidates hire political consultants for speech writing and media management like giving interviews to local dailies and channels, and analysis of news relevant to their constituency to ensure that they strike the right chord during their public rallies. The arrival of 24x7 news channels and rising popularity of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have changed the way politicians interact with voters. They provide election management and strategic solutions to political parties to see a major change in the voters "behavior and voting pattern". It is to be noted that many rural candidates develop their own campaign strategy based on inputs given by consultants mainly on voters' sentiments and socio-economic state of their constituency.

Data Source:

Their work is mainly based on the secondary data collected from the election offices, demographic and economic surveys, Census Reports for identifying caste strength in a particular constituency accordingly develop a successful poll campaign strategy for their candidates. Their approaches are basically from the perspective of Digital Marketing and Surveys and connecting with the targeted audiences directly

and serve upcoming leaders who are ambitious and committed. Their team consists of experts from various fields like Politicians, Legal Professionals, Digital Marketing Experts and Management Professionals. Their services starting from a. War Room Management b. Door To Door Campaigning Services, c. Political Canvassing, d. Research at Booth Level Management, e. News Media Audit, f. Election Management Campaign, g. Software Services. h. political consultants, i. campaign managers, j. political analysts and k. political strategists, k. Data analysis -Demographics, religion and cast by population statistics, voter segmentation, l. Survey - Booth level survey, opinion poll, trendy local issues m. War Room- Modern digital control room for strategy making, discussing ideas and meeting n. Other than these, they helps in choosing appropriate candidates ,manifestos with proper agendas, organizing campaigns etc. In simple words they provides enormous amount information using modern technology to their clients to plan their election winning campaigns.

Political research and analysis, designing and planning campaigns, training and managing election workers, data mining, digital outreach and helplines for voters, producing campaign videos, to identify the right candidates and drum up the right issues during campaigns are the major works of political consultants. Political consultancies generally adopt a vendor model when working for election candidates. Most have a small core of full-time headquarters staff specialising in digital tools, finance and logistics, and they hire contract workers in a state once they are engaged by a candidate. Voter outreach programmes, pre-poll surveys, tracking voters' behaviour based on caste, religious and other factors, door-to-door campaigning, designing digital programmes, maximising candidate visibility through live-streaming of speeches on LED screens and video inboxes. Consultancies work at the micro as well as macro levels. Primary research (based on door-to-door and sample surveys), booth-level reports from the election commission, household data from census reports. Between 100,000 and 500,000 rupees (47,000 to 235,000 baht) per candidate, depending on the kind of package the candidate chooses. Vivek Singh Bagri of LeadTech Political Consultancy "Parties now use drones to gauge the appeal of their speeches in public rallies. They are even using artificial intelligence. "In the next 10 years, consultancies and marketing research companies will completely replace the party workers on the ground. Party workers won't labour at reaching the voters the way they did some years back," Jha. "A political party is a brand and prime ministerial, chief ministerial and legislative candidates are its products." He draws a parallel between companies and political parties. When India had its last general election in 2014 there were only a handful of political consultants around. They included Prashant Kishore, a public health expert who was credited with providing a digital edge for Narendra Modi, who led the Bharatiya Janata Party to victory. Today there are about 300 such consultancies and the number will rise further."The industry is evolving and attracting new election aspirants. All political parties have started engaging political consultancies,". Political consulting is a mainstream business in developed countries such as the United States. Selling expertise

at influencing voters through social media has become an industry in itself, albeit with its share of dodgy operators. The recent furore over the harvesting of Facebook users' private data in the US and UK by Cambridge Analytica was a wake-up call. With tens of millions of Indians now logged in to WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, political parties and candidates are now looking for more effective ways to target their messages. Abhishek Shukla of Politics a former activist with India Against Corruption (IAC), is disturbed by the shady practices that candidates adopt during campaigns., a consultancy that has operated from New Delhi since 2014, believes homogeneity of language and high internet penetration in the United States give political consultancies an advantage over their Indian counterparts. "Almost everywhere candidates use liquor, money, and the chicken/mutton model. They distribute these among voters. All of them do caste and religious politics. Nobody is secular. Secularism is a virtual reality. Indian democracy is complicated and loopy. You can buy a ticket," [Kaushi \(2018\)](#).

8. CONSULTANCY FEES

There is no official data on the how much is the fee charged by various political consultants is not available officially but the people who are associated/worked with the consulting firms have revealed some approximate figures. Some political parties at national level, and some political parties at states level intensively made use of these political consultants to capture the power. According to ASSOCHAM to manage the contesting candidates poll campaign both in urban and rural areas the political consulting firms charge Rs. 600 to Rs. 700 crore from 2014 onwards. According to DS. Rawat, then General Secretary, "the disaggregating of poll data is becoming an important data as vote shares, winning margins, vote concentration, and demographic profiling are being used. The parties which win or lose do not want to take elections as one time affair. Those winning would like to retain their hold while those losing go for scientific analysis for their future strategy. All these require a professional approach" (Times of Indai.com). The rate for hiring a consultancy range from a few lakhs for individual clients to well over a hundred crore for big parties. One particular consultancy charged- between Rs 25 lakh and Rs 30 lakh for a six-month minimum period. A TDP candidate for the Guntur assembly seat opted in just before the polls and was charged just Rs 5 lakh. This money can be paid in cash if the candidate wants, with no receipts. If a client is interested only in surveys, they are charged according to the sample size and the number of questions; on average, a survey costs around Rs 5 lakh [Serupally \(2019\)](#).

9. SUGGESTIONS

1. Definitely one cannot deny the efforts of the political consultants, working for a political party or candidate, right from collecting data, processing data, adver-

tise the manifestos, contacting the voters directly, and indirectly through social medias and finally making the candidate a winner of the elections. They do research like those students who are doing Ph.D programmes in social science institutions. In a democratic country like India one has to do all these advertising techniques to change the wave in favour of them. If they do all these things for a genuine candidate who is dedicated to his services to the people it is well good. Since they collect enormous fees from the candidates most of the time they do it for candidates with criminal and highly corrupt backgrounds also. If consultancy is provided to a wrong candidate, it will affect the implementation of development programmes in the constituency. People will get good services only from a simple and highly approachable persons, not from money minded and corrupt candidates. So those who are doing consultancy services should keep this in their mind while accepting the offers from any candidate or from any political party. In most of the constituencies in India except Kerala the common people could not approach their MLAs and MPs. The how do they services to the people?

2. Political consultants dealt with enormous amount of data they collect from the constituency with respect to caste, religion, age, housing facilities, income status, development status of the constituency, number of good and concrete houses, thatched houses, people without houses, people without land, educational level, employment market and culture of the constituency, number of farmers, number of artisans, number of own business people, industrial groups, the road conditions, drinking water facilities, houses with toilet facilities and government servants etc. etc... They could easily identify how many people are there without houses, without even five cents of land, without old age pension benefits, handicapped people without monthly stipend from the government, unemployed graduates without unemployment grant etc. They have to take steps to convince the candidate who is contesting to ensure implementation of housing schemes for those who are living in thatched houses, at least 5 cents of land for the landless people, and implementation of so many welfare programmes announced by both Central and state governments. Otherwise they have to deny work for a candidate who is not interested for doing any social services for the common people.
3. The political consultants in addition to promoting short term benefit schemes like distribution of food items, and provisional kids for the constituency, should convince the political candidate go for implementation of some long term development programmes like starting more industries if the constituency is situated in urban areas and starting food processing and resource based industries under start up programme, make in India programme and under Atmanirbhar Bharat programme if the constituency is in rural areas to create more employment opportunities for the people in the constituency.

4. The political consultants should not work for a candidate who had been elected from the same constituency for more than two times. Ten years period is sufficient for a candidate to fulfil most of the basic requirements of the constituency like constructing good roads, ensuring drinking water facilities to all households, implementation of old age pension scheme for each eligible old age people, construction of houses for homeless and those who live in thatched houses. If the candidate was sincere in implementing the welfare schemes, and fulfilling the requirements of the common people then automatically he will be elected by the people without any consultancy services. If a candidate failed in fulfilling the basic requirements of the people in his previous terms and again contesting in the same constituency means he is not a dedicated person and not service oriented. That particular constituency will not get any benefit if he got a chance to be elected once again as MLA or MP. It is a great loss to the people. Instead of going forward they will go backward as far as development activities are concerned. There are MLAs and MPs in India even at Ministers level representing some constituencies more than 5 times continuously, still they did not fulfil most of the basic requirements of the common people in their constituencies. Some of the existing MLAs and MPs continuously contesting the elections for the purpose of enjoying the privileges meant for them. There are constituencies in India where the people not even seen their MLAs and MPs after they were elected. At the same time they come to the constituency when election date was announced with same old manifesto and caste card. The common people would not think anything more than “his caste” and “vote for him”. What is the result? The “Vicious Circle of under development” will work for another five years.
5. Now a day’s political consultancy has become part of our election system. Nobody can stop it in the future elections. It became highly profitable consultancy service at present. Simply working for a candidate without looking into his service backgrounds and sometimes even without knowing about his criminal backgrounds is dangerous to the democratic set up and also endanger the development of the people. So political consulting service providers should decline in extending their services to the candidate who has criminal backgrounds.
6. There is a proverb in Chinese language, “if you want to prosper first lay roads”. Since political consultants are very much associated with National Level political parties as well as ruling parties, it is their responsibility to provide appropriate advises to the candidate to support the government of India to implement various infrastructural development programmes like Bullet-train scheme and eight-lane highways from Srinagar, Kashmir in Northern India to Trivandram in Kerala in Southern India, from Kuwahati in Assam in North Eastern India to Shalimar in Rajasthan in western India. And Connect these lines with all major port cities, industrial towns and other state capitals. Similarly 5 per cent

of the forest land should be earmarked for industrial development schemes coming from within as well as outside India. Most of the industrial projects in India landed in the court due to land acquiring problems for starting industries. Multi National Corporations (MNCs) are finding it very difficult to acquire land for starting their industries in India. If government land is allotted for them they can easily start the business and the ease of doing business also will come down from 63rd Rank at present. In fact government of India taking all out efforts to bring it to below 50th Rank. So the political consultants have a bigger role here to convince the central government on these issues.

10. CONCLUSION

From the above analysis what one can easily understand is that the political consultants use all their means to ensure a particular party or candidate win in the elections, without looking into the real credit of a particular politician or political party. The politicians use these political consultants as a tool and an effective instrument to convey the false promises or ideology they have designed to convince the innocent people in favour of them.

If the political parties were really working for the common people with dedication no need of going for any such advertisements or and going for consulting somebody else to increase the chances of winning the elections. India is not a developed country like USA. Though we claim India is the 6th largest economy with &3 trillion still it is a developing country with two third of the total population living in rural areas at subsistence level. Most of the welfare schemes announced by the Central Government and State Governments, during the Covid 19 period from March 2020 onwards, have clearly stated that India still has about 800 million people with food insecurity condition. Even a slight disturbance in the form of Covid 19, and or any natural calamities such as flood, drought, cyclone and tsunami put their life out of gear. Both State governments and Central government are doing an excellent work during the pandemic period. But what we needed at present is a permanent solutions for unemployment, poverty, malnutrition, migration of large number of rural youth to urban areas, access to affordable health facility and educational facilities. India needs politicians and political parties with dedication with patriotism, target and service oriented. Politicians and political parties should get name and fame by doing/serving the people. Let the people decide whom they have to vote for based on the performance of a political party or politician. The performance of a political party should be assessed based on how much Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) brought to India, created employment opportunities in India, upliftment of the people from below the poverty line to above the poverty line, creating world class infrastructural facilities like introduction of bullet-train, eight-lane highways from Northern India to Southern India, from Eastern India to Western India, for the fast movement of the people and the goods and services, Creation of world class high-tech and universal

health facilities to the rural population like the one available in urban areas, etc. People should move fast, people should think fast and should do their work fast. So we need fast transport system. People should feel proud of about the transport system they have, the health care system they have , the education system they have and abundance of employment opportunities available in the labour market for skilled, semi-skilled and highly educated people like that of China, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. If the political consultants played their role unbiased a rightful and dedicated candidate will be elected from a particular constituency. So the innocent people should not elect a wrong person by getting false communication or impressions by these political consultants who work for money and not for the people.

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