LOK SABHA AS A DELIBERATIVE INSTITUTION

A Discourse Quality Index and Effectiveness of Indian Parliament (2004-2020)

Introduction

The concept that democracy encompasses more, than just elections is widely supported in philosophy. According to deliberation political decision making should prioritize discussion than just voting (Bohman and Rehg 1997). Decision making does not solely rely on predetermined preferences. Instead, political actors engage in a process of decision making where they respect each other's opinions listen to arguments and are open, to reevaluating and potentially changing their preferences through discourse on competing claims of validity (Habermas 1995; Chambers 1995; Gutmann and Thompson 1996). Deliberative theorists argue that such a process of discourse will lead to informed preferences and ethically sound decisions (Cohen 1989).

The term commonly used to describe all the spoken interactions that occur within and, between parliaments is " parliamentary talk." The key question here is whether parliamentary discussions have consistency and clear boundaries. Answering these questions can be complex. Advocates of democracy present a perspective that views Parliament as an institution. Mill referred to it as a "congress of opinion." Deliberation is widely recognized as the foundation of functioning. More attention is given to Parliaments' " capacity," "structural efficacy," and "procedural efficiency" than its role as a managerial administrative organization providing public services.

To systematically and logically explore differences in discourse quality this chapter focuses on analyzing the level of discourse quality in the Lok Sabha debates regarding 10 bills during two regimes; UPA and NDA from 2004 2020. The aim is to explain the variation in discourse quality based on systematic analysis. The study also aims to assess how reality aligns, with the concept of deliberative democracy. According to this approach if politics entails presenting and exchanging reasons through discussion then understanding how reasons are presented becomes crucial. Elected officials present their viewpoints during assembly sessions to shape the discussion, around issues. This chapter explores the reasons why

political representatives express varying perspectives on matters, in the Lok Sabha and how they rationalize their policy preferences.

Building a DQI Framework

According to the communications theory, it is crucial for political debates to be inclusive and for participants to maintain rationality and respect in their positions and justifications. The aim is ultimately to strengthen the defense. To measure the quality of deliberation, this chapter has chosen five indicators – reasoned expression of opinions, level of disagreement, equality, respect and persuasiveness – which collectively form a Discourse Quality Index (DQI) (Table 1 provides the coding framework for DQI) based on existing literature.

In order to handle the range of voices this study adheres to DQI not because it focuses on analysing parliamentary speeches but also because it has undergone significant development over time as a dynamic research tool. DQI aims to establish a foundation for comparative studies on parliamentary institutions by drawing from the political philosophy literature on deliberation. Its authors ambitiously worked towards creating indicators that can be measured empirically while remaining theoretically valid by incorporating ideas put forth by Jurgen Habermas (Steiner et al. 2004). Among things DQI utilizes, Habermas discourse ethics is a basis for proposing indicators related to levels of participation, justification and respect, in debates. This study builds upon the concept of Discourse Quality Indicators (DQI) by delving into philosophy. The aim is to develop revised indicators of "discourse quality" based on an analysis of how parliamentary deliberation contributes to legitimacy.

While the coding framework used in this study leans towards quantitative conventions the theoretical approach embraces qualitative traditions. Therefore, the analysis draws from both frameworks. It involves examining the content of factors described in existing literature that influence the quality of debates, in Lok Sabha (the lower house of Indian parliament). The examination focuses on statements made by parliamentarians, during Lok Sabha sessions. By methodically analysing arguments that address policy related and attitude-oriented concerns it aims to shed light on questions raised by political philosophers. Through this discourse analysis of Lok Sabha debates this study aims to explore how deliberative politics can be measured in the real world and understand the causes and consequences associated with a high level of deliberation.

The data composed for the study was predominantly produced by the sole researcher in order to analyze the content of the Lok Sabha debates. The major part of the data was collected from the uncorrected debates of the Lok Sabha which are published regularly and updated on Lok Sabha website. This data from these proceedings related to 10 specific bills being studied were used for content analysis through coding technique. The unit of analysis is the quality of discourse and the unit of observation is the speech, i.e., the statements or arguments by a particular individual delivered at a particular point in a debate. The selection of bills and laws focus only on the last 15 years (2004-2020) of law- making in the Indian Parliament to cover the political change piloted by both the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) as well as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The outcomes of the analysis are explained in detail in this chapter. To answer the above-mentioned research objective for this study, descriptive statistics were used which is analyzed and discussed following the results of the corresponding categories. The outcomes are also documented using the graphic visuals to strengthen the findings.

Table 1

Indicators of Discourse Quality Index (DQI)

S.No.	Indicators of DQI	Measurement Rules
1.	Reasoned opinion expression	a.) 0: No justification b.) 1: Inferior justification c.) 2: Qualified justification d.) 3: Sophisticated justification
2.	Disagreement	a.) 0: Speakers do not acknowledge counterarguments and explicitly degrade them by making a negative statement about them or the individuals and groups that propose them. b.) 1: Speakers tend to acknowledge counterarguments without making explicit negative or positive statements about them. c.)2: Speakers almost always acknowledge counterarguments and explicitly value them, even if they ultimately reject them for the most part. d.) 3: Speakers almost always acknowledge counterarguments and explicitly value them, and frequently also even accept them and change their position.
3.	Equality	a.) Frequency of Participation b.) Number of words spoken (1 if less than or equal to 500, 2 if less than or equal to 1000 and so on)

		Final equality score for each speaker is calculated by the sum of both the parameters.
4.	Respect	a.) The frequency of use of un-parliamentary words b.) No. of disruptions/interruptions while speaking Final respect score was calculated by the sum of both the parameters.
5.	Persuasiveness	Frequency of use of Performative verbs

Table 2

Indicator wise and final DQI scores of 10 bills

CASES	Reasoning	Level of disagreement	Equality	Respect	Persuasion	Discourse Quality Score
Forests 2005	3	1	1	1	1	7
Reservation 2006	2	1	3	0	1	7
Education 2010	2	0	2	0	0	4
Fcra 2010	2	1	2	1	0	6
Larr 2013	3	2	3	1	2	11
Aadhaar 2016	3	0	2	0	0	5
Caa 2019	2	2	3	2	2	11
J&K 2019	3	3	1	1	2	10
Farm 2020	2	2	2	2	1	9
SS 2020	1	0	1	1	1	4

Table 2 gives the scores for each bill which was formed by calculating the mode for each bill (of all speakers as recorded according to the above coding scheme) for each indicator because the mode refers to the most frequently observed value in the dataset (the one that occurs the most) and it is not affected by extreme values. The final Discourse Quality Outcome for each bill as mentioned in the above table is the sum of values of each indicator for the 10 bills respectively.

A Discourse Quality Index for the Lok Sabha and Deliberative Effectiveness

Whether there is a discussion or not is one aspect of deliberation, another important aspect is the level and quality of the conversation that takes place. In deliberation the goal is to express the reasons, behind policy decisions. The theory of deliberation suggests that parliamentary debates aim to transform discussions in the sphere into a more structured and controlled forum. This theory falls under the category of applied discourse theory and becomes part of the procedural theory of justification. The crucial source of legitimacy in procedures lies not in the vote but rather in the deliberative process leading up to it. The theory of deliberation seeks to examine contemporary political systems by imposing more demanding requirements for legitimacy. A democratic government based on majority rule alone is insufficient; it only becomes satisfactory when reasoning is reflected in its discourse. Therefore, the quality of discourse during debates in parliament serves as a measure of legitimacy.

Deliberative or discourse theories, which are normative, in nature argue that democratic societies benefit from discussion or discourse. In a summary, Dryzek and Braithwaite (2000: 241) summarise the central idea of these theories as follows:

> "The theory (and, to a lesser extent the practice) of democracy has in the last ten years or so taken a deliberative turn. That is, the idea that democratic legitimacy rests on authentic deliberation – rather than say, voting or interest aggregation – is increasingly stressed by democratic theorists. Deliberative democrats pin their hopes on the transformative power of deliberation. They argue that if it proceeds in suitably unconstrained and egalitarian circumstances, deliberation induces individuals to think through their interests and reflect upon their preferences, becoming amenable to changing the latter in light of persuasion from other participants . . . deliberative democrats believe that to the extent effective deliberation occurs, political outcomes will secure broader support, respond more effectively to the reflectively held interests of participants, and generally prove more rational."

To understand the theory of deliberative politics it is important to recognize that the concept is often discussed in ideal terms. However, it is worth noting that even though real political discussions may differ significantly from this model, discourse theory still employs the idea of a procedure for deliberation and decision making. The reality is that political conversations are

often quite different from the scenario due to the diversity of opinions and traditions (Dryzek 1990: 36-7). Rational discourses as Habermas (1996a: 296, 326) describes them like islands in the ocean of everyday praxis. It is not uncommon for critics to argue that the ideal deliberative situation is far removed from reality and its principles are frequently violated.

In order to assess discourse quality, during Lok Sabha deliberations this study developed a metric called the discourse quality index (DQI). This index effectively captures concepts underlying deliberation and is grounded in Habermas discourse ethics. The reliability of the DQI, as an assessment tool can be proven by its focus on the behaviour and its detailed coding guidelines. While the ideal type itself cannot be directly measured due to its nature but we can observe its manifestations through behavioural indicators in the real world. The intricate social reality that we experience is essentially a reflection of the type which enables us to categorize the limitless combinations of manifestations into a limited set of ideal types.

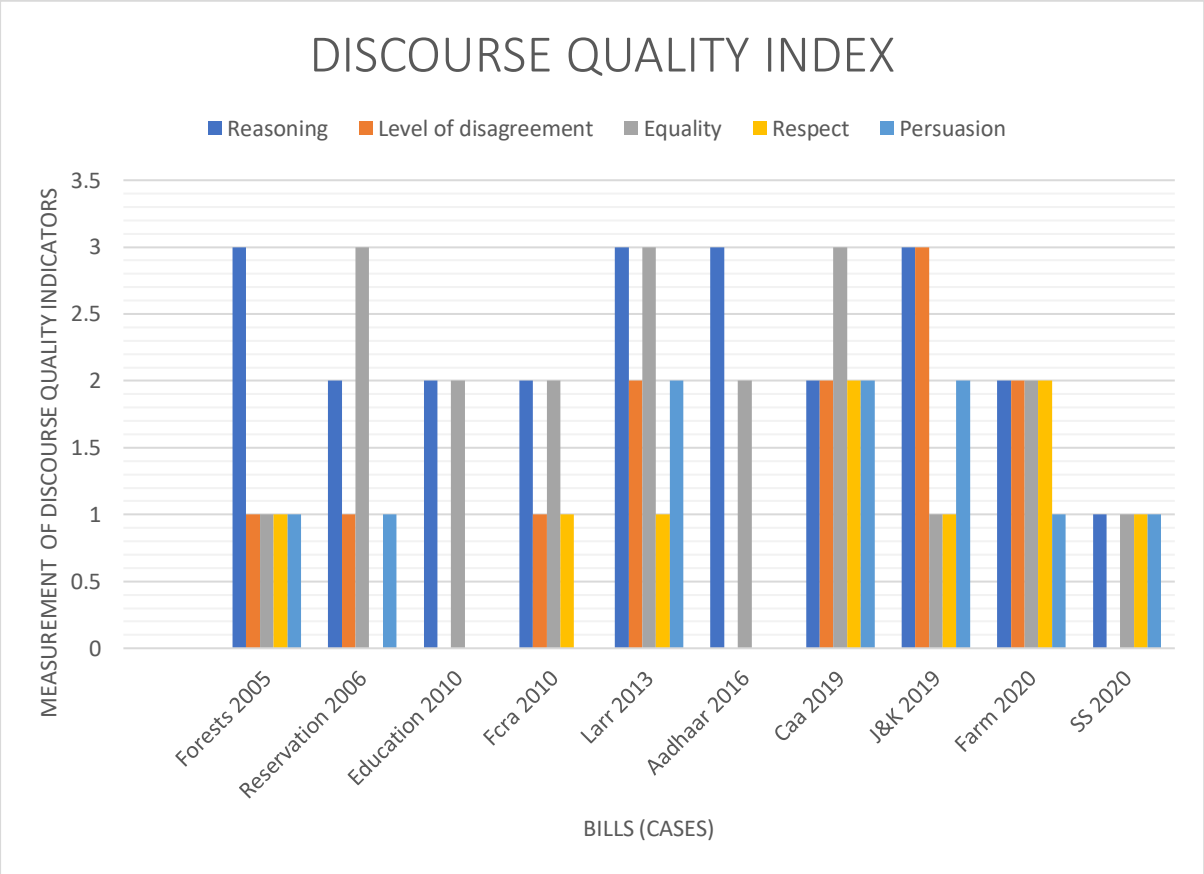
The Figure 1 presented in this section displays how the examined debates fared against each of the Discourse Quality Index indicators. They broadly suggest deliberation of a good quality. For the majority of the bills, the levels of justification/reasoning and equality are high to begin with. More than 50% of coded bills displayed signs of respect for other speakers and their points of view (Figure 1). Only 3 bills showed disrespect to other speakers and towards their arguments or actions. Regarding levels of justification, many speeches had one or even two justifications that outlined the rationale for the positions chosen whether in favour or against the bills.

Figure 1 illustrates how "The Code on Social Security, 2020", “The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2016” and "The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2010” received a degree of disagreement score of 0, which is an extreme example of poor indicator of deliberation where majority of speakers did not acknowledge counterarguments and explicitly degrade them by making a negative statement about them or the individuals and groups that propose them. Similar to the respect and persuasion levels, the Code on Social Security received a score of 1, whereas the Education Bill was coded at 0. Deliberation involves participants actively listening to each other showing respect presenting their arguments logically considering perspectives and evaluating their needs and interests with a focus on fairness. Importantly they should be convinced by the argument without any coercion. The ideal form of politics requires defending assertions and validity claims using reasoning and thoughtful evaluation through an organized

exchange of information and reasons between parties (Habermas 1996a: 370). In this way claims are critically assessed to reach the possible solution, for complex problems that benefit the majority of citizens.

Figure 1

Discourse Quality Index of the 10 Bills based on the 5 indicators



According to the theory of communication, it is believed that political discussions should be inclusive and allow all parties to express their views. Participants must engage in respectful debates presenting arguments for and against options based on their merits. This idea aligns with Fishkin and Lasletts (2002a; 125) perspective on deliberation which emphasizes the importance of weighing reasons for and against choices. Dryzek (1990; 218) also supports the notion that political decisions should be grounded in reasoning. The score of 4 out of 10 legislations as shown in figure 1 as 3 and 5 bills scored as 2 demonstrates the MPs' ability to coherently justify their arguments when speaking in favour of or against the bills. The

availability of justifications and valid claims is crucial for fostering discussions. In other words claims need to be made and critically evaluated through an organized exchange of information and arguments between parties. Justifications can both fuel debates as they help resolve them by facilitating discussion. Based on the data individuals who supported or opposed policies provided parties with arguments either in favor or against those positions that they could potentially accept.

One crucial aspect of deliberative politics as highlighted by Macedo (1999) is the genuine willingness of participants to actively listen and show sincere respect, towards the ideas put forth by others. Empathy plays a role in this criterion requiring individuals to try and understand perspectives by putting themselves in another person's shoes. It is important to acknowledge that each of us has a standpoint as mentioned in Orlie's (1994) adaptation of Hannah Arendt. While we may never fully grasp someone's viewpoint, it is essential to consider their arguments. In a sense deliberative politics involves a back-and-forth exchange resembling a debate, where participants engage directly with one another and express their thoughts spontaneously and passionately compared to exchanges involving statements or declarations. Although debaters must listen to each other this listening does not necessarily lead to a process. Instead, their objective is not to find ground but also to persuade the audience that their position is superior when compared to any alternative viewpoints. It is important to take into account opposing arguments or viewpoints that contradict one's conclusions in light of the circumstances (Gutmann and Thompson 1990). Showing respect, for differing opinions is a step which indicates the need to reevaluate one's own beliefs (Chambers 1999; Luskin and Fishkin 2002). In contrast to the mentioned bills two other bills from the NDA regime—the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2019 and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill of 2020—were given a higher respect indicator code of 2 in comparison to bills.

In addition to the indicators mentioned above equality has been proposed as a requirement for a discussion. Each participant should have opportunities to contribute their thoughts in order for the discussion to be constructive. No one should have control over the conversation and be able to silence others. Participants' input in the discussion may involve sharing knowledge that leads to an analysis of the topic at hand. In essence ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to speak on matters increases the chances of perspectives being heard (Burkhalter et al. 2002).

Three bills, the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Bill of 2006 , The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill of 2013 and The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2019 all received a score of 3 on the equality indicator. This score was calculated based on the frequency of participation and the length of speeches. It indicates that some lawmakers had an advantage by being allowed to make statements or speak multiple times on the floor. Looking at Figure 4.1 it becomes evident that certain legislators were able to dominate the conversation indicating a level of involvement and subpar communication.

For a discussion to take place mutual respect is essential (Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Fishkin and Luskin 2005; Gastil and Black 2008). Regardless of how heated or impassioned an argument may be both listeners and speakers should be treated with consideration and respect as part of reciprocity. The decline in productivity within Parliament coupled with an increase in disruptions and protests, inside the House represents changes. It is important to acknowledge that disruptions have become much a part of Indian Parliament as its intricate norms and procedures inherited from British parliamentary practices.

The Indian Parliament and politics in general are often filled with theatrics. These disruptions play a role, in shaping the way discussions and political representation unfolds. There are differing views on the state of parliament since 1989. The 'Parliamentary Decline' school argue that there has been a decline characterized by instability and ineffectiveness. On the other hand, 'Progressive democratization' school believes that disruptions in parliament are simply a reflection of a more inclusive and representative system (Verma and Tripathi 2013;154). However, both explanations have their shortcomings.

Interestingly despite the fragmentation, lack of institutionalization and political volatility two coalition governments—the UPA and NDA—have managed to maintain stability. This challenges the notion of decline as an explanation for the chaos witnessed in parliament. While new parties have offered policy options and contributed to a diverse parliament composition, they still face limitations due to centralized or dynastic leadership structures. It is also important to consider sentiment towards perceived declines, in parliament caused by these disruptions when assessing its effectiveness.

Slogan shouting alone cannot replace debates. Neither can obstructing Parliamentary proceedings or engaging in showmanship to draw attention to topics important to a party's supporters. Parties must also rely on persuasion and respectful disagreement to effectively

communicate their positions. Unfortunately, what we are witnessing is a decrease in discussions resulting in the passing of laws by Parliament without sufficient debate and persuasion (see Figure 1). Disagreement plays a role in the process. It signifies the presence of conflicts that need resolution or issues that require attention. Moreover, it reflects the diversity of perspectives among participants engaged in the discussion.

According to Figure 1, the Jammu and Kashmir (Reorganization) Bill, 2019 scored a level of disagreement with a rating of 3 and three other bills were measured as 2 while three more received a score of 1. Without expressing disagreement Parliaments may struggle to convey to their constituents the underlying values or approaches involved in decision making processes. The data mentioned above brings attention to the issue of legislators similar viewpoints. This tendency often leads to polarization among speakers as their beliefs become more extreme after interacting with individuals. Disagreement holds significance in the process of deliberation since it indicates opinions, within the group. To mitigate the polarizing effect, it is important to have legislators who hold different thoughts and perspectives. In such cases, politicians from different political parties and with varying viewpoints typically stick to their own opinions but are open to rational examination whenever they face challenges or scrutiny. Therefore, disagreement serves as a measure of the level of heterogeneity in political conversations, among lawmakers and can help determine whether expressing disagreement has any benefits (Cappella et al., 2002).

However, parliamentary discourse goes beyond rhetoric, discussions or oratorical skills. It also encompasses an aspect to other forms of speech which involves performative content. Parliamentarians take action while speaking; they assert, affirm, promise and challenge others. They position themselves independently while also aligning with others' positions. As members of a parliament legislative representatives fulfill the role of expressing their votes or advocating for those who share their beliefs (Deville and Lord 2020). However, most discussions ultimately reach an agreement through persuasion, driven by the need to address issues and external pressures. Drawing upon Aristotle's terminology, Ilie and Lorda (2007) suggest that MPs employ discourse to challenge the credibility and moral standing of their opponents while bolstering their reputation. This approach aims to strike a balance, between reasoning (logos) and emotional appeal (pathos).

Based on the persuasiveness scale, Figure 1 illustrates the discourse in the Lok Sabha as displaying patterns of persuasion or negotiation occasionally even lacking in some instances. Furthermore, by establishing a connection between these patterns and specific issues it becomes apparent that negotiations and persuasive efforts tend to be of quality concerning matters like land acquisition, citizenship rights and state reorganization compared to equally contentious issues with social significance and political adherence such, as reservations, social security and farm laws. Considering the importance of persuasion, it is essential not to overlook strategies for ensuring that laws and policies are acceptable to everyone.

In conclusion the emergence of parties in the parliament has disrupted traditional parliamentary practices highlighting the contentious aspects of parliamentary discourse. This can be seen as a crisis in democracy, where the focus has shifted towards party conflicts and the significance of majority voting than deliberative ideals and meaningful discussions. However, despite these challenges it is important to recognize that the Indian parliament still maintains its role. The institution retains its capacity for debate and adaptation on issues.

Trends in the Discourse Quality Outcome (2004-2020)

In Figure 2 we can see that despite having authority the body mentioned has been successful, as an institution with checks and balances on executive power. However, over time it has also experienced periods where it became less significant within the government. During Manmohan Singhs tenure as an economist appointed by the Congress leadership, the Congress and its allies were elected for two terms. This resulted in multiparty coalitions continuing until 2014. Logically speaking these coalitions should have led to a revitalization of the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha should have become a ground for policy debates and deliberations due to the weak party coalitions in place. However, this was not the case during UPA II (2009 2014) when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) served as the opposition party.

UPA I and II

Talking about UPA I and II specifically when discussing the Forests Bill in 2005 there was strong reasoning evident along with disagreement and a commitment, to equality and respect. While persuasion was moderate an overall discourse quality score of 7 suggests that there was a debate focusing on reasoned arguments and respecting diverse viewpoints. On the hand, when debating the Reservation Bill of 2006 there were levels of reasoning and disagreement;

however, there was significant divergence regarding equality and respect. The bill was given a discourse quality score of 7 indicating that there was a discussion, with regard for differing opinions. When discussing the Education Bill in 2010 there was some level of reasoning but it lacked disagreement, persuasive arguments and respect. Although the bill aimed to promote equality in theory its discourse quality score of 4 suggests that the debate was relatively weak and lacked depth and persuasiveness. In 2010 the FCRA Bill had reasoning and some level of disagreement. The debate touched upon promoting equality and respect to some extent; however significant persuasion was lacking. With a discourse quality score of 6 it indicates that the debate was balanced but could have benefited from arguments. The Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Bill in 2013 witnessed reasoning, moderate disagreement and commendable attention to equality and persuasion. While respectful overall there were still areas for improvement. Its discourse quality score of 11 demonstrates that it engaged stakeholders effectively in a high-quality debate.

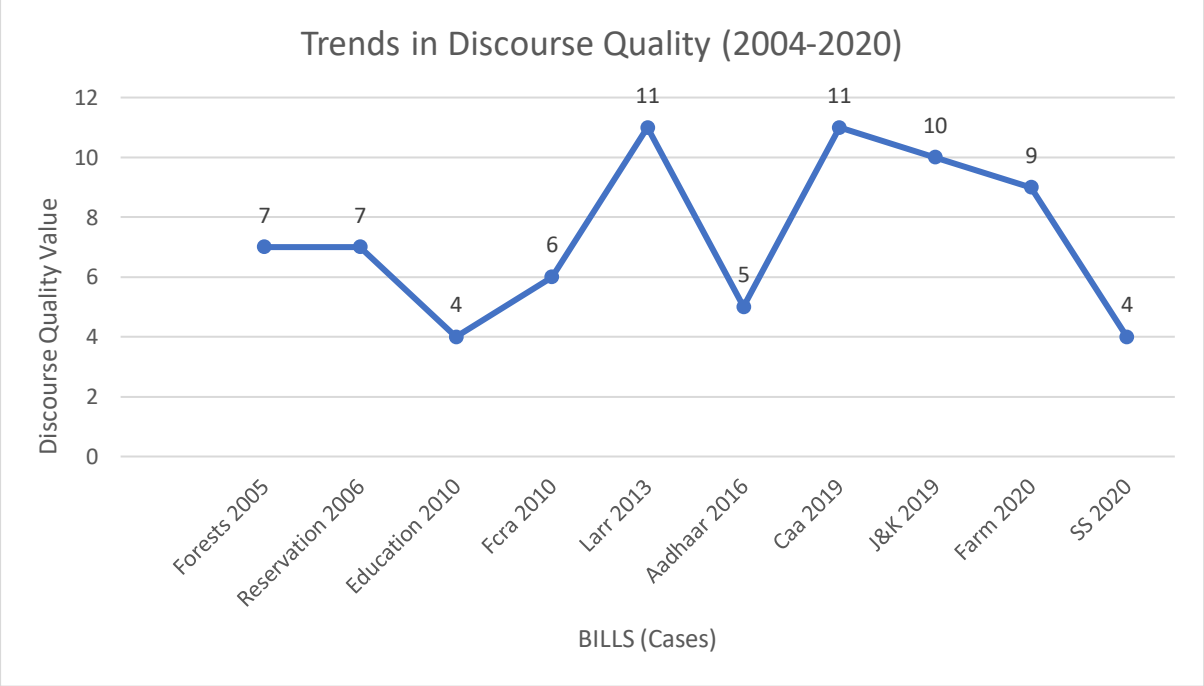
NDA I and II

The Aadhaar Bill in 2016 showcased reasoning; however, there were disagreements as well as persuasive arguments and respect during the debate. Equality was an area of concern as well. The discourse quality score of 5 indicates that while there was potential for a discussion on this bill; it fell short in terms of depth, persuasion power and respectfulness. In the case of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) debate in 2019, there seemed to be a balance, between reasoning provided along with disagreements expressed respectfully while also considering equality and persuasion factors. With a discourse quality rating of 11 it indicates that the discourse was of quality effectively engaging participants and allowing for arguments. The Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Bill of 2019 presented reasoning and significant disagreements highlighting the importance of the issue. However, there was room for improvement in terms of equality and respect. A discourse quality rating of 10 reflects a debate with opportunities to enhance inclusivity. The Farm Bill of 2020 demonstrated reasoning, moderate disagreements and a focus on equality and respect. While the persuasion was reasonable there could have been depth in the discussion. A discourse quality rating of 9 suggests a constructive debate took place. The Social Security (SS) Bill in 2020 showcased reasoning some disagreement, but displayed respect and modest persuasion efforts. With a discourse quality rating of 4 it indicates that there is room for improvement in terms of reasoning and equality, within the discussion.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) headed by the BJP party held power during both the 17th Lok Sabha sessions which experienced a high number of working hours lost compared to previous UPA II administration; however, they were able to surpass UPA II when it comes to deliberative efficacy and overall quality as shown in Figure 2. Ever since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came into power in 2014 the Lok Sabha has witnessed an increase, in productivity given the government's majority. This becomes more apparent when we compare it to the functioning of the Lok Sabha during the tenure of the second United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. The years 2013 and 2019 saw an improvement, in the quality of discussions and debates held in the house.

Figure 2

Changing Trends in the Discourse Quality of Lok Sabha Debates (2004-2020)



As commonly believed the productivity of a House is typically assessed by comparing the number of working hours to the hours. The NDA has faced its challenge, in the Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of the Parliament) due to lacking a majority, which gives an advantage to the opposition. However, the Lok Sabha (the Lower House of the Parliament) presents a different

scenario as the BJP holds a majority there. Hence this reality can be observed in the development of outcomes in the Lok Sabha during the NDA period as depicted in Figure 2.

In both the 17th Lok Sabhas the BJP had a strong mandate to push forward certain contentious issues on their agenda while dealing with less cooperative political opponents. For example, they pursued actions such as implementing the Citizenship Amendment Act and initiating steps, towards repealing Article 370 which grants Jammu and Kashmir an autonomous status. All the accepted definitions and measures of development originating from needs, citizenship rights or social inclusion undergo a reinterpretation, under the present right wing political regime of the country. This reinterpretation leads to the creation of graded inequalities, which are inequalities that align with existing hierarchies.

The Indian Parliament plays a role in holding the government accountable during a time when India's institutions face significant strain and suppression. The Parliament's lack of action has reaching consequences both in terms of its responsibility to critically analyze proposed bills and its delayed response to pressing issues in the country. According to Kapur and Mehta (2006) India is currently at a juncture where institutional adjustments and comprehensive policies demand quality deliberation and oversight over the executive branch.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is observed that Indian parliamentary democracy exhibits a picture in terms of its nature as evidenced by the discourse quality index scores of these ten bills. While there are instances characterized by reasoning, inclusivity and persuasive arguments challenges related to respect, equality and public engagement also exist. The variation in discourse quality across bills underscores the evolving nature of Indian democracy highlighting the ongoing need, for continuous efforts aimed at enhancing the deliberative quality of parliamentary debates. This encompasses the promotion of fair discussions encouraging participation and emphasizing the role of logical reasoning, in shaping policy outcomes. Ultimately sustaining an atmosphere of informed and respectful deliberation within the Lok Sabha can reinforce the deliberative nature of Indian democracy.

Unfortunately, the Indian Parliament is gradually losing its status as a platform where those in power and those aspiring to be in power can engage in discussions and pass laws for the betterment of the people. The fragmentation within the party system undermines processes

when weak parties on both sides obstruct proceedings. The government hinders discussions while the opposition disrupts proceedings. Consequently, this situation distorts Parliaments function and even renders it ineffective in terms of representation, legislation, accountability and governance. Through analysis of facts, it becomes evident that legislative actions lack accountability due to consideration given to them.

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