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Discipline in disorder: Does party discipline drive disruptions in the Indian Parliament?

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Abstract

The paper examines an unexplored form of legislative obstruction, parliamentary disruptions, in the context of the Indian parliament. We offer a two-fold explanation for why parliamentary disruptions are frequent in India. Firstly, we argue that political and institutional developments after the 1980s have led to very high concentration of power in the hands of the leadership of parliamentary parties. This has empowered party leaders to exert party discipline over legislators for the conduct of disruptions, an act that breaks the norms and rules of parliamentary functioning. Secondly, we empirically show that party discipline is exerted by presenting legislative and electoral incentives to legislators for being active in disruptions: (a) Legislators, who participate visibly in disruptions, are favored with more opportunities to represent the party in parliamentary debates as well as higher likelihood of party re-nomination in the next elections. (b) Among legislators that participate in disruptions, those that incur high private costs, in the act of disruption, are likely to receive higher payoffs and (c) The magnitude of legislator payoffs is contingent on the party's position in parliament. For the empirical analysis, we use primary data on disruptions in the Indian parliament during the five year tenure of the 15th Lok Sabha.

Keywords: party discipline, legislative obstruction, legislative disruption, parliament, India

Introduction

"Mr. Speaker, I am informed that the working of the US Congress is harmonious. I am also told that you are well-known for your bipartisanship (in humor). Well, you are not alone. Time and again, I have also witnessed a similar spirit in the Indian Parliament, especially in our Upper House. So, as you can see, we have many shared practices."

– Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi's Speech to Members of the US Congress, 2016

Legislative obstruction is a well-researched subject in political science literature. In early 1900s, Geddes Rutherford brought out the first systematic classification of the different forms of obstruction observed in legislatures. It, however, took a long time till the 1990s for empirical work in this domain to take shape, starting with Mayhew (1991), Binder (1999), Howell et al (2000) and Jones (2001). These papers did not study the specific acts of obstruction, but analyzed them for their effects on the decline in legislative productivity or policy gridlock. The next wave of studies followed after 2000, when Jones (2000) and Binder et al (2002) began to study the specific instances when legislators choose to exercise or not exercise the filibuster, a form of legislative obstruction. Since then Wavro & Schickler (2006 & 2010), Koger (2010), Smith & Park (2013) and Howard (2015) have brought new perspectives to the discourse on legislative obstructions.

We notice that the enrichment on legislative obstruction literature is focused on the study of US legislatures, barring a few papers such as Charlton (1999), which investigated the legislature of Canada. This is, perhaps, the reason why studies on legislative obstruction have tended to center around certain forms of obstruction: the filibuster, the legislative hold, dilatory motions and committee obstructions. In this paper, we contribute to the proliferating literature by introducing a study on an unexamined form of obstruction observed in the legislatures of some nations: the disruption of legislative proceedings.

Legislative disruptions are a form of obstruction, where the legislative business of the House is forcibly stalled by the actions of legislators. These disruptions are salient in diverse democratic environments such as the parliaments of Taiwan, Japan, South Africa, Ukraine and India (Spary 2010); the way disruptions manifest vary across institutional contexts ranging from violent altercations between legislators to non-violent protests conducted on the 'Well' of the House. But unlike the filibuster and other legally sanctioned means of obstruction in the US[i], disruptions visibly violate the procedural rules of parliament. It is due to this character of legislative disruptions, that they have so far been viewed disparately from other forms of legislative obstruction[ii].

In this paper, we investigate disruptions in the context of the Indian Parliament, the national legislature that democratically represents, in numeric terms, the largest polity in the world. Disruptions have become a frequent occurrence in the Indian Parliament since 2000, and have impacted between 20-40%[iii] of parliamentary business time over the last three parliamentary tenures. Most cases of disruptions in India do not involve violent behavior, but Members of

Parliament (MPs) usually protest by shouting slogans, displaying placards and congressing on the 'Well' of the House, thereby making it infeasible to proceed with parliamentary business.

Leading political commentators and observers identify that it is political parties that direct their MPs to disrupt the parliamentary proceedings[iv]. But it is unclear as to how parties are able to internally organize their MPs to participate in these disruptions. What is also pertinent is that parliamentary proceedings in India are telecast live to all parts of the country through a dedicated and subscription-free parliamentary channel. So, what incentives do parties make available to MPs to compensate for the potential reputational and moral costs they may incur for breaking a parliamentary rule in an effectively public forum?

In this paper, we present a two-fold explanation for why parliamentary disruptions are frequent in India. In the first part, we identify how political factors have combined with the institutional introduction of the anti-defection law, to lead to a rise in leadership dominance within political parties. This has strengthened party discipline in the hands of party leaders, and stifled the room for internal dissent against leader-directed tactics such as disruptions. We present evidence from qualitative interviews with MPs as well as secondary sources such as recorded speeches and political commentaries to back this claim.

This leads us to the second part, where we describe how party leaders use party discipline to organize disruptions. We use data on disruptions collated for the five year parliamentary term of the 15th Lok Sabha to demonstrate that party leaders preferentially allocate intra-legislative benefits and electoral benefits to MPs, who are active participants of disruptions. Secondly, we find that MP incentives for disruption rises with the reduction in his/ her party's stake in the government- for instance, we find opposition parties provide the highest rewards to disrupting MPs. Finally, we show that MP's, who are likely to incur high private costs associated with participation in disruptions, are likely to be rewarded better.

The rest of the paper is outlined as follows. In the next section, we present a literature review on party discipline in legislatures and develop a case for analyzing parliamentary disruptions using the lens of party discipline. Section three presents a narrative for explaining the rise of party discipline in Indian parliamentary parties, followed by the specification of the hypotheses. Section four describes the design of the econometric model and details the sources of data. In section five, we present our findings and interpret the results. We summarize our findings in the concluding section.

Party discipline in legislatures

Party discipline in legislatures has been primarily studied for its impacts on legislative behavior. There are a number of studies that highlight the role of party discipline in inducing party unity in legislative voting (Plumb 2014, Ceron 2013, McCarty et al 2001, Becher & Sieberer 2008). Longley (2003) demonstrates how discipline has a bearing even on the legislator's decision to abstain from voting. Others such as Dandoy (2011) connect party discipline to increased frequency of

parliamentary questioning by legislators. Heller & Mershon (2008), provide an engaging account of how high discipline associates with increased party switching by legislators.

While the literature displays extensive conversation on the effects of party discipline on the functioning of legislatures, there are few accounts on how party leaders 'exert'[v] this discipline. For one, party discipline creates benefits for all legislators as it solves the collective action problem that legislators would otherwise face if they had to work independently. But it may happen that, on occasions, the behavior directed by the party leader may not concur with the legislator's personal wish or the interests of his/ her constituents. Why then does the legislator choose to listen to the party leader?

The literature answers this by introducing the concept of party discipline, which is defined as the use of incentives or sanctions by party leaders to induce compliant behavior by rank-and-file members. The conceptual origins of party discipline can be traced to the seminal exposition of the party as legislative cartel theory by Cox & McCubbins (1993). They model parties as vehicles for reducing inefficiencies in the pursuit of collective action, and project congressional party leaders as enforcers of these collective interests in the legislatures. In order to be successful enforcers, party leaders are empowered with structural tools to induce loyalty from legislators. In line with the theory, they present empirical evidence from the US Congress to show that loyalty to party leadership influences committee assignments of legislators. Their succeeding work (Cox & McCubbins 1994) conceptualizes a broader coverage of 'assets' that Congressmen place in bond with party leaders as: intra-legislative benefits (i.e. things that increase the value of the seat) and electoral benefits (i.e. things that directly help members win reelection).

Pearson (2015) builds on this framework to present a rigorous empirical exploration of party discipline in the US House of Representatives; her analysis spread over the 100th-112th sessions of Congress. She embeds her study in the context of growing leadership control over Congressional parties after the 1970s following two institutional developments: (a) weakening of the seniority system in Congress Committees, and (b) rise in leadership stake in the crucial Rules Committee. This, she argues, has given majority party leaders additional governing powers over which bills would get preference in the legislative agenda and over the choice of chairmanship/ membership to committees- two important intra-legislative benefits that she finds leaders preferentially allocate to 'loyal' legislators. Her study also widens the canvass of legislator behaviors that are perceived to portray loyalty to include not only voting on bills but also voting on legislative rules as well as contributions to party campaign funds.

Our analysis of party discipline in the Indian parliament builds on the theoretical progress made by Cox and McCubbins (1994) and Pearson (2015). We believe this is the first study that attempts to bring light to the mechanisms behind party discipline within a parliamentary system. Cox & McCubbins (1993) had earlier speculated that leadership control over legislators is likely to be higher in parliamentary systems, since party whips receive more institutional powers. In presenting the case of party discipline in India, we present a rather extreme scenario (even among parliamentary systems) where party discipline has grown to extreme proportions, aided

by political shifts and the alteration of institutional rules. This has given party leaders extensive control over the actions of their legislators, to the extent that they are capable of directing legislators to visibly transgress a parliamentary rule on the floor of the House.

The empirical construction of this study departs from Pearson in that we conceptualize new parameters for operationalization of legislator loyalty and party benefits, by accounting for the institutional features of a parliamentary system, and the distinctive functional traits of the Indian Parliament. Firstly, we characterize legislator loyalty in terms of their participation in parliamentary disruptions, which we argue are actions guided by the party leadership. Secondly, we identify two types of legislator benefits, whose distribution is controlled by party leaders: opportunities to speak in parliamentary debates and party re-nomination for the next election.

The next section takes off from this theoretical discussion to elaborate on the evolution of party discipline in India.

Party discipline in India

The fact that Indian political parties do not present models for internal democracy is well acknowledged in the extant literature. Chhibber et al (2012) empirical effort at a cross-party examination of party organization revealed that most parties scored low (only 1 or 2 points out of 3) with regard to basic organizational building blocks such as a clear succession plan for leadership, stability in party functionary roles and opportunities for upward mobility. It is not surprising that a similar degree of opacity and leadership domination also typifies the relationship between the parliamentary parties and the party MPs.

Our interviews[vi] with current and former parliamentarians brought light to the nuts and bolts of intra-party functioning. A senior party leader and former Member of Parliament shared with us:

"In general, MPs would like to keep their party leaders happy. This all stems from the hierarchical nature of parties where decisions are taken by party leaders, there is no internal democracy. Internal elections are conducted in name whichever party you consider. So MPs are forced to behave in a manner to please the party leader. This is true for all parties barring the exception of may be the communist parties when leaders like xxx were leading. The problem is most significant in the case of regional parties."[vii]

Leadership influence over party legislators has historically been strong in India, but we argue that its transformation into extreme leadership dominance is a recent phenomenon, catalyzed by two development in the 1980s- one political and the other institutional: (a) Disappearance of single-party majority governments and (b) Enactment of the anti-defection law. We elaborate below why these two developments have made a difference.

Figure 1: Percentage parliamentary seats held by the Ruling party
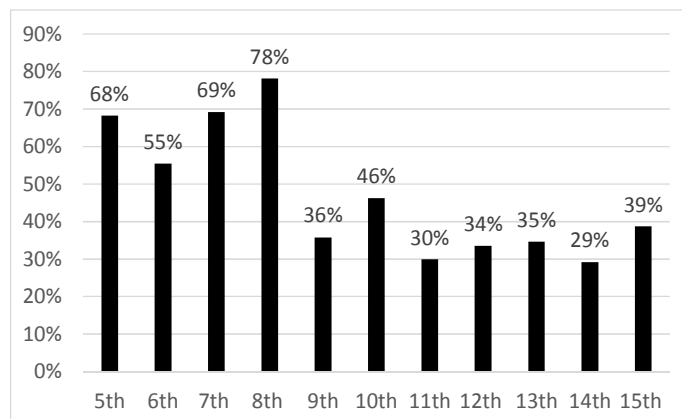
Source: Lok Sabha Secretariat

Figure 1 presents the trends in parliamentary seats held by the ruling party in the Lower House of the Indian Parliament or Lok Sabha[viii]. We see a sharp inflection after the 8th Lok Sabha (1984-89) - since then no parliament has seen the ruling party enjoy a stand-alone majority[ix]. This political development has had important consequences for how political parties strategize over legislative business in the House. When parties hold comfortable majorities, such as till the 8th Lok Sabha, they are amenable to give legislators some leeway to express their personal legislative preferences. But repeated minority governments after the 1980s has meant ruling parties are constantly wrestling for legislative votes, and consequently leaders have tightened the leash over the legislative choices of their party legislators.

The second development is the enactment of the anti-defection law in 1985, which has had also impacted legislative functioning. As per the law, MPs face automatic disqualification of parliamentary membership if they do not follow the vote directives of the party leadership. This provision has given party leaders the legal authorization (by use of the whip) to enforce legislative voting on any bill or resolution in parliament. The frequent exercise of the party whip[x] by party leaders has given rise to sharp criticisms by political commentators in India. Manor (2011), for instance, observes:

"They (anti-defection law provisions) have also strengthened party discipline, which had often been quite weak before 1985. They have, however, been criticized for turning legislators into mere 'lobby fodder', unable to speak their minds freely or to represent their constituents adequately. The changes are also said have unduly strengthened the influence of party leaders – which is already immense, especially within regional parties, which tend to be dominated by single leaders or cliques."

Madhavan (2014) highlights the impact of the anti-defection law in considerably reducing the parliamentary leverage in the hands of legislators: *"The government can get any of its policies and Bills approved by issuing a whip to its party members and through backroom deals with the leadership of other political parties. It does not need to convince individual MPs of the merits of the proposals. Thus, our system strips the incentive for an MP to understand and think through any issue, as he has to finally just obey the party."*

Figure 2: Average annual no. of Congress Parliamentary meetings
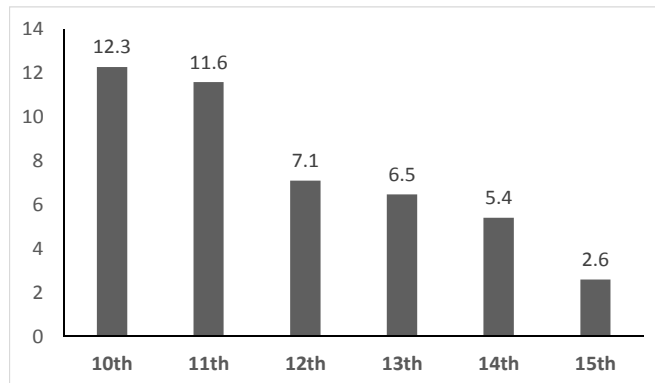
Source: Requested anonymity

There is additional evidence to suggest that the command-and-control culture within parliamentary parties may have solidified over the decades. Figure 2 shows trends in the frequency of parliamentary party meetings of the Congress party from the 10th Lok Sabha (1991-96) to the 15th Lok Sabha (2004-09): it has declined from an average of over 12 meetings in a year to less than 3 annual meetings, which suggests that there are now less intra-parliamentary party discussions on policy issues. While data on the frequency of parliamentary party meetings of other major parliamentary parties is not available to us, we have no reason to suspect that the pattern of decline in intra-party deliberations is pervasive across parties[xi].

Building on the evidence of strengthening parliamentary party leadership, we make two points to argue that it is now easier for party leaders to organize parliamentary disruptions. Firstly, the decline in intra-party deliberative culture in parliamentary parties has narrowed the room for MPs to express dissent over party tactics of disruption. Our interviews with MPs suggest that many are not supportive of disruptions: *"Among people who go onto the Well, many people do not like it.[xii]"*. Former Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee has made a similar observation in his memoirs: *"They (MPs) expressed their regret individually for indulging in disruptions in the House, as directed by the party leaders."* But they fear that expressing disagreement may be construed as showing 'disloyalty' to their party leader.

The second reason is that party leaders now use their enhanced strength to exert party discipline even for the conduct of disruptions in parliament. This was made evident to us from our interviews, where almost every MP identified disruption directives as a form of 'party whip'[xiii] issued by party leaders. But if disruptions are organized by party discipline, how then do party leaders incentivize such behavior from their MPs? The modus operandi of disruptions is what we come to in the next section.

Party incentives for disruptions

We would expect that the nature of legislator incentives available to parliamentary party leaders to be a function of the institutional rules of the legislature and intra-party procedures within their party. For instance, in the context of the US Congress, where individual legislators have the opportunity to sponsor bills, Pearson (2015) shows that majority party leaders give legislative preference to congressmen that are loyal to party leaders. Similarly, party leaders in the US also enhance the electoral prospects of 'loyal' candidates by assisting them with campaign funds.

In the case of India, the institutional rules within the legislature and political parties are quite different, and so are the resources available to party leaders. In the legislative arena, parliamentary parties have discretion over the allocation of speaking time in parliamentary debates. The institutional mechanism is as follows: The Speaker of the House allots speaking time to each party depending on the proportion of seats they hold in parliament, thereafter party leaders allocate speaking time to individual legislators. Theoretically speaking, if parties allocate time equitably across party legislators, we should find that each legislator would receive the same opportunities for debate – but this may practically not be the case. Our first empirical test investigates the potential imbalance in the allocation of debate opportunities to legislators and examines whether this is connected to legislator party loyalty[xiv].

In the electoral arena of India, party leaders have very large influence with regard to candidate selection for elections, a consequence of the poorly developed intra-party institutional processes within Indian parties. In our second test, we examine whether party re-nomination prospects of incumbent legislators is related to their participation in disruptions.

Our first set of twin hypotheses is as follows:

H1a: Legislators, who participate in disrupting parliament, get more opportunities from the party to speak in parliamentary debates than legislators who do not participate in disruptions.

H1b: Legislators, who participate in disrupting parliament, get a higher chance for party electoral re-nomination than legislators who do not participate in disruptions.

Moderating effect of party type

Legislative obstructions that are studied in the context of the two-party system of the US suggest that obstructions are driven by opposition parties. The legislative landscape in India is, however, substantively different from the US with about 35-40 political parties finding representation in parliament. With the commencement of the coalition era in Indian politics in the 1990s, parties have come to assume specialized roles in the legislature: principal opposition party, other opposition parties, parties providing outside support, coalition partners and ruling parties.

Earlier literature on parliamentary disruptions in India (Wallack 2008, Spary 2010) suggest that incentives for disruptions are highest for opposition parties, since derailment of the government's legislative agenda is likely to benefit them the most. Incentives are expected to drop as we move towards parties that have a higher stake in the government's legislative agenda. For instance, coalition partners of the ruling party are less likely to encourage disruptions compared to parties that provide outside support. We expect that these party incentives would influence how parties reward their MPs- we, therefore, estimate opposition parties to give the highest benefits for disruptive behavior by MPs.

H2a&b: Opposition parties, particularly the principal opposition party, are likely to incentivize disruptions with the highest benefits: (a) opportunities for debate & (b) party re-nomination. The magnitude of these benefits is likely to drop as follows:

Opposition party> Party giving outside support> Coalition partner> Independents

Moderating effect of private costs

The act of disrupting parliament is likely to have private costs for individual MPs; here we account for two types of costs: (a) Reputational costs of being publicly seen breaking a parliamentary rule and (b) Physical costs of standing in the 'Well' of the House for long hours and shouting slogans[xv].

We hypothesize that all MPs do not incur the same degree of reputational and physical costs for disruptions, and the magnitude of costs incurred is contingent on certain MP attributes. Firstly, we expect that reputational costs will rise with the educational background of the MP. Secondly, we feel that an MP's political seniority would also increase his/ her reputational costs, since senior MPs come from an era where orderly functioning of parliament was a norm. Thirdly, we anticipate that the physical costs of disruptions for MPs would increase with age, since participating in disruptions can be physically strenuous.

Our third set of hypotheses examines whether party leaders incorporate the effects of the differential private costs on MPs, while allocating disruption rewards to MPs.

H3a: Party legislators, who have higher private costs associated with participation in disruptions, are given more debate opportunities than other legislators for their participation in disruptions

H3b: Party legislators, who have higher private costs associated with participation in disruptions, get higher chance for electoral re-nomination than other legislators for participation in disruptions

Research Design

For empirically testing these hypotheses, we crafted out data from the parliamentary proceedings of the 15th edition of the Lok Sabha (Lower House), which spans a five year term from 2009 to 2014. We define disruption as an event when the Session Chair of the Lower House is forced to prematurely 'adjourn' a parliamentary sitting at least once owing to disturbances emanating from some MPs. MPs are 'participants of disruption' if they exhibit evidence of any of the two behaviors mentioned below within the last 20 minutes of the Speaker/ House Chair's announcement of adjournment:

- Coming onto the well of the House
- Making statements signaling intent to disrupt proceedings

Using this coding instruction, we created a primary dataset with two categories of data: (a) List of MPs who participated (or did not participate) in at least one disruption (b) Number of disruptions participated by each MP. The data for generating the dataset originated from a manual reading of the 15th Lok Sabha daily parliamentary debates published by the Lok Sabha Secretariat on their website (www.loksabha.in). Careful attention was given to the events and

discussions that immediately preceded a forced adjournment by the House Chair in order to identify the participants of the disruption. The 15th Lok Sabha debates are available for 353 sittings (out of 357 sittings), with each sitting accounting for about 100 pages (on average), making the browsing exercise spread over 35,000 pages.

As our hypotheses suggest, we use two dependent variables for the tests: (1) opportunities for parliamentary debate (2) probability for party re-nomination in the next elections. Data on MP participation in parliamentary debates of the 15th Lok Sabha was accessed from the website of PRS Legislative Research, a non-profit organization which regularly publishes MP activity reports. Similarly, data on whether or not MPs were re-nominated by parties for the next (2014) parliamentary elections was gathered from the 2014 parliamentary results published by the Election Commission of India.

In addition, we also collected data on potential measures that are likely to impact on our dependent variables, in order to control for their effects. For the model connecting participation in disruptions with opportunities for debate we identify two controls: (a) MP Seniority as we would expect senior MPs to get more opportunities for debate and (b) MP Education, a categorical variable, since parties are likely to perceive well-educated MPs to be better at articulating the party stance, and thereby they get more debate opportunities.

For the second model that investigates participation in disruptions with reelection likelihood, we incorporate three controls in the basic model: (a) Victory margin/ Vote share in the previous elections (b) MP Seniority (c) Relative Assets ratio. While the first two are self-explanatory, the Relative Assets ratio is the ratio of the MPs assets with the highest assets reported by a competitive constituency candidate in the 2014 elections[xvi]. It gives us a measure of the relative strength of the candidate in comparison to the monetarily strongest competitive[xvii] candidate in the constituency. We would expect all three controls to positively effect on reelection chances.

We also present an advanced model, where we control for the additional impacts of two potential confounders in our basic model: (a) Old age of the MP & (b) Political positions dummy. It may be argued that MPs above a certain age (60 or 75)[xviii] are less likely to be part of physically strenuous activities such as the disruption of parliament, and for fitness reasons they are also less likely to be re-nominated for the next elections. Therefore, to account for the re-nomination variance that may be explained by old age alone, we include it as a control.

Secondly, it may also be argued that MPs, who have been active party workers, are likely to be more compliant to party directives for disruptions. On the other hand, such active party workers may also find it easier to secure party-renomination; here also we need to dissociate the effects of participation in disruptions from the overall party activity of the MP. We, therefore, control for party activity by incorporating the control of a 'Political positions dummy' in the model, since active party workers are expected to be awarded with national Parliamentary/ Ministerial or Party positions in recognition of their sustained party contributions.

The data for these control variables has been put together from a variety of sources. Data for the Assets and Age of the MP is recorded from the published reports of the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), a non-profit organization, which presents this information for all candidates of the 2009 and 2014 parliamentary elections. Vote margin/ Vote share figures for the 2009 parliamentary elections are taken from the election statistics published by the Election Commission. We measure MP seniority by the number of previous parliamentary terms[xix] held by the MP, this data along with Parliamentary and Ministerial positions is gathered from the Lok Sabha website.

Descriptive Statistics

We now lay down the important descriptive statistics concerning parliamentary disruptions during the 15th Lok Sabha. Our earlier explained coding manual enabled us to identify a total of 189 MPs out of nearly 545 MPs as 'participants to at least one disruption'. Most MPs (107) participated in only 1-2 disruptions, but a significant number (54) participated in 5 or more disruptions. The breakup of MPs by type of party affiliation at the time the MP disrupted is[xx]:

Figure 3: Disruptive participation of 15th LS MPs
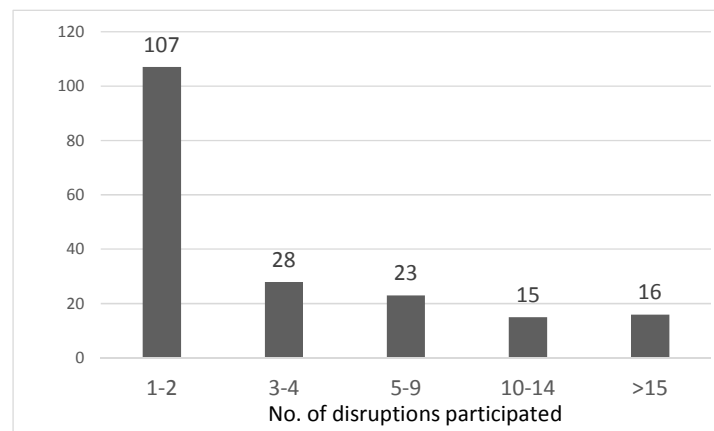
Source: MPs identified from 15th LS debates

- Ruling party   : 25
- Coalition partner   : 8
- Outside supporter   : 28
- Opposition parties   : 127

This party distribution of MPs participating in disruptions is consistent with the expectations expressed in the literature: Opposition parties dominate in disruptive activities (Wallack, 2008) but ruling coalition partners and on occasions even ruling party members are seen participating in disruptions (Spary, 2010). Although the number of ruling party members appears higher than expected, most of them were part of only 1-2 disruptions. Only, three ruling party members contributed to more than 5 disruptions, and all the three were seen repeatedly protesting on the specific issue of constitution of the state of Telangana[xxi].

Given this background on disruptions in the 15th Lok Sabha, we now move on to the specific relationships of interest. For our subsequent analysis of how participation in disruptions impacts on party benefits, we limit our analysis to MPs from all parties with the exception of the ruling party, since ruling party leaders are highly unlikely to incentivize disruptions from their own MPs.

Figure 4 illustrates the prospective connection between participation in disruptions with opportunities to speak in parliamentary debates.

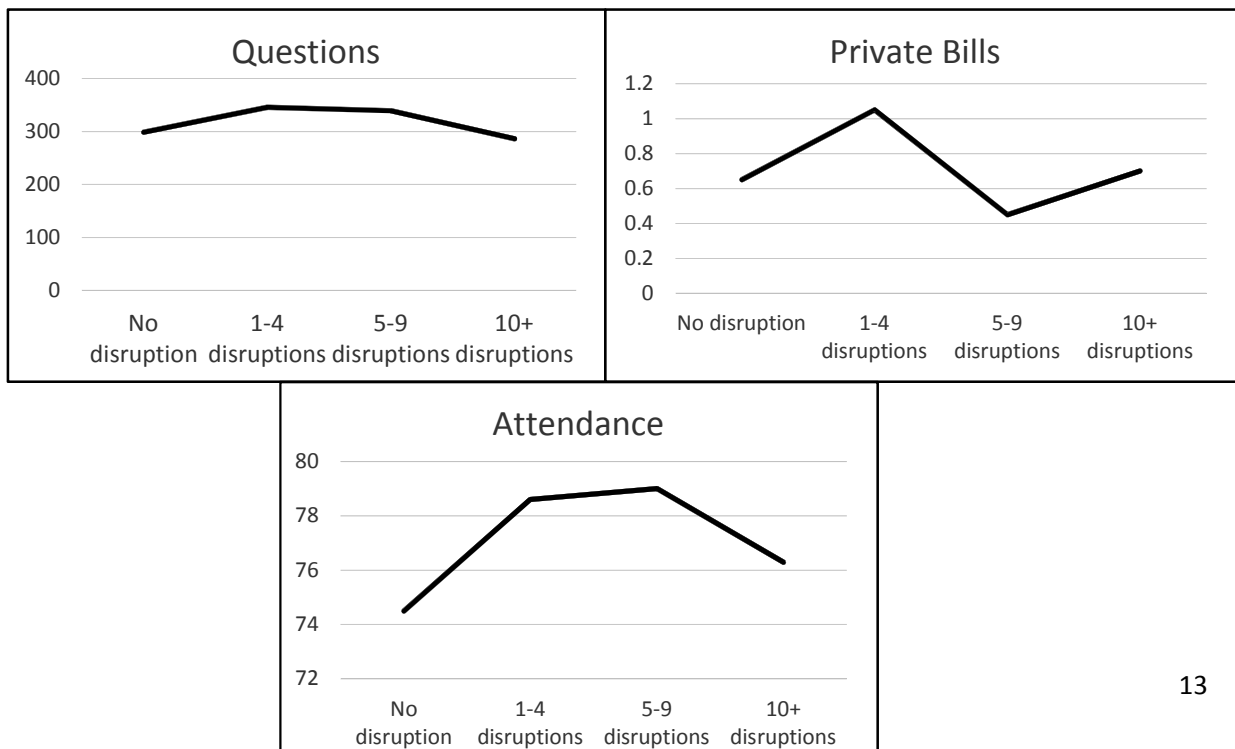*Figure 4: Average parliamentary debates with disruption participation*
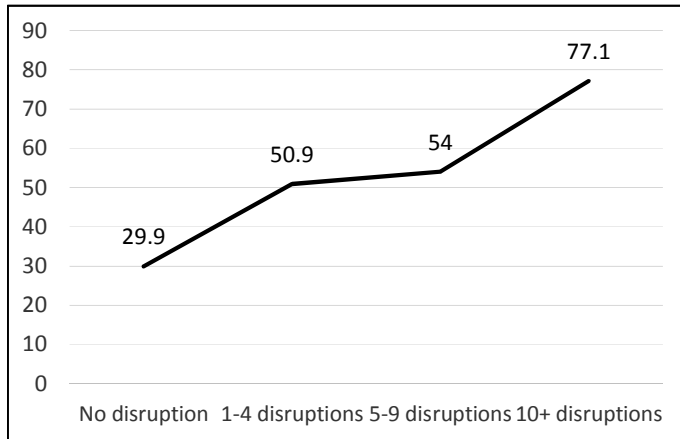
Source: Debates data is from PRS Legislative Research

There appears to be a linear pattern in the relationship between opportunities for parliamentary debate with participation in disruptions. MPs who have participated in 10 or more disruptions have, on average, about 2.5 times more opportunities to speak in parliamentary debates than MPs who have not participated in any disruptions. Since parties allocate speaking time to MPs there is a clear case to suspect that they favor MPs who participate in disruptions.

It is possible to argue that a confounding factor, the MPs personal initiative in parliamentary activities, may be driving both their higher participation in debates as well as their higher participation in disruptions. If this is the case, then we should observe a similar linear relationship between participation in disruptions with use of other parliamentary instruments such as Questions, Private Bills and attendance in parliament. Incidentally, in the context of the Indian Parliament, the party does not play a role in the allocation of these other instruments, and participation depends on the MP's own initiative. Figure 5 below presents the patterns.

Figure 5: Participation in Questions, Private Bills and Attendance with Disruptions
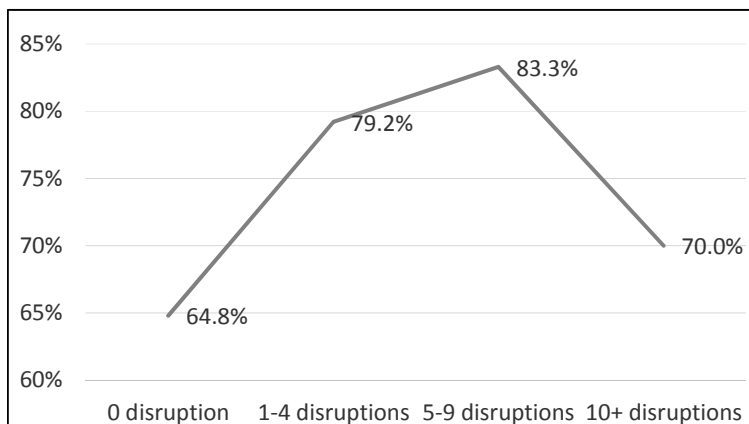
The figure suggests that none of the other instruments (Questions, Private Bills) or Attendance in parliament presents a linear relationship with participation in disruptions. Further, the differences across categories of disruption participation for each of the graphs is marginal, so as to suggest no trend for these instruments. As opposed to this, the distinctiveness of the data patterns between debates and disruptions presents strong grounds for us to further examine whether there is a systematic relationship between party-allocated opportunities for debate with the MP's participation in disruptions.

Our second hypothesis deals with the relationship between an MP's participation in disruptions with the probability of being re-nominated by the party in the next elections. As the statistics for the 15th Lok Sabha in Figure 6 show, this association is not as clearly defined as the case with opportunities for debates.

Figure 6: Party re-nomination rates with participation in disruptions

Average MP re-nomination rates for the 15th Lok Sabha was high at 71.2%. Figure 6 demonstrates an increasing trend as we move from MPs who have not participated in any disruption to MPs with 5-9 disruptions. This trend is however broken when we move to MPs with 10 or more disruptions where the re-nomination rates actually drop[xxii]. It is, however, illustrative that even after this drop, re-nomination rates for MPs with 10 or more disruptions are still higher than MPs who have not participated in any disruption. It is, therefore, instructive to investigate how far does participation in disruption, even if it is only one disruption, has on an MP's chances for party re-nomination. Figure 7 illustrates this association.

Figure 7: Odds for re-nomination with disruption participation
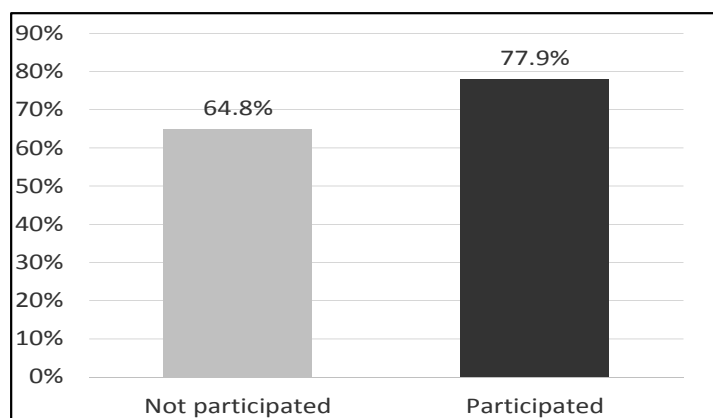
The figure suggests that there is a considerable difference (~13%) in the party re-nomination rates between MPs, who participate and do not participate in disruptions, indicating that it is possible that parties favor MPs who participate even in one disruption. This is, however, difficult to conclude on the basis of descriptive data alone.

In summary, the descriptive analysis does indicate the existence of a relationship between party benefits, in terms of opportunities to debate as well as electoral re-nomination, with the disruption participation of MPs. However, the illustrations presented above suggest only trends as we have not accounted for the impacts of confounding factors that likely impact on both disruption participation and party benefits. We will be testing for the strength of these relationships by incorporating the appropriate control variables in an econometric model.

Econometric Test

In this section, we present the empirical test for our expectations of whether participating in disruptions is related to the benefits received by MPs from their parties. As mentioned earlier, ruling party leaders are unlikely to incentivize disruption from their MPs. So to test for the association between participation in disruptions and party benefits we limit MPs under consideration to only the non-ruling party (in this case non-Congress party) MPs of the 15th Lok Sabha. Among them we include, for our analysis, only MPs who were members for the full period of the parliamentary term. This amounts to a spread of 315 MPs for our comparative study.

The two dependent variables corresponding to the benefits that parties give MPs are: (i) Debate opportunities for MPs and (ii) Probability for party re-nomination in next elections. For each of the models, we operationalize the independent variable (participation in disruptions) in two distinct ways. The first one measures the number of times the MP has participated in disruptions and reflects the MP's frequency of disrupting parliament. The second is the disruption dummy that gauges whether the MP has participated at least once in disruptions during the tenure of the 15th Lok Sabha. We incorporate the impacts of the proposed control variables in our respective basic models: MP Seniority, MP Education, MP Vote margin/ Vote share in the previous election and MP Relative Assets.

Debate opportunities with participation in disruptions

Table 1 presents the regression results of our model for Debate opportunities- tested for both linear and negative binomial regression (since the dependent variable is measured in counts).

The sample size of MPs applied for this model is slightly lower at 296, since we have not included MPs for whom data on debates participation is not available for the complete term of the 15th Lok Sabha. These are MPs who were appointed as Minister or the Deputy Speaker for the whole/ partial period of the Lok Sabha and thereby their participation in debates has not been recorded for the time they held these positions[xxiii]. We do not see any reason to expect that their exclusion in the sample would substantially impact our results.

Table 1: Explaining Debate opportunities with participation in Disruptions

Parameters	1a (Linear)	1b (Linear)	1c (NBR)
(Intercept)	14.1429	10.867	3.031236
No. of disruptions	2.4685*** (0.3376)		0.027209*** (0.007377)
Disruption dummy		21.105*** (5.630)	
MP Seniority	1.0459 (1.5761)	1.856 (1.671)	0.011519 (0.034715)
MP Education	14.3891*** (3.1298)	14.728*** (3.368)	0.352586*** (0.068986)
Party type effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-square (Adj.)	0.2239	0.123	0.137[xxiv]
N	296	296	296

*Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '`' 0.10*

The results from the linear regression (1a & 1b) show there is a strong correspondence between participation in disruptions and opportunities for debate, proving to be significant below 0.001 p-value. We can appropriate two conclusions based on this: (a) For every additional disruption a Member participates in, he/she is likely to get about 2.5 more debates opportunities in parliament, and (b) On an average, MPs who participate in 1 or more disruptions get opportunities for 21 more debates than MPs who did not participate in any disruption. The latter conclusion assumes importance, since an average MP, in our sample, gets only about 44 debate opportunities over his/ her 5 year term. This means that by participating in disruptions he/ she can increase debate opportunities by 21 debates or close to 50% over the average debate opportunities! The signs on the control variables of MP Seniority and MP Education are expectedly positive, though only the coefficient of MP Education proves significant. Results are consistent for the model run with negative binomial regression (1c).

Placebo test

We had earlier mentioned that the relationship between participation in disruptions and opportunities for debate may be confounded by the fact that both could be related to the personal initiative of the MP in parliamentary matters. This placebo test investigates whether

participation in disruptions is correlated with an MP's participation in other parliamentary functions, such as parliamentary questions, private member bills and parliamentary attendance, where political parties do not exercise institutional control. Table 2 presents the results of our regression analysis by applying the same control variables as with the model with opportunities for debate as the dependent variable.

Table 2: Testing for placebo effects (parliamentary questions, private bills and attendance)

Parameters	2a (Questions)	2b (Private Member Bill)	2c (Attendance)
(Intercept)	148.508	1.14464	56.685445
No. of disruptions	0.219 (2.015)	0.01381 (0.02206)	0.005465 (0.120196)
MP Seniority	-16.175' (9.408)	-0.02536 (0.10296)	0.744024 (0.561072)
MP Education	2.846 (18.682)	0.24765 (0.20446)	3.755854*** (1.114157)
Party type effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-square (Adj.)	0.004623	-0.004376	0.09321
N	296	296	296

*Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ''' 0.10*

It is revealing that our sample does not show evidence of a relationship between participation in disruptions with any of parliamentary questions, private member bills and parliamentary attendance. The models for 2a and 2b do not cross the minimum F statistic criterion (p=0.05) needed for their consideration. Model 2c fits the bill but the coefficients on the participation in disruptions prove insignificant. The evidence shows that participation in disruptions has little to do with the MP's own personal initiative, and is contingent on the party's directives[xxv].

The passing of the 'placebo test' enhances our confidence in the demonstrated relationship between participation in disruptions with party allocated opportunities for debate. A word of caution is, however, called for in interpreting this as a causal relationship since the available data does not permit us to excavate the timing of these debating opportunities presented to MPs. In other words, we are not sure whether debate chances were allocated after the MP participated in a party-directed disruption, or was it given earlier with an implicit promise that they would co-operate in future disruptions. Since we are not clear about this, we limit our conclusions to the evidence of a correlational relationship between party allocated debate opportunities and participation in disruptions.

Re-nomination chances with participation in disruptions

Our second hypothesis that connects participation in disruptions with party re-nomination chances lends itself to causal argumentation since party re-nomination for the subsequent

elections occurs only at the end of the previous parliamentary term. By then party leaders have a fair view of which MPs have been 'loyal' to them and are likely to incorporate this loyalty criterion into the MP re-nomination decision. In Table 3, we present the results of a parsimonious model using logistic regression to ascertain the relationship between participation in disruptions and likelihood of party re-nomination.

Table 3: Party re-nomination probability with participation in disruptions (Basic model)

Parameters	**3a**	**3b**	**3c**
(Intercept)	-0.688321	-0.687928	-0.745582
No. of disruptions	0.025335 (0.025052)	0.018538 (0.041988)	
Square (No. of disruption)		0.000231 (0.001299)	
Disruption dummy			0.625028* (0.263912)
Votemargin (2009)	0.005777 (0.017040)	0.005767 (0.017024)	0.003626 (0.016844)
MP Seniority	0.111401 (0.084605)	0.112185 (0.084692)	0.105277 (0.084480)
MP Relative Assets	0.083470* (0.040666)	0.083307* (0.040686)	0.086995* (0.040479)
Party type effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rsquare (Pseudo)	0.047	0.047	0.058
N	315	315	315

*Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ''' 0.10*

Model 3a which regresses re-nomination likelihood with number of disruptions does not show significance in the relationship. In 3b we introduce the square of the number of disruptions as an additional explanatory variable to test for potential curvilinear nature of the relationship, but both number of disruptions and its square are not significantly connected to party re-nomination. This suggests that the number of disruptions participated by an MP has no influence on party re-nomination chances.

Model 3c makes a modification by presenting the disruption dummy as the independent variable- a measure of whether or not an MP has participated in atleast one disruption. We find the coefficient of disruption dummy to be positive and statistically significant. The substantive interpretation is that participation in at least one disruption increases the odds of party re-nomination by 87% (exp (0.6250)-1) over non-participation in disruptions. Taking the other view, disruptions impact on an MP's electoral prospects by penalizing MPs who do not participate in any party-directed disruptions.

The coefficients of the three control variables are on expected lines: Votemargin in 2009 and MP Seniority are positive but not significant, MP relative Assets is both positive and significant.

Incorporating the confounding variables

We mentioned earlier that our basic model may be biased due to the omission of two variables that could work as confounders: (a) Political positions[xxvi] held by MP and (b) Old age of the MP. Conceptually, both these variables are likely to be correlated with both our dependent variable (party re-nomination probability) and independent variable (Disruption dummy). To account for the impact of these variables, we run models incorporating them as controls in order to check the robustness of our hypothesized relationship.

Table 4: Model incorporating the potential confounding variables

Parameters	4a	4b	4c
(Intercept)	-0.672685	-0.442995	-0.27003
Disruption dummy	0.579736*	0.550230*	0.47435'
	(0.266419)	(0.268237)	(0.27164)
Votemargin (2009)	0.001387	0.000399	0.00233
	(0.016892)	(0.016892)	(0.01768)
MP Seniority	0.046957	0.089235	0.14949
	(0.089994)	(0.093765)	(0.10182)
MP Relative Assets	0.081158*	0.080788*	0.08028*
	(0.040462)	(0.040423)	(0.03974)
MP Political Positions	0.614284'	0.714743*	0.67388'
	(0.344596)	(0.350742)	(0.35671)
MP Age>60		-0.513038'	
		(0.279980)	
MP Age>75			-1.40524**
			(0.48685)
Party type effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rsquare (Pseudo)	0.067	0.076	0.090
N	315	315	315

*Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ''' 0.10*

Model 4a presents the results after addition of Political positions as a control. We find that the Disruption dummy retains significance at 5% tolerance levels. Adding two variations of old age (60 years and 75 years) still maintains the confidence of the Disruption dummy, although for MP above 75 years the p value rises to 0.064, still below 10% tolerance.

With regard to the additional controls, political positions demonstrates a positive and significant impacts on party re-nomination while an MP's age (beyond 60/ 75years) shows a negative effect. The signs on both these coefficients follow our expectations.

The fact that the Disruption dummy maintains significance despite exposing it to a variety of carefully crafted controls suggests that our expectation that participation in disruptions has a causal influence on party re-nomination prospects holds.

Incorporating party position effects

Our next model tests for hypotheses 2a & 2b, which incorporate the differential impacts of party positioning on the magnitude of incentives that MPs get for disruptions. We achieve this by introducing an interaction between disruptions and parliamentary party type in our model. Table 5 presents the findings.

Table 5: Party benefits with party positioning in parliament

Parameters	5a (Debate opportunities)	5b (Re-nomination likelihood)
(Intercept)	17.1210	-0.453996
No. of disruptions*PRINCIPALOPP	2.8783*** (0.8158)	
No. of disruptions*OTOPP	1.4630* (0.7042)	
No. of disruptions*OUT	2.9410*** (0.4311)	
No. of disruptions*COA	-0.8099 (5.6757)	
No. of disruptions*IND	-20.7805 (46.5426)	
Disruption dummy*PRINCIPALOPP		0.971700' (0.521329)
Disruption dummy*OTOPP		0.650062' (0.390180)
Disruption dummy*OUT		0.729355 (0.704363)
Disruption dummy*COA		0.999056 (1.242078)
Disruption dummy*IND		-14.374787 (882.743722)
Votemargin (2009)		0.008868 (0.017805)
MP Education	14.6596*** (3.1207)	
MP Seniority	0.5894 (1.5778)	0.077275 (0.085562)
MP Relative Assets		0.090963*

		(0.040884)	
Party type effects	Yes	Yes	
Rsquare	0.2378	.072	
N	296	315	

*Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ''' 0.10*

Both model 5a and 5b support our conjecture that opposition parties, particularly the principal[xxvii] opposition party, reward MPs, who disrupt, with both more opportunities to debate as well as higher re-election chances. In the case of parties giving outside support to the ruling coalition, disruptions are significantly related only to the debate opportunities received by MPs. However, for coalition partners and independent candidates there is no relationship between disruption participation and either of debate opportunities or re-nomination likelihood. These results are in line with our hypothesis that party incentives for disruptions reduce with the degree of party stake in the government.

Incorporating MP private costs

The last model tests for hypotheses 3a & 3b, which attribute higher MP private costs with higher rewards for participation in disruptions. We run three regression models, each incorporating an interaction term between disruptions and the variables of interest: MP Age, MP Seniority and MP Education for each of the dependent variables: debate opportunities and re-nomination probability.

Table 6: Party benefits with variables associated with MP private costs

Parameters	6a (Debates)	6b (Debates)	6c (Debates)	6d (Renom.)	6e (Renom.)	6f (Renom.)
(Intercept)	34.6070	27.6488	28.0037	0.564674	0.673010	0.478522
No. of disruptions	1.7330*** (0.4833)	1.9876*** (0.3667)	2.5980*** (0.4031)			
No. of disruptions*Education	1.1648* (0.5508)					
No. of disruptions*Seniority		0.6328** (0.2145)				
No. of disruptions*Age			0.2113 (0.5347)			
Disruption dummy				0.623417* (0.263124)	0.660414* (0.260026)	0.526523* (0.267102)
Disruption dummy*Education				0.237180 (0.325445)		

Disruption dummy*Seniority					0.050735 (0.166453)	
Disruption dummy*Age						-0.174908 (0.368174)
Votemargin (2009)				0.003646 (0.016523)	0.003379 (0.016607)	0.002453 (0.016841)
MP Education	15.2670*** (3.1387)	13.9866*** (3.0684)	14.2130*** (3.1143)	0.148154 (0.163006)		
MP Seniority	0.9226 (1.5678)	0.6206 (1.5355)	0.5657 (1.7151)	0.093031 (0.083572)	0.101936 (0.083780)	0.202981* (0.091930)
MP Age			3.0983 (3.6485)			-0.542297** (0.199320)
MP Relative Assets				0.093205* (0.041160)	0.091986* (0.040779)	0.093862* (0.040749)
Party type effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rsquare	0.2331	0.2504	0.2274	.055	.052	.072
N	296	296	296	315	315	315

*Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ''' 0.10*

Models 6a to 6f present evidence for a relationship between private costs, interacted with disruptions, and debate opportunities, but there appears to be no influence on re-nomination prospects. Among the types of private costs we consider here, the strongest impact on debate opportunities is the MP Education and MP Seniority effects which are both positive and significant, while MP Age is positive but not significant. These results can be interpreted as follows: MPs, who are well educated are likely to be more handsomely rewarded for disruptions than MPs who have a lower education background. Similarly, senior MPs get higher debate opportunities for their participation in disruption as compared to less senior Members.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this paper presents an empirical investigation of an unexplored form of legislative obstruction, legislative disruptions in parliament. We introduce a new line of study by relating legislative obstructions, in the form of disruptions, to a characteristic of intra-party functioning of legislative parties i.e. party discipline. By presenting the case of disruptions in the Indian parliament, we argue that when party leadership dominance rises to extreme proportions, party leaders can exert party discipline over legislators even for the performance of legislative disruptions, which entail breaking of a parliamentary rule.

We organized our argument into two parts. In the first part we presented our case on why we believe parliamentary party leadership has become dominant in India- citing the effects of two developments: Disappearance of single-party majorities in parliament and the enactment of the anti-defection law. Anecdotal evidence from our interviews with MPs, speeches from politicians and literature from leading political commentators support our conjecture that party discipline is the driver of disruptions.

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In the second part, we presented empirical evidence for two kind of party incentives that leaders make available to legislators who are active participants of disruptions: Debate opportunities in parliament and Electoral re-nomination. Our statistical tests provide strong correlational evidence for a linear relationship between an MP's participation in disruptions with debate opportunities. The higher the disruption participation, the more opportunities parties give MPs to represent them in debates. We verify that these results are robust by testing for placebo effects of participation in disruptions with other parliamentary instruments such as questions, private member bills and parliamentary attendance, over which parties have no institutional control. Further, our statistical results show that MPs, who do not participate in disruptions are disadvantaged with lower chances for party re-nomination in the next elections. We ascertain the strength of this relationship by controlling for confounding factors, but our results hold.

We present two extensions to our main findings. We find that parties are more generous in giving benefits, particularly debates opportunities, to MPs who have high private costs associated with participation in disruptions. Further, we find that the relationship between party benefits and participation in disruptions to be strongest for principal opposition parties and weakest for parties that are coalition partners with the ruling alliance.

The robustness tests and incorporation of interaction effects give us confidence over the findings that participation in disruptions do influence the allocation of party benefits. We are, however, cognizant of two important limitations of the study, originating from the difficulty in locating data within the information-deficient environment of political science research on India. Firstly, our study analyzes cross-sectional data on disruptions during the 15th Lok Sabha, our findings could be further strengthened by incorporating time-series extensions of disruption data across many Lok Sabhas. Secondly, we do not incorporate the potential gradations in the strength of leadership dominance within political parties. While the political and institutional developments that we identify are bound to induce centralization tendencies in all parliamentary parties, how far this has led to leadership dominance is also a function of intra-party institutional processes and practices borne out of party history. Due to paucity of research on intra-party functioning in India, we are unable to incorporate the influence of these factors in our models.

This research is the first step towards unravelling the complexities of the phenomenon of parliamentary disruptions in India. Legislative disruptions is an unexamined area, and any such exploration is likely to fuel more questions. For instance, it would be interesting to examine why parties organize these disruptions in the first place? How do voters react to their parties and MPs disrupting on the floor of the House? What other factors explain the trends of rise in disruptions in the Indian parliament? We hope this research inspires investigation into these other facets of parliamentary disruptions.

The study presents an insight into the mechanisms behind disruptions in India, but we do not know whether the same mechanisms may explain legislative disruptions in other countries such as Japan, South Africa, Ukraine and Taiwan. A comparative study of legislative disruptions across

these countries, culminating into a larger comparative exploration of legislative obstructions across the world could be an enlightening exercise.

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Endnotes

[i] Studies have suggested that filibusters are also often exercised to safeguard partisan interests

[ii] Rutherford (1914), for instance, classifies only the 'legal' methods of blocking legislation

[iii] Lok Sabha Secretariat reports percentage parliamentary time lost due to interruptions/ forced adjournments

[iv] Spary (2010)

[v] Pearson (2015) uses the term 'exert' to characterize the use of party discipline by leaders

[vi] We conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with MPs from the 15th/ 16th Lok Sabhas that were affiliated to a cross-section of parties

[vii] Interview with former MP from Congress party on 6th Nov. 2015

[viii] Data on party composition of Lok Sabhas is gathered from the Lok Sabha Secretariat website

[ix] 2014 elections changed this trend since BJP got 51% seats, but the margin is still likely to be too low to release the tight leash that leaders have over MPs

[x] The larger parties (Congress and BJP) appoint multiple whips in each House: A Chief Whip followed by Whips. For instance, in July 2014, BJP appointed a Chief Whip and 13 Whips in the Lok Sabha- Source: Indian Express, 13th July 2014.

[xi] The notable exception for this is the CPI(M) which is known for better engagement with parliamentarians

[xii] Interview with MP from a regional party on 13th December 2015. We asked this question in the third person so that the MP respondent could tell us the reactions of other MPs towards disruptions.

[xiii] This was highlighted to us by MPs from across BJP, Congress and regional parties

[xiv] A conceptual challenge to our disruptions are incentivized by debate argument is that disruptions occur in the course of heated debates in parliament, and it is therefore expected that they may be correlated. This interpretation is however quite different from the way disruptions are known to take place in India- they are pre-meditated events that start at the first hour of parliament and continue for an hour or may wash out the entire sitting. As former Speaker Somnath Chatterjee mentioned about disruptions: "I used to be told sometimes just through a phone call half an hour before the House was to assemble for the day that it will not run on that day as our party has decided that it should not run"

[xv] Reputational and physical costs were highlighted to us by MPs in the interviews

[xvi] For MPs who did not contest the 2014 elections, their 2014 assets were estimated by forward projecting their 2009 assets based on the average asset growth of 15th LS MPs who contested in both 2009 and 2014 elections

xvii We use a retrospective measure for determining whether a candidate is competitive. We define a candidate to be competitive if he/ she managed to secure at least 20% vote-share in the 2014 elections

xviii We test for two levels old age: 60 years because that is the retirement age of civil servants in India and 70 because that is the official retirement age for Senators in the US Senate

xix Previous parliamentary terms includes terms in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

xx During the 15th Lok Sabha two parties (AITC, DMK) changed from a coalition partner to the opposition. These parties actively disrupted parliament only after this change, hence we classify their MPs under opposition.

xxi The Telangana issue pertained to the bifurcation of an Indian state, such issues are not expected to be frequent

xxii We were intrigued by why the re-nomination rates drop substantially for MPs with 10 or more disruptions. We found that among MPs, who failed to be nominated, was an MP who publicly challenged the leader, there were 2 MPs who faced a serious corruption charge just 4 months before the election and 1 MP was dismissed from the party just before elections due to anti-party activities. If we remove these exceptional cases, re-nomination rate climbs up to 81%. This does not say much, however, because these other events are assumed to be randomly distributed across the sample.

xxiii Debates participation by Ministers is not recorded in the Lok Sabha Secretariat data, the Deputy Speaker is officially not permitted to participate in parliamentary debate.

xxiv Psuedo R was calculated for the NBR model

xxv Just to be doubly sure, I take Parliamentary Questions as the indicator for MP's personal initiative and rerun a fresh regression using Opportunities for debate as Dependent variable and now controlling for MP's personal initiative. I observe that the Disruptions and Disruptions Dummy both retain significance at .001 level and their magnitudes are marginally altered.

xxvi Political positions comprises Ministerial or Parliamentary positions during the 15th Lok Sabha or being part of the National Executive Committee of the party.

xxvii Principal opposition party is the largest opposition party in terms of seat share in the legislature. To be designated the Principal opposition a party should have a minimum of 10% seats in the legislature.