

Examining the Electoral Dynamics: A Comparative Analysis of National Party Performance in the Past Three Indian General Elections

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Abstract

This research explores the complex electoral dynamics of India's major national parties, focusing on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) over the last three general elections. The electoral landscape in India is intricately shaped by the interplay of national and regional political entities, as well as the influence of civil society organizations. Central to this dynamic are national parties, which attain their status by meeting specific criteria in the Representation of the People Act, of 1951. Through a detailed analysis of vote share and seat distribution, the study uncovers significant trends and patterns that highlight the evolving electoral landscape. It examines changes in the overall vote share of these parties, identifying factors contributing to their fluctuating performance. Additionally, the research compares the electoral outcomes of the BJP and INC, providing insights into the competitive dynamics between these two dominant political forces. A critical aspect of this study is the investigation of regional variations and their impact on the electoral performance of national parties. The research identifies emerging trends and shifts in regional political alignments by exploring how regional contexts and voter preferences influence election results. Furthermore, the role of civil society organizations is scrutinized to understand their potential as catalysts in shaping electoral outcomes, mobilizing voter bases, and influencing public opinion. By integrating quantitative electoral data with qualitative analysis of political strategies and regional influences, this research aims to comprehensively understand the factors driving the electoral success of major national parties in India. The findings offer valuable insights into the electoral dynamics between national and regional political entities and the broader implications for India's democratic processes and political stability.

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Introduction

The electoral landscape of India is intricately shaped by the interplay of national and regional political entities, as well as the influence of civil society organizations. Central to this dynamic are the national parties, crucial players in the country's democratic framework. A registered party attains national status by meeting specific criteria outlined in the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which includes winning a minimum percentage of seats in the Lok Sabha from multiple states or securing a certain percentage of votes across different states (*Dynamics of Elevation of Political Parties to State or National Party*, 2014). Understanding the electoral performance of major national parties is paramount, and in this context, an examination of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) over the last three general elections reveals intriguing patterns in vote share and seat distribution. Furthermore, regional variations wield significant influence over the electoral fortunes of these national parties, with civil society organizations emerging as potential catalysts in shaping political outcomes. Delving into the complexities of Indian electoral dynamics, this research aims to assess the evolving roles of national and regional parties, scrutinize the impact of civil society organizations, and unravel the broader implications for the democratic fabric of the nation.

Research Questions

This research paper aims to explore several key questions to shed light on the electoral dynamics of major national parties in India. The following research questions will guide this investigation:

1. What is a national party?
2. How has the overall vote share of major national parties changed in the last three general elections, and what trends are evident in the number of seats secured?
3. How does the electoral performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) compare with that of the Indian National Congress(INC) across the last three general elections, and are there

discernible patterns in the vote share and seat distribution between these two major national parties?

4. To what extent do regional variations impact the electoral performance of major national parties, and have there been emerging trends in their performance influenced by civil society organizations?

Methodology

This research employs a comprehensive methodology incorporating both primary and secondary data collection methods. It uses a comparative and temporal analysis of the electoral performances of India's major national parties, specifically the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC), over the past three general elections (2009, 2014, and 2019). The research aims to uncover trends in vote share and seat distribution, analyze the impact of regional variations, and assess the influence of civil society organizations on these outcomes.

Primary Data Collection

The Election Commission of India (ECI) serves as the principal source for official election results, offering comprehensive data on vote shares and seat distributions for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) in the general elections of 2009, 2014, and 2019. Complementing this, the IndiaVotes database provides detailed electoral data, including constituency-wise results and overall vote shares. This resource is pivotal for analyzing the performance of national parties (ECI, 2018) across different states and constituencies. Additionally, the political manifestos of the BJP and INC from these election years were scrutinized to evaluate their commitments related to health, employment, and national security, offering valuable insights into the policy priorities of each party.

Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data collection involved consulting scholarly articles and books to gain historical context and in-depth analyses of the Indian political landscape, helping to understand broader

trends and factors influencing electoral outcomes. Government reports and white papers provided insights into policy implementations and their impacts, aiding in the assessment of how well the parties manifesto commitments were translated into action. Media reports from reputable news sources were also reviewed to gain current perspectives on electoral outcomes and the role of civil society organizations, offering crucial insights into the contemporary political environment and public sentiment.

Data Analysis

A multi-faceted approach was adopted for data analysis. Temporal analysis of vote shares and seat distributions was conducted using data from the ECI and IndiaVotes to quantify and compare the performance of the BJP and INC across the three election cycles, highlighting trends and shifts in voter support and party performance. A systematic comparative analysis of political manifestos was performed to categorize and compare specific promises and policy proposals related to key issues such as health, employment, and national security. The extent and impact of implementing these manifesto commitments were assessed by cross-referencing with government reports and media articles.

Regional variation analysis involved disaggregating electoral data by state to examine party performance patterns and deviations in different regions, considering historical affiliations, cultural identities, and socio-economic conditions to provide a nuanced understanding of regional voting behavior. Detailed case studies of specific states with significant variations in party performance, such as Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, offered deeper insights into localized factors affecting electoral outcomes.

The role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in shaping electoral outcomes was explored through qualitative analysis of reports and articles on their activities and influence. This analysis investigated how CSOs contribute to political discourse, mobilize voters, and advocate for specific issues. Specific case studies where CSOs have notably influenced electoral fortunes and public opinion highlighted the significant impact of civil society on the political landscape.

By integrating these methods, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the electoral dynamics in India, focusing on the evolving roles of national and regional parties, the influence of civil society organizations, and the broader implications for the democratic fabric of the nation.

National Party in India

The history of the national party in India can be traced back to the inception of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885. As the first modern political entity in the country, the INC played a foundational role in shaping the contours of Indian political discourse. Founded during a session in Bombay, the INC's early years witnessed the participation of leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, A.O. Hume, and Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee. From its outset, the INC demonstrated a commitment to fostering inclusivity by representing diverse segments of Indian society, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and individuals from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The party's evolution into a prominent force was propelled by the leadership of figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sardar Patel, who led the charge in the independence movement against British colonial rule. Through its annual sessions, the INC provided a platform for interregional dialogue and solidified its dedication to the vision of a unified, independent India. While subsequent decades witnessed the emergence of other political entities, the INC's early establishment, organizational structure, and unwavering commitment to national unity mark it as the cornerstone of India's political landscape. The subsequent emergence of other political parties in India unfolded as a consequence of evolving socio-political dynamics and a desire for diverse representation. Post-independence, the political landscape witnessed the formation of various parties, each reflecting distinct regional, ideological, or identity-based interests. The heterogeneous nature of India's population, marked by linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, contributed to the proliferation of regional parties that aimed to articulate and address the specific concerns of their respective constituencies (Guha, 2008). Additionally, ideological variations led to the establishment of parties with distinct policy agendas, such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has emphasized a particular set of cultural and social principles, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) championing Marxist principles, and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) focusing on anti-corruption and transparent governance. These developments

contributed to the fragmentation of the political landscape, introducing a multi-party system that reflected the diverse aspirations and identities within the Indian polity. As a result, regional and ideological factors have continued to shape the political narrative, leading to a dynamic and pluralistic party system in India.

In accordance with the prevailing criteria, a political party attains the status of a national party by meeting specific benchmarks. To be officially recognized at the national level, a party must secure a minimum of six percent of the total votes in either Lok Sabha or Assembly elections across four states. Additionally, the party should achieve victory in at least four Lok Sabha seats. This stringent set of requirements ensures that national parties possess a broad base of support and representation across diverse regions, underscoring their significance in shaping the country's political landscape (*Dynamics of Elevation of Political Parties to State or National Party*, 2014).

In line with these stipulations, the current roster of seven recognized national parties, including the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India – Marxist (CPI-M), Indian National Congress (INC), and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), underscores their fulfillment of these criteria and their consequential role in national governance and policy making.

Representation of The People Act (RPA)

The Representation of the People Act (RPA) of 1951, enshrined in Articles 324 to 329 of Part XV of the Indian Constitution, constitutes the bedrock of India's electoral framework. Bestowed upon Parliament is the authority to enact laws pertaining to all facets of elections to the Parliament and State Legislature. Initiated in 1950, the RPA addresses crucial aspects of the electoral process, including seat allocation in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies, voter qualifications, delimitation of constituencies, and preparation of the electoral roll. Subsequent amendments, such as those in 1966, 1988, and 2002, have refined the electoral system by abolishing election tribunals, addressing issues like booth capturing and electronic voting machines, and introducing the right to information for voters. The 2010 amendment extended voting rights to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). The Representation of the People (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2013, introduced and

swiftly passed in the Rajya Sabha on August 23, 2013, aimed to address significant changes necessitated by a Supreme Court judgment. The key provisions of the bill focused on two crucial amendments to the Representation of People Act, 1951 (RPA, 1951). Firstly, the bill stipulated that an individual, even if in police custody or jail, would not lose their status as an elector as long as their name remained on the electoral roll. This implied that such an individual could still file nominations for elections. Secondly, the bill altered the definition of "disqualified" in the RPA, 1951, specifying that disqualification must result from a conviction for certain specified offenses and no other grounds. Conviction for these offenses would lead to the removal of the individual's name from the electoral roll, resulting in the cessation of their status as an elector. The amendment sought to rectify the legal implications arising from a Supreme Court ruling on July 10, 2013, which held that individuals in jail or police custody could not contest elections as they were not entitled to vote, and hence, did not qualify as electors under the RPA, 1951. The Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2017 aims to amend the Representation of People Act, 1950, and the Representation of People Act, 1951. The proposed amendments focus on introducing proxy voting and ensuring gender neutrality in certain provisions of the Acts. The 1950 Act, addressing the allocation of seats, delimitation of constituencies, and qualifications of voters, allows the registration of certain residents, including those with service qualifications and specific offices declared by the President. The Bill replaces the term 'wife' with 'spouse' in recognition of gender neutrality. Additionally, the 1951 Act, which governs the conduct of elections, currently restricts overseas voters to cast their votes only in person. The proposed amendment seeks to allow overseas voters to vote either in person or through a proxy in the respective constituency. Furthermore, the Bill replaces 'wife' with 'spouse' in the provision related to the voting rights of individuals holding service qualifications. These amendments signify an effort to modernize and enhance inclusivity in India's electoral processes.

The Act outlines qualifications and disqualifications for candidates, mandates the registration of political parties with the Election Commission, and sets criteria for national and state party recognition. Importantly, the RPA establishes stringent measures against electoral offenses, ranging from promoting hatred and breaching official duty to booth capturing and sale of liquor around polling periods. In essence, the RPA serves as the linchpin of India's electoral machinery,

embodying democratic principles, transparency, and the sanctity of the electoral process (The Representation Of The People Act, 1951). Table 1 below represents the evolution of the Act 1951.

Table 1: Evolution of the Representation of the People Act 1951

Year	Legislative Action	Key Provisions/Changes
1951	Representation of the People Act (RPA) enacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seat allocation in Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies ● Voter qualifications ● Delimitation of constituencies ● Preparation of electoral roll
1966	Amendment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Abolition of election tribunals
1988	Amendment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addressed issues like booth capturing and electronic voting machines
2002	Amendment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduced the right to information for voters
2010	Amendment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extended voting rights to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)
2013	Representation of the People (Amendment and Validation) Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individuals in police custody or jail not losing elector status as long as name on electoral roll. ● Altered the definition of "disqualified" specifying conviction for specified offenses as only grounds.
2017	Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduced proxy voting ● Ensured gender

		neutrality in certain provisions of the Acts.
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Source: Compiled By Author

Temporal Analysis of Vote Share and Seat Distribution: BJP and INC in Indian General Elections 2009-2019

Over the past decade, encompassing the general elections of 2009, 2014, and 2019, the Indian political landscape has witnessed significant transformations, notably in the electoral performances of major national parties, namely the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). According to the data retrieved from IndiaVotes, during the 2009 elections, the INC, fielding 206 contestants, secured a substantial vote share and emerged victorious in 28.6% of seats, contributing to the formation of the government. In contrast, the BJP, with 116 candidates, secured 18.8% of seats.

The political landscape experienced a seismic shift in the 2014 general elections. Experiencing a surge, the BJP triumphed with 282 seats, coupled with a remarkable increase in vote share to 31.3%, in stark contrast to the INC's 44 seats and 19.5% vote share. The BJP's decisive victory reshaped the political landscape, resulting in the formation of a majority government.

Building on this momentum, the 2019 elections further solidified the BJP's electoral dominance. Fielding 303 candidates, the party maintained its 2014 performance, securing 37.7% of seats. In comparison, the INC, though showing a modest recovery in vote share, fell short in terms of substantial gains, securing 52 seats with a 19.7% vote share. The vote share dynamics accentuated the BJP's ascendancy, holding steady at 37.7%, while the INC slightly improved to 19.7%.

This comprehensive analysis demonstrates the BJP's consistent rise in both vote share and seats over the three elections, establishing itself as a major national force. Concurrently, the INC, despite a modest recovery in vote share, grappled with challenges in making significant gains in terms of seats. These trends underscore the dynamic nature of India's political landscape and emphasize the importance of a nuanced understanding when deciphering the intricate factors influencing the

electoral performances of major national parties. Table 2 below represents the electoral performances of Indian National Congress (INC) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in general elections (2009, 2014, 2019).

Table 2: Electoral Performances of Indian National Congress (INC) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in General Elections (2009, 2014, 2019)

Year	Party	Candidates	Vote Share (%)	Seats Won
2009	Indian National Congress	206	28.6	28.6%
	Bharatiya Janata Party	116	18.8	18.8 %
2014	Indian National Congress	44	19.5	19.5%
	Bharatiya Janata Party	282	31.3	31.3%
2019	Indian National Congress	52	19.7	19.7%
	Bharatiya Janata Party	303	37.7	37.7%

Source: IndiaVotes | India’s Largest Election Database, n.d.

To provide a structured and focused analysis of political manifestos, the following analysis examines three critical parameters: health, employment, and national security. This selection forms a sampling model aimed at evaluating key areas that significantly impact civil society. By concentrating on these domains, it is possible to better understand the practical implications of political promises and their potential to address pressing societal needs and it allows for a detailed comparison of how major parties have approached these key issues over time and how these approaches have influenced their electoral performance.

Manifesto Commitments: A Comparative Analysis of Health, Employment and National Security

Health

In the realm of healthcare, both the BJP and INC have consistently prioritized the well-being of citizens in their manifestos across multiple elections. The BJP, in 2009, envisioned a 'Health for All' scheme with public-private participation and a targeted effort to eradicate malnutrition (Manohar Joshi, 2009). Subsequently, during the 2014 elections, the initiation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme demonstrated a proactive approach to improve healthcare accessibility (Manohar Joshi, 2014). In comparison, the INC, in 2009, advocated for increased government expenditure on healthcare and the Right to Healthcare Act. Despite the absence of specific data on the realization of these commitments, the party's dedication to broadening healthcare accessibility is evident (*Lok Sabha Elections 2009 Manifesto of the Indian National Congress*, 2009). The 2019 elections saw the BJP sustaining its commitment through initiatives like Ayushman Bharat and addressing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Manohar Joshi, 2019). The INC, in the same elections, reiterated its commitment to increasing the doctor-to-population ratio and implementing the Clinical Establishments Act, reflecting a comprehensive healthcare vision (*Lok Sabha Elections 2019 Manifesto of the Indian National Congress*, 2019).

Employment

Turning to employment, both political parties have consistently emphasized the importance of inclusive economic growth and job creation in their manifestos. In 2009, the BJP outlined commitments related to job creation, with subsequent years witnessing a focus on initiatives like 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' during the 2014 elections. This underscored the party's commitment to employment generation and skill development. The INC, in 2009, also highlighted the need for employment generation through inclusive growth. However, specific data on the realization of these commitments during this period is not readily available. In the 2014 elections, the BJP's victory indicated public support for their economic agenda, including job creation. Both parties sustained their commitment to employment generation in the 2019 elections, with the BJP

focusing on initiatives like 'Make in India' and 'Skill India,' while the INC emphasized inclusive growth and skill development.

National Security

In the domain of national security, both the BJP and INC consistently prioritized a strong and secure India in their manifestos. In 2009, the BJP emphasized modernizing defense forces and addressing internal security challenges. While specific data on the outcomes during this period is not available, subsequent years saw the BJP maintaining a robust stance on national security during the 2014 elections, with a particular emphasis on defense capabilities and counterterrorism measures. The INC, in 2009, acknowledged the importance of national security and defense force modernization. Moving to the 2014 elections, both parties reiterated their commitment to national security, with the BJP's victory suggesting public support for their agenda. In 2019, the BJP sustained its commitment through initiatives like the Balakot airstrikes and the abrogation of Article 370, while the INC maintained its emphasis on a strong national defense and the modernization of armed forces despite not securing a victory.

Analyzing the manifestos of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) and INC (Indian National Congress) reveals varying degrees of feasibility and practicality in their commitments to health, employment, and national security. In terms of healthcare, the BJP has demonstrated a proactive approach with initiatives like Ayushman Bharat, leveraging public-private partnerships to enhance accessibility. This scheme has been implemented and shown results in expanding health coverage. On the other hand, the INC's emphasis on increased government expenditure and legislative measures like the Right to Healthcare Act suggests commitment but lacks clarity on specific implementation strategies and outcomes. Regarding employment, both parties prioritize job creation and skill development. The BJP's initiatives such as 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' have been actively promoted and have contributed to economic growth and employment opportunities. The INC's focus on inclusive growth aligns with similar goals, but evidence of tangible outcomes is less transparent. In terms of national security, the BJP's manifesto reflects a robust stance with clear actions like defense modernization and counterterrorism measures demonstrated through initiatives such as the Balakot airstrikes and the abrogation of Article 370. These actions highlight

a strong commitment to strengthening India's defense capabilities. The INC also emphasizes defense modernization but lacks specific evidence of tangible outcomes during their periods in governance. Overall, the BJP's manifesto appears more believable and practical due to its track record of implementing key initiatives like Ayushman Bharat and 'Make in India'. The focus on actionable plans underscores a commitment to translating promises into tangible outcomes, contributing to a more credible and impactful governance agenda. Comparatively, while the INC presents similar goals, the clarity and evidence of implementation in their manifestos are less pronounced, raising questions about the feasibility and practicality of their commitments.

Impact Of Regional Variations On Electoral Performance

The electoral landscape in India is profoundly diverse, marked by regional variations that exert a significant influence on the fortunes of major national parties. Factors such as language, culture, and socio-economic conditions across states contribute to the intricate electoral dynamics, shaping the emergence of regional parties as key players in articulating the specific concerns and aspirations of their constituencies.

Examining the electoral performances of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC) reveals nuanced variations across states. Despite the BJP's overarching emphasis on a unified national narrative, the party has successfully penetrated regions traditionally dominated by regional parties, showcasing a broad pan-Indian appeal. However, the BJP's performance is not uniform, as it varies in certain states due to localized factors such as specific issues, leadership dynamics, and socio-economic conditions. Similarly, the INC, with its historical roots and commitment to inclusivity, maintains a presence across diverse states. Nevertheless, the party encounters challenges and variations in its performance, demonstrating strongholds in certain regions and facing hurdles in others.

The observed regional voting patterns for these major political entities are intricate and multifaceted, influenced by a convergence of historical, cultural, economic, and governance-related factors. Historical affiliations weigh heavily, as regions often maintain enduring ties with specific parties due to past events, social movements, or influential historical leaders. Cultural identities also significantly shape voting preferences, with communities aligning themselves with parties perceived as protectors of their cultural values and traditions. Economic development

emerges as a crucial determinant, with regions at varying stages prioritizing distinct aspects of governance based on their economic progress. Parties perceived as more adept at addressing specific economic challenges or initiating developmental projects tend to secure support in those regions. Moreover, perceptions of governance quality, encompassing issues like corruption, efficiency, and responsiveness, substantially shape voter choices. Regions experiencing effective governance under a particular party may sustain their support, while those facing governance shortcomings may seek alternatives (Bharti, 2022). Understanding the nuanced socio-political context of each region is pivotal in comprehending these voting patterns. Local issues, leadership dynamics, and the socio-economic fabric contribute to the intricate mosaic of regional politics. Factors such as regional aspirations, demands, and the performance of local leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the political landscape. Consequently, a meticulous analysis that acknowledges the interplay of these diverse elements within the unique context of each region is essential for comprehending the reasons behind regional voting patterns.

In the 2009 elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) capitalized on regional sentiments in Uttar Pradesh, a northern state in India. The party's alignment with local concerns, particularly its emphasis on the Ram Mandir agenda, resonated strongly with voters, contributing significantly to its electoral success in the region. On the other hand, the Indian National Congress performed well in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, leveraging strategic alliances with regional parties. This collaborative approach, coupled with addressing state-specific concerns, played a pivotal role in Congress's electoral triumph.

Moving to the 2014 elections, the BJP's stronghold in the western state of Gujarat showcased the impact of strong regional leadership. Led by Narendra Modi, the party emphasized the Gujarat model of development, focusing on the state's economic growth under Modi's governance. This regional-centric approach influenced voters positively, contributing substantially to the BJP's electoral victory. In the northeastern state of Assam, Congress strategically aligned with regional sentiments and concerns, particularly emphasizing issues like immigration and regional autonomy. This tailored approach to local dynamics contributed significantly to Congress's electoral success in the region.

In the 2019 elections, the BJP's performance in the western state of Maharashtra reflected the influence of regional alliances and leadership dynamics. Collaborating strategically with regional parties such as Shiv Sena, the BJP navigated local issues effectively, contributing to its electoral success in the state. In the southern state of Karnataka, the Indian National Congress demonstrated its ability to navigate regional complexities. Through effective alliance-building and addressing state-specific concerns, Congress showcased the impact of regional variations on electoral outcomes, underlining the significance of adapting strategies to the nuanced dynamics of each region.

The electoral landscape in India is undeniably shaped by the intricate interplay of regional variations, influencing the performances of major national parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC). The diversity in language, culture, and socio-economic conditions across states forms the backdrop for nuanced voting patterns. As observed through examples from the 2009, 2014, and 2019 elections, historical affiliations, cultural identities, economic priorities, and governance perceptions are pivotal determinants in regional voting behavior. The BJP's pan-Indian appeal and the INC's commitment to inclusivity are evident, yet the localized influences on their performances are undeniable. The 2009 elections showcased the BJP's success in Uttar Pradesh through alignment with local sentiments, while the INC's strategic alliances contributed to triumph in Andhra Pradesh. Moving to 2014, the BJP's stronghold in Gujarat demonstrated the impact of strong regional leadership, while Congress leveraged regional sentiments in Assam. In 2019, the BJP's performance in Maharashtra underscored the influence of regional alliances, while Congress navigated Karnataka's dynamics adeptly. The examples highlight the adaptability of national parties to regional nuances and the integral role of state-specific strategies in electoral success. As delving into these instances, it becomes evident that regional variations are not just historical artifacts but dynamic forces continually shaping India's electoral landscape. The ongoing significance of understanding and responding to regional complexities is crucial for political parties aiming to secure electoral success. The intricate mosaic of regional politics demands continual analysis and adaptation, acknowledging the unique context of each state. Thus, the impact of regional variations on electoral performance remains a persistent and influential factor in the ever-evolving democratic narrative of India (PAI, 1990).

Emerging Trends Influenced By Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have increasingly played a role in shaping political outcomes in India. These organizations, comprising NGOs, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements, contribute to political discourse, mobilize voters, and advocate for specific issues, particularly in areas related to social justice, human rights, and environmental concerns. The impact of CSOs on the electoral performance of national parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) is multifaceted. While some organizations align with specific political ideologies or parties, others operate independently, influencing public opinion and advocating for policy changes (Mexhuani & Rrahmani, 2017). Recent instances, as reported in articles such as those from *The Economic Times* and *The Times of India*, highlight the active involvement of CSOs in shaping the political narrative. Civil society groups have organized rallies and nationwide mobilizations, signaling a collective stance against the BJP-led government. These mobilizations involve not only raising awareness on social and political issues but also garnering support from secular parties, indicating a collaborative effort to influence the political landscape. In examining the impact of CSOs on BJP and INC's electoral performances, it is crucial to consider their role in specific regions, as CSOs may champion causes that resonate with local populations, impacting voter sentiment and influencing electoral outcomes (Boulding & Nelson-Núñez, 2014). Recent electoral trends in India indicate a noticeable shift influenced by CSOs, particularly concerning the electoral performance of major national parties. One emerging trend is the growing significance of issue-based voting, where CSOs play a crucial role in shaping public opinion around specific social, environmental, or governance issues. Additionally, there is a trend of greater collaboration between CSOs and opposition parties, with civil society groups actively supporting and aligning with parties that advocate for causes aligned with their mission. This collaboration has resulted in more concerted efforts to challenge the policies and electoral prospects of ruling parties, particularly the BJP-led government, as seen in recent mobilizations and rallies organized by CSOs across the country. As a result, electoral outcomes are increasingly being influenced by the collective voice and advocacy efforts of civil society, shaping the political landscape in India in novel ways.

Based on the comprehensive analysis conducted, several key findings emerge, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of India's electoral landscape and the evolving role of civil society organizations (CSOs).

Findings and Analysis

Firstly, the historical evolution of national parties, notably the Indian National Congress (INC), underscores their foundational role in shaping political discourse. This evolution is characterized by the emergence of regional parties, reflecting the nation's linguistic, cultural, and ideological diversity within a multi-party system. Secondly, the temporal analysis of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and INC's electoral performances over the past three general elections reveals significant shifts in vote share and seat distribution. While the BJP has experienced a consistent rise, consolidating its position as a major national force, the INC has faced challenges in making substantial gains in terms of seats, despite modest recoveries in vote share. Thirdly, a comparative analysis of manifesto commitments related to health, employment, and national security demonstrates commonalities and differences in the policy agendas of the BJP and INC across multiple elections. Both parties prioritize these sectors but with varying approaches, reflecting their efforts to address diverse citizen needs. Fourthly, The BJP's manifesto seems more credible and practical because of its successful implementation of initiatives like Ayushman Bharat and 'Make in India'. Their emphasis on actionable plans demonstrates a commitment to converting promises into tangible outcomes, contributing to a more impactful governance agenda. In comparison, although the INC shares similar objectives, the clarity and evidence of implementation in their manifestos are less evident, raising doubts about the feasibility and practicality of their commitments. Fifthly, regional variations exert significant influence over the electoral performances of major national parties, as evidenced by nuanced voting patterns across states. Historical affiliations, cultural identities, economic priorities, and governance perceptions play pivotal roles in shaping regional voting behavior, necessitating tailored approaches by political parties to address localized concerns. Lastly, civil society organizations (CSOs) have emerged as influential actors, mobilizing voters around specific social, environmental, and governance issues. The growing significance of issue-based voting and collaboration between CSOs and opposition parties underscores the evolving dynamics of Indian democracy, where the

collective voice and advocacy efforts of civil society increasingly impact electoral outcomes. In conclusion, the analysis highlights the dynamic and pluralistic nature of India's political landscape, wherein historical legacies, regional variations, and emerging trends intersect to shape the democratic fabric of the nation. By recognizing and responding to these multifaceted factors, political actors can contribute to the consolidation and deepening of democratic principles, fostering inclusive governance and responsive policymaking in India.

Conclusion

This research has delved into the intricate dynamics of India's electoral landscape, highlighting the multifaceted challenges faced by major national parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC) over the past decade. The analysis revealed a nuanced understanding of electoral performances, manifesto commitments, regional variations, and the evolving role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in influencing political outcomes.

One of the primary challenges identified is the need for political parties to navigate and adapt to diverse regional dynamics and socio-cultural contexts. While both the BJP and INC share common intentions in prioritizing health, employment, and national security in their manifestos, the manner of execution and emphasis on actionable policies vary significantly. This variation is further amplified by the distinct beliefs and cultural considerations of voters across different states, which underscores the importance of tailored strategies to resonate with local concerns. The comparative analysis of manifesto commitments underscored the importance of clarity and feasibility in political agendas. The BJP's emphasis on initiatives like Ayushman Bharat and 'Make in India' demonstrated a more tangible approach compared to the INC's commitments, which often lacked specific implementation strategies. Moreover, the research highlighted the growing influence of civil society organizations (CSOs) in shaping public discourse and advocating for specific issues. Acknowledging and fostering constructive engagement with CSOs is essential for political parties to tap into grassroots sentiments and collaborate effectively on shared objectives.

In response to these findings, several key recommendations emerge to enhance the effectiveness of India's electoral landscape. Political parties should prioritize clarity and feasibility in manifesto

commitments, ensuring that promises translate into tangible outcomes that benefit citizens. Recognizing and embracing the diversity of regional dynamics is crucial, requiring tailored strategies that resonate with local concerns and cultural identities. Additionally, fostering constructive engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs) is essential for parties to connect with grassroots sentiments and collaborate on shared objectives. Continuous monitoring of socio-political trends and adaptive strategies are imperative for parties to navigate complexities effectively and maintain relevance in the ever-changing political environment.

Looking ahead, further research is warranted in areas such as conducting longitudinal studies to track the evolving role of regional parties and CSOs over multiple electoral cycles, assessing the impact of specific policy interventions on electoral outcomes and public perception, and investigating the specific mechanisms through which CSOs influence electoral dynamics.

In essence, this research underscores the importance of a holistic and adaptive approach to navigating India's diverse electoral landscape. By embracing the nuanced realities of regional variations and harnessing the potential of civil society engagement, political actors can contribute meaningfully to the strengthening of democratic principles and the promotion of inclusive governance in India's vibrant democracy.

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